



SFI activist stabbed to death on college campus in Kerala  
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Myanmar court sentences Suu Kyi to four more years in jail  
 page 11



Djokovic wins appeal against deportation from Australia  
 page 13

Kohli is back as India takes on South Africa in decider at Cape Town  
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## COVID-19 hospitalisations at 5-10%, situation evolving: govt.

Over 9 lakh 'precaution' doses of vaccine administered on first day

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN  
 NEW DELHI

Farm union leaders of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha said the Centre is yet to keep its promises of setting up a panel to look into guaranteed minimum support prices for crops and withdrawing cases filed against farmers who protested against the three farm laws.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

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Shield of safety: A frontline worker getting the 'precaution' dose of COVID vaccine in Ahmedabad on Monday. • VIJAY SONEI

Also on Monday, India started administering a third "precaution" dose of COVID-19 vaccine to healthcare and frontline workers, and people over the age of 60 with co-morbidities.

In his letter, Mr. Bhushan termed the COVID-19 situation as dynamic and evolving, with the possibility of the need for hospitalisation changing rapidly.

He has directed States to

continued presence of VoC Delta across the country.

On the first day of the "precaution" doses for the identified categories of beneficiaries, more than nine lakh doses were administered till 7 p.m., the Ministry said in a release.

Earlier in the day, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya reviewed the public health preparedness and reiterated the importance of the Test, Track, Treat, Vaccinate protocol and adherence to COVID-appropriate behaviour.

He added that the current rise in cases appears to be driven by the Variant of Concern (VoC) Omicron and the

ty on a daily basis.

He added that the current rise in cases appears to be driven by the Variant of Concern (VoC) Omicron and the

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8  
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## Jolt to BJP in Goa as Minister, MLA resign

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
 PUNE

In a setback to the Goa BJP ahead of Assembly elections, Calangute MLA and Minister for Ports and Waste Management Michael Lobo – the party's most prominent Catholic face – on Monday quit the party and resigned from his legislative and ministerial posts.

Hours later, Pravin Zan-

tye, MLA from Maem, also resigned from the party.

Both claimed they were sidelined by the current BJP leadership.

Mr. Lobo, a two-time legislator from Calangute, said he was in talks with a number of parties. Sources indicated that he is likely to join the Congress.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Two SC judges pull out of Krishna water case

Justice Chandrachud hails from Maharashtra, Justice Bopanna is from Karnataka

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI



Justices A.S. Bopanna and D.Y. Chandrachud.

had had a word with each other earlier in the day and decided to withdraw from

hearing the case. Justice Chandrachud is from Maharashtra and Justice Bopanna

hails from Karnataka.

Justice Chandrachud explained to the lawyers present that they had noticed that judge similarly placed them – hailing from the States in dispute – had recused themselves from the case. "We do not want to be targets of invective," he conveyed their decision.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Top court to urgently hear hate speeches case

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to urgently hear a petition seeking the arrest and trial of people who made hate speeches, inciting violence towards Muslims, at the Hardikar Dhamansah.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana assured senior advocate Kapil Sibal that the

petition filed by former High Court judge Anjaneya Prakash and journalist Qurbani Ali would be heard without delay. Mr. Sibal, in an oral mention before the Bench, said: "We are living in different times where slogans in the country have changed from 'Satyamev Jayate' to 'Shashtramev Jayate'."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Morning musings



Work unhindered: Villagers loading grass on a bicycle amid the fog on Monday morning near the Biju Patnaik international airport in Bhubaneswar. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

## 'Battle of 80% vs 20% in U.P. poll'

Adityanath makes reference to religious composition of State

OMAR RASHID  
 LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly election had progressed to a battle of 80% vs 20%. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday, perhaps subtly hinting at the religious composition in the State where Muslims make up over 19% of the population.

Responding to a question why Brahmins should vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) when the Opposition Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party were wooing the caste to defeat the party, he said the fight had advanced much further.

Precedence for religion  
 "Yeh ladai usse bahut agay ja chuki hain. Yeh ladai assi



Sole agenda: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath waves to supporters as he arrives at the BJP office in Lucknow on Monday. • PTI

Muslim population, he said 80% of the voters who favoured nationalism, good governance and development would press the BJP's lotus button in the election.

A different path'  
 And those who were against nationalism, development and farmers, and supporters of mafia and criminals, and backed professional rioters and corrupt persons, and embraced anti-India elements, "those 15-20% people will choose a different path," he said.

The Brahmins would provide leadership to this election of the '80 versus 20'. "Brahmin doesn't mean caste but prabhu samaj [learned community]," Mr. Adityanath said.

When the anchor hinted if he meant 19% when he said 20%, a reference to the

## Two lakh more got jobs in 9 sectors: govt. survey

Union Labour Ministry releases July-Sept. 2021 employment figures; three more reports in progress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
 NEW DELHI

Nine sectors that account for about 85% of total employment in establishments with 10 or more workers hired two lakh more people in July-September 2021 compared to April-June 2021, according to the second round of the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) released by the Union Labour and Employment Ministry on Monday.

"The estimated total employment in the nine selected sectors from the second round of QES (July-September, 2021) came out as 3.10 crore approximately, which is 2 lakh higher than the estimated employment (3.08 crore) from the first round of QES (April 1, 2021)," the report stated.

The report, released by Mr. Bhupender Yadav, covers manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, education, health,

and restaurants, IT/BPOs and financial services sectors.

Speaking during the virtual launch event, Mr. Yadav said that the other three surveys launched by the Mi-

nistry last year were progressing well.

The report of the survey on migrant labour should be out by July or August.

Jobs rose amid pandemic'  
 The survey on domestic workers was in progress and quarterly reports under the area-based employment survey would be released soon, he said. The QES showed that employment had increased even during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the second QES report that covered 11,503 establishments said nearly 90% of the establishments had less than 100 workers, while 30% of the IT/BPO establishments had at least 100 workers.

"The overall percentage

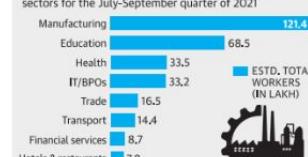
of female workers stood at 32.1%, higher than 29.3% reported during the first round of QES.

Regular workers constitute 87% of the estimated workforce in the nine selected sectors, with only 2% being casual workers.

However, in the construction sector, 20% of the workers were contractual and 6.4% were casual workers, it noted.

4.3 lakh vacancies  
 The survey also found that 5.6% of the total establishments had reported vacancies, a total of 4.3 lakh. While most of the vacancies (65.8%) were for unspecified reasons, 23% were due to resignation and 11.2% due to retirement of employees.

AND-NDE



## 40%-50% oxygen beds occupied in hospitals

Most of the serious patients are those with comorbidities; doctors worried over staff testing positive

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

Doctors at three major private hospitals, where about 40%-50% of oxygen beds for COVID-19 are occupied, said though hospitalisation is increasing they are not seeing a rush of patients like in the second wave.

All of them said symptoms are still mild in most cases and patients, who are serious, are mostly the ones with comorbidities. They also said that staff testing positive is a challenge, but the hospitals are not stressed at this point.

Meanwhile, the surge in cases in Delhi continued on Monday with the test positivity rate (TRP) increasing to 25%, which is the highest in seven months, according to a Delhi government bulletin.

**Tests drop, active cases up**  
With a fall in tests, the number of fresh cases over 24 hours dipped to 19,166 from 22,751 on Sunday. While



**Immunity boost:** 82-year-old Bal Krishan Malhotra taking a booster dose of COVID vaccine at a centre in the city on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

96,678 samples were tested on Sunday with a TPR of 23.5%, the number came down to 76,670 on Monday.

Seventeen COVID-19 related deaths were reported, taking the toll to 25,177. The number of active cases has gone up to 65,806 from 60,732 a day earlier.

More than 1,000 Delhi Police personnel, including an Additional Commissioner of

Police rank officer, have tested on Sunday with a TPR of 23.5%, the number came down to 76,670 on Monday.

Dr. Rommel Tickoo, director, Internal Medicine, Max Hospital, said there is no huge rush like in the second wave and there is no stress on the system at this point. "If in Delta (second wave) seen out of 10 patients were serious, now it is only two out of 10. Hardly anyone is on steroids. Earlier, there was a huge rush at radiology for CT scan during the second wave. It is not there now."

Dr. Sumit Ray, head, Department of Critical Care, Holy Family Hospital, said there is a slight rise in hospitalisation. "But it is much lesser than Delta (second wave). We are not over-

whelmed. Only stress is the staff testing positive," he said.

At Holy Family Hospital, 37 of the 86 oxygen beds were occupied on Monday evening. While 67 of the 120 beds at east and west block in Max Hospital were occupied, at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, 86 of 228 beds were occupied.

During the second wave of the pandemic, beds at private hospitals had filled up before government hospitals and there is a similar trend in the current wave too.

**Severe cases**  
All the three doctors said most of the severe cases are people with comorbidities.

Dr. Ray said symptoms are mainly in the upper respiratory tract and severe cases are mostly elderly people.

"About 80% of the cases are mild or asymptomatic. Also, recovery is happening in five days in most cases. In the majority of cases, people do not have symptoms relating to lungs," Dr. Tickoo said.

### No complete ban on use of cannabis'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Cannabis is not completely banned in the country as its medical use is allowed under the law, the Centre told the Delhi High Court which, on Monday refused to advance the date of hearing of a plea seeking to legalise its use on various grounds.

The court refused to al-

low the early hearing application by the petitioner – Great Legalisation Movement India Trust – which contended that there were reports to suggest that canabidiol helped in countering the impact of COVID-19.

"Looking at the board position, the application can't be entertained at this juncton," the court said.

### Court feels 'absolute loath' to trust witnesses' testimony

Four men acquitted in Delhi riots case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has acquitted four men in a riots case, saying it feels "absolute loath" to place any trust on the testimonies of two prosecution witnesses – a constable and a head constable – on the aspect of identification of rioters.

Additional Sessions Judge Virender Bhat acquitted Nimesh Yadav, Tinku, Sahil and Sandeep in a case related to robbing, vandalising, and setting a house and shop on fire at Bhagirathi Vilas during the February 26, 2020, riots in the Capital.

The case was registered against them on the basis of two complaints filed by Alfar Saifi and Shoibai.

In his complaint, Saifi claimed that a riotous mob barged into his house, vandalised it, robbed articles, and set it on fire. Shoibai approached the police with a similar complaint regarding the theft at his shop, which was clubbed with Saifi's complaint.

"In view of the nature of evidence lead by the prosecution, the identification of the accused as rioters who committed loot and arson in the house of PWI (Saifi) becomes intensely doubtful. This court feels absolute loath to place any trust upon the testimony of PWI and PWII in the aspect of identification of the accused as rioters," Judge Bhat said in his judgment.

"As many as 72 lakh cardholders are getting free ration from the Central government. But the real problem is for those 60 lakh people who have applied for

## 'Govt. order on closure a slow death for restaurant industry'

NRAI demands normal hours of operation or compensation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The order issued by the Delhi government on Monday prohibiting dining at restaurants and allowing only deliveries is unsustainable and will lead to a slow death of an erstwhile vibrant industry, said the National Restaurant Association of India. It urged the government to provide the industry with some "oxygen" to survive the closure.

All restaurants and bars in the city, which had so far been running at 50% capacity and with restricted operating hours, were ordered to be closed in view of the rise in COVID-19 cases.

Kabir Suri, president of NRAI, said the guidelines came at a time when restaurants had just started seeing a respectable surge in consumption, which prompted the industry to hire back staff who had lost jobs.

The government order prohibiting dining at restaurants and allowing only deliveries is unsustainable, said NRAI. ■ FILE PHOTO

"We are very worried about the fate of 3,01,715 people employed in Delhi restaurants. We don't want them to suffer but unfortunately, we don't have adequate resources to support them for long. 25% of restaurants were shut last year and more than 24 lakh people lost their jobs nationally. These new guidelines are going to be even further detrimental to the industry," Mr. Suri said.

He said it is disheartening to see that the restaurant industry, which operates in a safe and closed environment, is being asked to shut while some other activities like airlines, transport and markets continue to function.

"We need some urgent oxygen for our survival. I urge the Delhi government to either allow us to operate in normal hours with safeguards, or compensate us, our employees, suppliers and landlords suitably for the loss of business resulting from the lockdown," Mr. Suri said.

### IN BRIEF

#### Father held for beating paralysed son to death

The Delhi police on Monday arrested a man in north-west Delhi's Bharat Nagar for beating his 30-year-old paralysed son who later succumbed to injuries. The victim, Paramjeet, was bedridden since 14 years, his sister Rekha told the police.

DCP (Northwest) Usha Rangnani said when Rekha came home on Sunday, Paramjeet was lying injured and told her that their father, Ajmer Singh, had beaten him with a stick in an inebriated state the previous night.

**Businessman robbed at gunpoint; four held**

A 54-year-old businessman was robbed of around ₹7 lakh at gunpoint by four accused, including his former employee, in north Delhi's Timarpur, officers said on Monday. The police narrowed down the ex-employee, Baby, who allegedly disclosed that he hatched the plan with Arun Sharma, Vinay and Mahak. All four accused are in police custody.

#### Five arrested for killing man in Inderlok

Five persons have been arrested for killing a 20-year-old man in northwest Delhi's Inderlok, the police said on Monday. On January 7, the police found a body wrapped in a bedsheet and tied with ropes at Tikona Park. The deceased, identified as Abhishek, a resident of Pratap Nagar, was allegedly extorting money from the accused, the police said.

## BJP blames AAP govt. for 'migrants leaving Delhi'

"It is not fulfilling promise of free ration"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday blamed the AAP government for yet another "exodus of migrant workers" from the Capital.

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ranvir Singh Bidhuri said migrants were amid rising COVID-19 cases because the Arvind Kejriwal government was not fulfilling its responsibility of providing free ration despite directions by the Supreme Court in this regard.

"As many as 72 lakh cardholders are getting free ration from the Central government. But the real problem is for those 60 lakh people who have applied for

ration cards in Delhi since 2015 but the government has not yet issued these to them," Mr. Bidhuri said.

"The Supreme Court had given strict instructions to the Delhi government and pulled it up for not arranging community kitchens and rations for them during the last COVID wave," he said.

Mr. Bidhuri said in spite of a recent Delhi Government announcement that such individuals will be given free ration till May, this was not the case "anywhere" in the city.

"I urge the government to take immediate care of the poor labourers and plan to provide rations and other facilities to them," he said.

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr.P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that **Shah Nawaz, S/o Saraf Rao Village chiroli, Loni Ghazaband, UP** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 148/18 u/s 342/354/354B/34 IPC & POCSO Act, P.S. S.B. Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Shah Nawaz** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Shah Nawaz** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Ankit S/o Prem, R/House No. C-43/44, Main Road Ambikapur Basti, Jhandewalan, Karol Bagh, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 492/21 u/s 323/341/34 IPC at P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Ankit** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Ankit** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Ankit S/o Prem, R/House No. C-43/44, Main Road Ambikapur Basti, Jhandewalan, Karol Bagh, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 492/21 u/s 323/341/34 IPC at P.S. Karol Bagh, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Ankit** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Ankit** has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

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By Order, Ms. Shefali Sharma Additional Session Judge (North) (POCSO) Room No.308, Rohini Court, Delhi

DP/1451/ON/2021

### H.P.W.D NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders for the execution of work on form 638 are invited by the Executive Engineer, Dharmpur Division, HPWD Dharmpur on behalf of Governor of H.P. for the following works from the approved and eligible contractor enlisted in HPWD.

**TENDER SCHEDULE:**  
1 Date and time of receipt of application for the tender form 27/1/2022 upto 4:00 PM  
2 Date and time of issue of tender form: 29/1/2022 upto 4:00 PM  
3 Date and time of receipt of tenders: 29/1/2022 upto 11:00 AM  
4 Date and time of opening of tenders: 30/1/2022 upto 11:30 AM

The tender form will be issued against cash payment (non refundable), the earnest money in the shape of NSC/DR/Deposit at call of any Post Office/Bank in H.P. duly pledged in the name of the Executive Engineer, Dharmpur Division, HPWD Dharmpur must accompany each tender. Conditional tender and tender received without earnest money will summarily be rejected.

**Sr. No.** Name of work Estimated Cost (In Rs.) Earnest Money (In Rs.)  
1. Ch/Rissa Reyar Brang road Km 0/0 to 1/500 (SH - ROFD in Km 0/300 to 0/900) 498260/- 1000/- Two months  
2. R/R Damages on Rissa Reyar Brang Road Km 0/0 to 1/500 (SH - FC 57 mtrs wide in Km 0/600 to 1/300) 497548/- 1000/- Two months  
3. A/R & MIO Charki Padhar kathal Road Km 0/0 to 2/600 near Padhar (J SH - FC 57 mtrs wide in Km 1/300 to 1/800) 498780/- 1000/- Two months  
4. Improvement of black spot on Charki Padhar kathal Road Km 0/0 to 2/600 (J SH - FC 57 mtrs wide in Km 1/800 to 2/300) 497849/- 1000/- Two months

### Terms and Conditions:-

i) The contractors/firms should possess the following documents at the time of application (Please refer to the attached:-) i) Latest renewal of enlistment, ii) PAN (Permanent Account No.), iii) Copy of GST registration, iv) Copy of EPF Number, v) Undischarged documents proof of the machinery required for the work, vi) Cost of tender, vi) Ernest Money.

5. The Contractors/Firms are required to quote their rates both in figures and words, failing which signed receipt of the right to accept/reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons,

6. 1% cess charges on the amount of work awarded will be recovered from the contractor and the contractor has to get registered with Labour Officer-cum-Registering Officer-cum-Cess Collector before the date of award letter.

7. The contractor will give affidavit that he has not or more works in hand for execution, failing which the application shall be rejected.

8. The offer of the tender shall remain valid upto 120 days after the opening.

9. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to reject/cancel any or all the tenders without assigning any reason(s).

Sd/-

Executive Engineer,  
Dharmpur Division,  
HP/PWD, Dharmpur,  
Dist: Mandi (H.P.).

DP/ 6165/21-22 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

## SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Sonam Chauhan D/o Upender Chauhan R/o C-219, Pocket-5, Sector-35, Rohini, Delhi Age 15 years, Height 5', Complexion Whealish, Round Face, Medium Built, Wearing Black Colour Lower, Grey Colour T-shirt & Blue Color Sleeper in feet Sonam Chauhan has been missing since 15.11.2021 from her house. Since efforts have been made by local police to trace out this girl, but no clue has come to light so far. In this regard a case FIR No. 669/21 dated 15.11.2021 U/s 363 IPC has been registered at PS Shambhu Dairy, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl kindly inform to the following Website: <http://cbncln.in> Email: [cic@cbncln.in](mailto:cic@cbncln.in) Fax: 011-23011334 Ph: 011-23010406, 23015218 DP/1493/ON/2022

SHO Shaheed Dairy, Delhi Ph. 011-27821047, 27812207

Timings DELHI	
MONDAY, JAN. 10	RISE 07:16 SET 17:44
TUESDAY, JAN. 11	RISE 12:58 SET 01:27
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 12	RISE 07:16 SET 17:44
THURSDAY, JAN. 13	RISE 13:30 SET 02:21
FRIDAY, JAN. 14	RISE 07:16 SET 17:45
SATURDAY, JAN. 15	RISE 14:05 SET 03:16

Delhi Weather	
max	min
Delhi City	18 10
Safdarjung	18 10
Palam	16 09

**Delhi Palam Today**  
19°C The weather will be dry, mostly clear with some clouds in the east and west. Day will be cool with cold breeze. Temperature is likely to decrease.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
19°C The dry weather is likely to continue. Cold wave like conditions to prevail, a foggy morning turns cold day like conditions with cold breeze.

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## Cong. leader writes to President on varsity row

He accuses Kerala Governor of crossing 'Lakshman Rekha'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



**K.C. Venugopal**  
Congress general secretary (organisation)

Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal on Monday wrote to President Ram Nath Kovind urging him to seek a report on the controversy between Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and officials of the Kerala, including the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kerala, over the issue of conferring DLitt on the President.

In his letter, Mr. Venugopal said the President's office had been "derogated" by dragging it into an unwarranted controversy and accused the Governor of crossing the "Lakshman Rekha".

"It is reported that the Honourable Governor of Kerala, in his capacity as the Chancellor of the university, had issued a directive to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Kerala to confer DLitt on the Honourable Pre-

sident. As per the reports, violating the statute of the university, the Vice-Chancellor, instead of convening a Syndicate meeting to decide on the matter, informed the Governor that the university Syndicate had turned down the proposal," the Congress leader wrote.

**Violation of the statute?** When the Governor summoned Vice-Chancellor V.P. Mahadevan Pillai and asked him to submit a written letter about the proposal being

in the voters' list of the State in 1966. He died later.

The Tribunal also noted that the petitioner had studied up to Class V in Gandhi Colony Madhyamik Vidyalaya in Kolkata and after attaining his majority was engaged in jewellery business at Jadavpur area of that city.

..."It is on record that the petitioner came to Patharkandi, Karimganj, Assam, only in the year 1984 and settled there and started his jewellery business," said the High Court judgment on December 14, 2021.

"The question which naturally will arise is, what will be the status of the petitioner, who had entered India in the year 1964 from East Pakistan and continued to stay in India?" he was declared a foreigner.

According to the petition, his grandfather had entered through West Bengal but thereafter settled in Assam and his name appeared

in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and entered India in 1966.

To whether a person who enters India in 1964 from East Pakistan can be considered to be an Indian or not, there is no provision under the Citizenship Act, 1955 except for Sections 6A(2), the Bench said.

"Under Section 6A(2) of the Citizenship Act, 1955, a person entering India before 01.01.1966 can be deemed to be a citizen provided he enters Assam from the specified territory [East Pakistan] and he has been ordinarily residing in Assam after the date of entry," the Bench said.

According to the Assam Accord, foreigners entering Assam on or before March 25, 1971 can get the benefit of citizenship if they register themselves before the authority. Those who entered the State after the date will be declared as foreigners.

Two-judge Bench expressed its inability to declare Mr. Paul as an Indian citizen as claimed by him as he was not born in this country

## Chargesheet against school owner for 'molesting' students

Several girls were molested after they were allegedly given food laced with sedatives in Muzaffarnagar

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUZAFFARNAGAR

Police on Monday filed a chargesheet in a special POCSO court against a school owner and an official for allegedly molesting several girls in a case that rocked Uttar Pradesh late last year.

Yogesh Chouhan, owner

of a school in Muzaffarnagar, was taken 17 girls students of Class X from his school to another one on the pretext of practical examinations.

However, Mr. Chouhan and Arjun Singh, manager of the host school, convinced the girls that they stay over-

night as it was too dark to return. They allegedly gave the students food laced with sedatives and later molested them.

The incident came to light only when two girls complained of uneasiness and confronted Mr. Chouhan and Mr. Singh, who threatened to kill their families if they re-

vealed what they went through.

A case was registered

against the duo under Sections 328 (causing hurt by means of poison, etc.), 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke such that it may lead to death).

peace of the Indian Penal Code and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.

Mr. Chouhan and Mr. Singh are in judicial custody.

Meanwhile, AAP in-charge of Uttar Pradesh Sanjay Singh raised the issue in Rajya Sabha and demanded a speedy trial.

## PM to open 11 medical colleges across T.N.

Event will be held virtually tomorrow

**P.SUNDAR**  
VIRUDHUNAGAR

The imposing glass facade buildings of the new Virudhunagar Government Medical College are ready for inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 12.

The Prime Minister, along with Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, was scheduled to arrive here for inaugurating II new government medical colleges across the State on the same day. However, with the rise in COVID-19 cases, the Prime Minister's visit has been cancelled, and the inauguration has been planned to happen virtually.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sankumuni said work on all blocks, including academic and administrative, men and women's hostels and auditorium, had been completed. The entrance of the college had a statue of Tamil saint-poet Thiruvalluvar.

In view of the Prime Minister's visit, the district administration had begun work on infrastructure, including a helipad at the Collectorate premises. Similarly, the Public Works Department had planned to lay a new road connecting the helipad to the function venue. Landscaping work was also

done to the exception from the offence of rape granted to a married couple had remained in the legislature for several years in spite of developments suggesting the contrary and remained that "one of the possible reasons" was the wide scope of Section 375 of Indian Penal Code which included even a single act of "unwilling sex" as

The court questioned as to why the exemption from the offence of rape granted to a married couple had remained in the legislature for several years in spite of developments suggesting the contrary and remained that "one of the possible reasons" was the wide scope of Section 375 of Indian Penal Code which included even a single act of "unwilling sex" as

Justice C Hari Shankar, who formed part of the Division bench hearing a batch of petitions seeking criminalisation of marital rape, orally observed that a non-marital relation, no matter how close, and a marital relationship cannot be "parallelised".

"Let's take a newly married couple... If the wife says

## 'False rumours led to prolonged strike'

Sharad Pawar intervenes, says MSRTC strike has seriously affected rural commuters



Sharad Pawar •

have been wasted as a result of such rumours," said Mr. Pawar.

**Merger, status**  
Stating that commuters across Maharashtra had been gravely hit by the strike called by staffers of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Monday said that "false rumours" spread about the alleged high-handed attitude of the Maharashtra government towards the agitators had needlessly prolonged the strike.

"The MSRTC employees strike has been dragging for over two months now... It is better not to describe the condition of the passengers in this period. To add to our woes, the State is in the grip of a third wave of the pandemic owing to the Omicron variant. All this is taking a toll on the State's economy. So, I appeal to the agitating employees to think of the welfare of passengers and resume duties," said Mr. Pawar, speaking in Mumbai.

In a bid to break the stalemate between the agitators and the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the NCP chief mediated between the government and representatives of 22 labour unions representing the MSRTC employees. A meeting between Mr. Pawar, State Transport Minister Anil Parab and these representatives was held on Monday.

"The representatives too agreed that MSRTC must be run as before and the welfare of commuters was important. Some people have been spreading this misconception that this government (MVA) was unwilling to listen to the demands of the MSRTC staffers. Two months

The strike, which steadily intensified throughout November last year, has been dragging on for nearly 75 days, with less than 25,000 of the 92,000-odd MSRTC staffers reporting for duty.

Most of the 250 MSRTC de-

puties have remained dysfunctional in this period, throwing commutes away while afflicting lakhs of passengers in the State's rural hinterland.

Despite the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government announcing a pay hike in late November last year to mollify the MSRTC employees, they refused to budge. For a while, the Opposition BJP too jumped in the fray with leaders Gopichand Padalkar and Sadashiv Patil leading the MSRTC staffers before "pulling out" of the strike.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pawar urged the MSRTC employees not to hold the public hostage and cause more losses to the MSRTC and themselves. "I have been repeatedly appealing strikers to resume work... I have given them notice at least thrice," Mr. Pawar said.

The Transport Minister claimed that false rumours were being spread by certain parties that those MSRTC staffers resuming their duties would be suspended and told those still on strike not to believe them.

## Race against time



Close to the saluting base, the Central Vista redevelopment project under way ahead of the Republic Day celebrations in Delhi.

• V.V. KRISHNAN

## Ghaziabad most polluted city, says NCAP report

Delhi in 2nd spot with highest PM 2.5 level

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI  
Delhi and most of the other non-attainment cities under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) have shown only a marginal improvement, said a new analysis released on Monday.

Some of the cities have even recorded an increase in particulate matter (PM) levels, it said. Cities are declared non-attainment if they consistently fail to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAQS) over a five-year period.

The Centre's NCAP was implemented across India in 2019 to reduce particulate matter levels in 132 cities by 20-30% in 2024.

The analysis by NCAP Tracker, a joint project by news portal *Carbon Copy* and a Maharashtra-based start-up *Respirer Living Sciences*, designed to track India's progress in achieving the clean air targets, ranked Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh as the most polluted city out of the 132 non-attainment cities with highest levels of PM 2.5 and PM 10.

Delhi was the second most polluted city in the list of cities with the highest PM 2.5 level and fourth in cities with the highest PM 10 level.

Despite the constant focus on the air pollution woes of the Capital city, Delhi reduced its PM levels only marginally, the analysis said.

"Based on the Continuous Ambient Air Quality Moni-



Smog engulfing the Yamuna in Delhi on Monday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

toring System (CAAQS) data, its PM 2.5 levels dropped from 108 ug/m3 in 2019 to 102 ug/m3 in 2021 and its PM 10 levels reduced from 217 ug/m3 to 207 ug/m3 during the same period, it said. It added that Delhi's PM 2.5 level continues to be more than 2.5 times the CPCB's safe limit of 40 ug/m3 and 20 times the WHO's safe limit of 15 ug/m3," it said.

The data shows little or no progress on ground. An analysis of the government's air quality data shows that not only have most non-attainment cities reduced PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels only marginally but some have also recorded an increase," the analysis pointed out.

According to the three-year comparative analysis, Ghaziabad, with annual PM 2.5 level above 100, remained at the top of the table in the most polluted cities, except in 2020, when Lucknow ranked first with an annual PM 2.5 level of 16.

## M.P. constable suspended for long hair reinstated

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

#### BHOJPUR

A Madhya Pradesh police constable who was placed under suspension for keeping his hair and moustache long in alleged violation of uniformed personnel was reinstated on Monday. A senior official stated that the order to take him off duty was not issued by a competent authority.

Constable Rakesh Rana, posted as a driver in the police's motor transport wing, was suspended, as per an order of Prashant Sharma, Assistant Inspector General, Cooperatives Fraud and Public Service Guarantee, for not obeying his senior officer's order to correct his appearance.

Mr. Sharma had said on Sunday that Mr. Rana was adamant about keeping his moustache and hair long, both of which were not in accordance with norms for uniformed personnel, to which the latter was suspended as part of disciplinary action.

Monday's order issued by DIG (Personnel), M.P. police headquarters, stated the suspension order was being revoked without immediate effect as it was not issued by a competent authority.

State Minister for Home Narottam Mishra told reporters that he had called the officers and constable involved in the matter.





Kannada writer-activist Champa passes away

**BENGALURU**  
Kannada writer and activist Chandrashekhar Patil, 82, popularly known as Champa, passed away here on Monday. Though he taught English and linguistics, Champa, a poet, playwright, and critic, was a passionate proponent of the Kannada cause.

**Trial in rape case over; hearing on Jan. 14**

**KOTTAYAM**  
The Additional District and Sessions Court in Kottayam here on Monday completed the trial in the rape case filed by a Catholic nun against Bishop Franco Mulakkal, former head of the Latin Catholic Diocese of Jalandhar. The court posted the case for next hearing on January 14.

## SFI worker stabbed to death in Idukki

He was a student of Govt. Engineering College; Youth Congress worker held

**A CORRESPONDENT**  
**IDUKKI**

Dheeraj Rajendran, a Student Federation of India (SFI) worker at the Idukki Government Engineering College, Painavu, Keralam, was stabbed to death following a clash with Kerala Students Union (KSU) and Youth Congress workers in connection with college union elections on Monday.

Two other SFI students at the college, both SFI workers, were also injured in the clash near the campus.

Dheeraj, 21, was a seventh semester B.Tech. Computer Science student and hailed from Taliparamba in Kannur. He was stabbed in the chest. Though he was rushed to the nearby Medical College Hospital, Idukki, his life could

not be saved. The injured are Abhijith T. Sunil, 21, from Thrissur and Anjal A.S., 21, from Kollam. They were also admitted to the medical college hospital. The police arrested KSU president Nikhil Paily in connection with the incident. He was arrested from a bus at Karimannil by evening while trying to escape, the police said.

There were issues on the campus between SFI and KSU workers in connection with the college elections.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) and SFI leaders alleged that KSU and Youth Congress workers were behind the attack.

Idukki Police Chief R. Karuppaswamy said investigation was on and it cannot be



## KSU activists attacked on Maharaja's College campus

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**KOCHI**

About 10 Kerala Students Union activists, including a woman office-bearer, were injured after they were allegedly beaten up by Students' Federation of India activists on the Maharaja's College campus on Monday afternoon.

Tension erupted shortly

after the media reported the alleged murder of an SFI activist by KSU activists during a college election in Idukki. "It was a targeted beating of KSU activists without any provocation. Only later did we realise that it was retaliation for what happened in Idukki," said Sunil Sajeevan, a KSU activist.

stable, he said.

The body of Dheeraj was shifted to the medical college mortuary for autopsy.

The college Principal said the college and the host would remain closed till further notice. The Higher Education department also

issued a directive to stop the election process in the college.

Former Minister M.M. Mani alleged a conspiracy behind the attack on SFI leaders. Water Resources Minister Roshy Augustine condemned the attack.

## 'Delhi govt. has no power to plan delivery of ration'

DSRDS challenges the scheme in HC

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**NEW DELHI**

The Delhi government's scheme for doorstep delivery of ration cannot be sustained in law in the absence of approval from the Lieutenant-Governor and the Centre, the Delhi High Court was told on Monday.

The Delhi Sarkari Ration Dealers Sangh (DSRDS), which has challenged the AAP government's Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojna, said before a Bench headed by Justice Vipin

singh that the scheme fell foul of the law, including the National Food Security Act (NFS).

"The State government does not have the power to make any such scheme without the concurrence of the L-G and the Central government," the DSRDS argued. It also said that any notification pertaining to the food security law has to be mandatorily published under the signature of the L-G. On being asked if fair price shops (FPS) were ready to supply door-to-door, lawyer V Shrivastav, appearing for the petitioner, replied, "We are ready but the Central government has to say yes because it is their foodgrain." The DSRDS is an association that represents FPS owners.

The court, which has reserved its verdict on the challenge to the scheme, also asked the Delhi government as to how its doorstep delivery scheme was an improvement on the existing FPS model and how it did allege the present system has corruption.

## BKU (Ugrahan) will neither support SSM nor contest polls

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
**CHANDIGARH**

A newborn baby died at Government Tribal Spechi Hospital, Kottakkara, Attappady, on Monday.

The death of the three-day-old son of Kumar and Eswari from Nadumalli tribal hamlet in Pudur panchayat has brought pressure on the Kerala government.

It is alleged that the operators were indulging in large-scale suppression of sales made in cash.

"The assesses of the group have been found to have sold immovable properties without duly accounting for the capital gains arising from such transactions," it said, adding that the group's estimated unaccounted income was about ₹200 crore.

The child, weighing 2.25 kg, was delivered through a C-section on Friday evening and was said to be healthy. However, the child was seen dead around 6 a.m. on Monday.

Addressing the media

here, Ugrahan said they would be taking part in the January 15 meeting, called by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha to discuss pending issues of farmer bodies like status of the committee on minimum support price and take a call on farmer organisations which decided to take an electoral plunge in the State Assembly polls.

BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) is one of the biggest farm bodies in Punjab. Its activists had camped at the Tilkri border when the farmers' strike against the Centre's farm laws was going on.

"We will neither support them (farmer bodies contesting polls) nor will we participate in the elections," said Ugrahan while clarifying its stand on the upcoming polls.

SSM leader Balbir Singh Rajeval on Sunday had ruled out the possibility of any tie-up with the AAP and said they would announce their candidates soon.

## 'Rajasthan budget should address structural issues'

Pre-budget consultation with civil society groups held

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**JAIPOUR**

A pre-budget consultation with the civil society groups in Rajasthan has thrown up the issues of livelihood, food security, right to health and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Social activists and development practitioners suggested that the budgetary allocations and schemes should be aligned to address the structural issues faced by focus sectors.

The state government's Finance Department took note of the suggestions made for catering to the needs of vulnerable sections through budgetary interven-



A long queue of women waiting for free foodgrains under PDS in Jaipur.

tions and driving economic recovery and growth while dealing with the pandemic.

Principal Secretary (Finance) Akhil Arora interacted with the representatives

of civil society and voluntary groups, while identifying the scope for making budgetary provisions for different sectors.

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International) secretary-general Pradeep S. Mehta said the State should accord the highest priority to increasing the employment and income generation opportunities.

The representatives of Suchna Evum Rozgar Adhikar Abhiyan made suggestions for strengthening the public distribution system, decentralisation of schemes for Dalits and tribals and streamlining of payment of social security pensions.

The IT Department said digital data was seized from

## I-T searches: ₹800 crore detected in A.P., Telangana

Firms engaged in real estate business

**DEVEESH K PANDEY**  
**NEW DELHI**

The Income-Tax Department's searches on three real estate developers in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have led to the detection of unaccounted transactions worth over ₹800 crore.

The groups are engaged in the business of land development and construction activities in Kurnool and other mofussil areas of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

"More than two dozen premises have been covered in the search operation spread over Kurnool, Ananthapuram, Kadapa, Nandyal, Bellary, etc.," said the agency.

The IT Department said

a specialised software application and other electronic gadgets.

During another operation against two groups engaged in quarry operation business, the agency searched over 35 premises in Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad and Kannur of Kerala.

It is alleged that the operators were indulging in large-scale suppression of sales made in cash.

"The assesses of the group have been found to have sold immovable properties without duly accounting for the capital gains arising from such transactions," it said, adding that the group's estimated unaccounted income was about ₹200 crore.

The child, weighing 2.25 kg, was delivered through a C-section on Friday evening and was said to be healthy. However, the child was seen dead around 6 a.m. on Monday.

## One more infant death in Attappady

**STAFF REPORTER**  
**PALAKKAD**

A newborn baby died at Government Tribal Spechi Hospital, Kottakkara, Attappady, on Monday.

The death of the three-day-old son of Kumar and Eswari from Nadumalli tribal hamlet in Pudur panchayat has brought pressure on the Kerala government.

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## Teachers stage protest near Telangana Minister's house

**Dharna against transfer of teachers**

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**HYDERABAD**

Mild tension prevailed near the house of Telangana Education Minister P. Sabita Indra Reddy at Shantinagar in Hyderabad on Monday as members of the Junior College Teachers Union staged a sit-in against allotment and transfer of employees and teachers taken up by the government.

The union demanded a judicial inquiry into the transfers, and suspension of Education Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultanai who played a key role.

The death of two women teachers in separate incidents on Sunday has agitated the teaching community. Some of them named fears

**Clean and fresh:** Ahead of the temple festival season in Kerala, elephant owners are particular about keeping the tuskers ready. An elephant getting a shower in a stream at Thirunallayi near Palakkad on Monday. ■ K. MUSTAFAH

that they were unjustifiably transferred to far off places and will never be able to come back to their native places.

The two deceased women were Pulyala Srimathi, 40, who died of cardiac arrest in Hanamkonda, and

Bethala Saraswati, 32, of Pallikkonda village, who ended her life as she felt her transfer was unjustified.

The Telangana Progressive Teachers Federation has claimed that nine employees

and teachers have died due to the arbitrary manner in which the allotments and transfers were taken up.

The government was indifferent to the pleas of the unions and the affected persons ever since it started implementing an order issued for the purpose since December 9.

The federation said the victims were mentally disturbed that they were not allotted to centres of their choice.

## Mekedatu: FIR against 30 Congress leaders

Charged with violating curfew norms

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**BENGALURU**

The Karnataka government, which was seen as not acting against the Congress' padayatra, a host of former Ministers, legislators, and a couple of film personalities, including 'Duniya' Vijay and Sadhu Kokila, and also veteran Congress leader and former Chief Minister M. Veerappa Moily have been named for violating the weekend curfew norms when they participated in the padayatra on the Sangama on Sunday that attracted thousands of participants.

While the Congress remained adamant about the padayatra, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the government would not differentiate between anyone on taking action.

## Man's severed head found at idol's feet

**STAFF REPORTER**  
**HYDERABAD**

A sense of shock prevailed at Gollapalli village in Nalgonda district of Telangana on Monday, when villagers found severed head of a man placed at the feet of Goddess Mahankali idol on the premises of a local temple.

Chintapalli police said locals reported the incident around 6.30 a.m.

According to the police, the man may be around 40 years. Clues team and a dog squad were pressed into service and searches were conducted in and around the village and on the highway for the torso, but there was no headway.

Lack of English medium education and absence of transport facility to reach the

Eswara Rao, who struggled during his college days, sets up school in his native village in A.P.

Nadukutidi Eswara Rao participating in the investiture ceremony of NER School of Excellence in Andhra Pradesh.

Government 20 km away at Nellirajapet, Nalgonda district of Vidazanagaram, Nadukutidi Eswara Rao to big at young age. In spite of Telugu medium background, he improved his English and com-

and became an industrialist by establishing his own firms, thanks to his vision and command over his subjects such as finance and accounting. He received many awards from the government and other organisations for service activities in his native place. However, all these achievements could not provide him satisfaction, owing to the delay in fulfilling his dream to ensure quality education for rural students.

The lockdown in 2020-21 provided him an opportunity to finalise his plans. As he was staying in his native place of Nadukutidipalem, near Ranasthalam, he contacted academicians on the establishment of the school. The initial response was not much encouraging from fa-



## Bugle for restraint

However adversarial, elections should not allow for a socially divisive campaign

The schedule for Assembly elections in five States announced by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on January 8 was along expected lines. Polling will begin in Uttar Pradesh on February 10 and end on March 7, spanning seven phases. The Manipur polls would be held in two phases and the Goa, Punjab and Uttarakhand polls in one. Given the size of the States and deployment of paramilitary forces, the ECI has split the polling into seven phases this time, as in the 2017 Assembly polls. In the U.P. elections, the ECI has stuck to its earlier pattern of starting with constituencies in the western part of the State first and then moving towards the east. Dismissing reports of the Bharatiya Janata Party asking for the phases to be from east to west, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra said that the polls would be held from west to east and that no party had made a demand during the ECI's visit to U.P. in December to change this. The farm protests have had more of an impact in western U.P. The announcement of the poll schedule also came with a total ban on physical campaigning till January 15 due to the COVID-19 pandemic entering its third wave. The ECI plans on reviewing the situation, including prevailing positivity rates in the States, before deciding on allowing any rallies after January 15.

Till then, candidates and parties have been encouraged to use online ways to reach out to voters, throwing a challenge to the election authorities on enforcing the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and monitoring expediency. Considering the fact that several emotive and controversial issues are at play, this is going to be a tough test for the ECI. It will have to reinforce its impartiality and rigour to ensure that the rules of the game are followed by all parties. Political parties must take special care to not only follow the MCC but also observe COVID-related additional restrictions on campaigning. Ruling parties both at the Centre and States have to bear an extra burden of ensuring that they do not misuse official machinery to influence the elections. Social media have made toxicity a low risk, high reward instrument of political campaigns, causing serious harm to social cohesion and national integrity. The breach of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security in Punjab took a political colour, but the issue must now be left to the Supreme Court which has decided to appoint a judicial commission to inquire into it. The substance and rhetoric of the campaign will be adversarial in a multiparty democracy, but they need not, and must not, be socially divisive. The elections must be a celebration of democracy, and not a threat to it.

## Boosting protection

Vaccination must be accompanied by COVID-appropriate behaviour

Nearly a year after India rolled out the COVID-19 vaccination programme, it began administering a 'precaution dose' – scientifically called a third or booster dose – to people above 60 years with comorbidities, health-care and frontline workers on January 10. On day one, about one million people received the booster shot. Though 98 million people above 60, 9.7 million health-care workers and nearly 17 million frontline workers have received the second dose as of January 9, the actual number of people in the three groups eligible to receive the booster dose will be lower. The reason: only those who have taken the second dose nine months or 39 weeks ago will be eligible to receive the booster shot. Also, among the elderly, only those with comorbidities will be eligible to receive the additional shot. The nine-month gap between the second and the booster dose is not based on any clinical trials but evidence of protection offered by natural infection lasting up to that period. The only data on homologous boosting of fully vaccinated individuals six months after the second dose comes from a study using Covaxin in 184 participants; Covaxin comprises 12.7% of the nearly 1.52 billion doses administered so far. But a sizable percentage of the fully vaccinated might have had a previous infection, increasing the level of protection and possibly the duration of protection that hybrid immunity offers. A booster shot in such people will confer greater protection against severe disease and death.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines currently being used for immunisation offers sterilising immunity, which completely prevents infection. Administering a booster dose will surely increase the level of neutralising antibodies but even that does not guarantee full protection from infection. The prime objective of COVID-19 vaccines, including the booster, is not to prevent infection but to only mitigate disease severity. If this was true even with the virus strain first identified in Wuhan, China, and all the vaccines that have been developed using this strain, the variants which have emerged later have highlighted the limitation of the COVID-19 vaccines currently available. Even if the variants have demonstrated increased ability to cause breakthrough infections among those who have received a booster shot, all the vaccines have been highly effective in stopping the disease from becoming severe and causing death. Till such time as a safe and highly efficacious intranasal vaccine that confers a very high level of protection against infection becomes available, even those who receive the booster shot cannot let their guard down. Since none of the booster doses has been developed using the variants that have emerged, the highly infectious Omicron variant with high immune escape capability can cause breakthrough infections. Hence, vaccines should not be seen as a silver bullet but must be used in combination with masks and other COVID-appropriate behaviour to drastically cut the risk of infection.

# The sail that Indian diplomacy, statecraft need

Striking the right balance between continental and maritime security will enable India's long-term security interests



D.B. VENKATESH VARMA

and geographical access as a form of domination, practised by China and other big powers. To meet this challenge, evolving an effective continental strategy for India will be a complex and long-term exercise.

### Some course correction

India's maritime vision and ambitions have grown dramatically during the past decade, symbolised by its National Maritime Strategy, the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative for the Indian Ocean Region and major initiatives relating to the Indo-Pacific and the Quad, in which maritime security figures prominently. This was perhaps an over-correction to the historic neglect of India's maritime power. It was also a response to the dramatic rise of China as a military power. It may also be a by-product of the oversized influence over our think-tank community of Anglo-Saxon strategic thinking, which has tended to emphasise the maritime developments of China's military rise more than others.

The U.S. is a pre-eminent naval power, even more so in the Indo-Pacific region, and defines its strategic preferences in the light of its own strengths. That said, maritime security is important to keep shipping lanes open for trade, commerce and freedom of navigation, resisting Chinese territorial aggression in the South China Sea and elsewhere, and helping littoral states resist Chinese bullying tactics in international relations. However, maritime security and associated dimensions of naval power are not sufficient instruments of statecraft as India seeks diplomatic and security constructs to strengthen deterrence against Chinese unilateral actions and the emergence of a unipolar Asia.

The Chinese willingness and capacity for military intervention and power projection are growing far beyond its immediate region. Its rise is not merely in the maritime domain. It is expanding on the Eurasian continent – its Belt and Road Initiative projects in Central Asia up to Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, undercutting traditional Russian influence, its gaining access to energy and other natural resources, and its dependency-creating investments, cyber and digital pe-



netration and expanding influence among political and economic elites across the continent. The American military footprint has shrunk dramatically on the core Eurasian landmass, though it has a substantial military presence on the continental peripheries. Bulwarks against Chinese maritime expansionist gains are relatively easier to build and it gains easier to reverse than the long-term strategic gains that China hopes to secure on continental Eurasia. Like Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality is key to the Indo-Pacific, centrality of the Central Asian states should be key for Eurasia.

### Border, connectivity issues

India's partition and the emergence over the past six decades of a persistent two-front threat from Pakistan and China set the stage for a tough continental dimension of our security. There is increased militarisation of the borders with Pakistan and China, with the Ladakh sector now increasingly looking like it will see permanent deployment on the Siachen Glacier. India has been subject for over five decades to a land embargo by Pakistan that has few parallels in relations between two states that are technically not at war. Connectivity means nothing when access is denied through persistent neighbouring state hostility contrary to the canons of international law.

Difficulties have arisen in operationalising an alternative route – the International North-South Transport Corridor on account of the U.S.'s hostile attitude towards Iran. It may appear strange that while we join the U.S. and others in supporting the right of freedom of navigation in the maritime domain, we do not demand with the same force the right of India to conduct interstate trade, commerce, and transit along continental routes – be it through the lifting of Pakistan's blockade on transit

or the lifting of U.S. sanctions against transit through Iran into Eurasia. With the recent Afghan developments, India's physical connectivity challenges with Eurasia have only become starker. The marginalisation of India on the Eurasian continent in terms of connectivity must be reversed.

### Where the U.S. stands

The ongoing U.S.-Russia confrontation relating to Ukraine, Russian opposition to future NATO expansion and the broader questions of European security including on the issue of new deployment of intermediate-range missiles, following the demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty will have profound consequences for Eurasian security. This comes against the background of an ongoing U.S. review of its global military commitments. While the U.S. had over 2,65,000 troops under its European command in 1992, it now has about 65,000. Even with the rise of China's military power, over the past decade, the U.S. which had about 1,00,000 troops in the early 1990s under what is now called the Indo-Pacific Command, currently has about 90,000 troops mostly committed to the territorial defence of Japan and South Korea. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) has undergone a major transformation during the last decade; it had about 1,70,000 troops a decade ago (related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan), but has less than 10,000 personnel now.

The bottom line is clear – the U.S. would be severely stretched if it wanted to simultaneously increase its force levels in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. Successive waves of post-Cold War NATO expansion only increased overall insecurity, with the potential to create for the U.S. the mother of all quagmires. A major conflict – if it erupts in Central Europe, pitting Russia, Ukraine and some European states – will stall any hopes of a substantial U.S. military pivot to the Indo-Pacific. Geopolitics may be fractured but always add up globally. Russia and China do not need to be alliance partners to allow for coordinated actions relating to Taiwan or Donbas, as such coordination would flow from the very logic of the strategic

conundrum that the U.S. now finds itself in. In the same vein, European NATO powers dependent on the U.S. can do only so much for strengthening security in the Indo-Pacific. Their engagement with the Indo-Pacific is welcome but we should not only be cognisant of the limitations of geography, obvious gaps between strategic ambition and capacity but also the inherently different standpoints of how major maritime powers view critical questions of continental security. India is unique as no other peer country has the same severity of challenges on both the continental and maritime dimensions.

### Be assertive about rights

Going forward, it is clear India will not have the luxury of choosing one over the other; we would need to acquire strategic vision and deploy the necessary resources to pursue our continental interests without ignoring our interests in the maritime domain. This will require a more assertive push for our continental rights – namely that of transit and access, working with our partners in Central Asia, with Iran and Russia (not that we have many other options), and a more proactive engagement with economic and security agendas ranging from the SCO, Eurasian Economic Union (EAU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). Stabilising Afghanistan is a necessity but not a sufficient condition.

Striking the right balance between continental and maritime security would be the best guarantor of our long-term security interests. But this will not be easy as we would need to work with different partners on different agendas even while their geopolitical contradictions play out in the open. India will need to define its own parameters of continental and maritime security consistent with its own interests. In doing so, at a time of major geopolitical change, maintaining our capacity for independent thought and action (namely strategic autonomy) will help our diplomacy and statecraft navigate the difficult landscape and the choppy waters that lie ahead.

D.B. Venkatesh Varma is a former Ambassador to Russia

## The rise of collaboratives for social impact

The emphasis on inclusion, equity and justice, and formal collaborations could make a mark in India's social sector



PRITHA VENKATACHALAM &  
AKSHAY GAMBHIR

In early 2020, The Bridgespan Group released a report, "Philanthropic Collaboratives in India: The Power of Many" (<https://bit.ly/3r7nU6>), that examined alliances between development sector actors – funders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governments. Those stakeholders bet that their combined funding, skills and assets would make the impact of collaboratives greater than the sum of their parts.

And, yet, at the time, India had few philanthropic collaboratives. This is no longer the case.

Co-created by three or more independent actors, including at least one funder, a philanthropic collaborative pursues a shared vision and strategy for social impact. In 2019, we studied 15 such collaboratives in India. Since then, at least 18 more collaboratives have come together. These include COVID ActionCollab, India Protectors Alliance, The Future of Impact Collaborative, and The Coalition for Women Empowerment.

Sixteen of these operate across

multiple States. Most focus on implementing social programmes and mobilising funding. Swasth, for instance, has created a one-stop tele-medicine portal, while ACT Grants pools financial resources for innovations in tackling COVID.

Collaboratives are also mobilising greater funding. The annual budget of the 13 collaboratives in 2019 ranged from ₹50 lakh to ₹50 crore. In comparison, multi-year financial commitments for eight of the new collaboratives range from ₹2 crore to ₹600 crore (budget data is not available for the other 10). At least three of them aim to raise about ₹100 crore.

There is growing emphasis on inclusion, equity, and justice. The new generation of collaboratives increasingly focuses on marginalised communities such as informal waste pickers, front-line workers, and migrant labour.

**Path to scaling**  
The devastation caused to lives and livelihoods by the novel coronavirus pandemic is clearly driving organisations to work collectively. Several partnerships now involve businesses, harnessing the power of private capital for social good.

Consider the Migrants Resilience Collaborative (MRC).

Soon after the nation-wide COVID-19 lockdown on March 24,



2020, the NGO Jan Sahas released the results of a survey that revealed the lockdown's disproportionate impact on migrant workers. Of the 3,196 migrant construction workers interviewed, a staggering 90% had lost their source of income and 62% were unaware of the Government's emergency assistance efforts.

India has approximately 140 million migrant workers. Jan Sahas' founder, Ashif Shaikh, concluded that the scale of the problem far outstripped the capabilities of any single NGO and necessitated collaboration. Jan Sahas, in partnership with EdelGive Foundation, Global Development Network and other organisations, launched MRC, whose goal is to facilitate relief for more than 10 million migrant workers across 13 States. More than 40 community-based organisations, 25 companies and industry associations, and three State governments have

partnered with MRC.

Although collaboratives can increase the odds of achieving outcome impact, collaboration is complicated. Building trust across multiple partners and balancing their priorities and the collaborative's goals can be challenging. In 2020, we found that it took several years for collaboratives to move from "coming together" – where they define their shared mission and strategy – to actually "working together" and delivering results.

This new crop of collaboratives is forming relatively faster. Of the 18 we examined, 15 are already "working together". No doubt, the pandemic has spurred collaboratives to raise funds and evolve swiftly. Equally important for MRC has been its credibility and clarity.

Since 2000, Jan Sahas has worked to end commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour, focusing on migrant workers from socially excluded communities; 90% of Jan Sahas' staff comes from the communities it serves. Jan Sahas could hence draw on a deep well of trust and relationships for MRC.

To ensure alignment of MRC's stakeholders, Mr. Shaikh drew up a list of "non-negotiable" goals: such as securing a minimum wage for migrant workers and ending exploitation of female workers. While there were some disagree-

ments among the partners, clarity on the "non-negotiables" ensured that they remained on the same page.

### Here to stay

Mr. Shaikh identified another factor, besides the pandemic, that is driving collaboration.

"Funding for NGOs, especially for community-based and grassroots organisations, has dropped significantly," he observed. "That is pushing small- and medium-sized organisations, particularly at the State and district level, to collaborate. They can then get strategic and financial support, and a platform to implement their programmes."

To be sure, as more NGOs and funders pool their resources and expertise, some start-up collaboratives will struggle to partner effectively and achieve collective impact. Still, given the significant increase in philanthropic collaboratives over the past two years, it is likely that formal collaboration between multiple stakeholders – including private business – is set to become a distinctive and lasting feature of India's social sector.

Pritha Venkatachalam, a partner in The Bridgespan Group's Mumbai office, heads the firm's market impact initiatives in South Asia. Akshay Gambhir is a case team leader in The Bridgespan Group's Mumbai office.



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### Governors and States

The observation of the writer page, "Some Raj Bhavans are on the war path", January 10 that the Governor must be mindful of being a friend and a guide to his government, is utopian in my view. Governors, who are essentially political appointees, are keen to display their loyalties to their masters, and do so by unnecessarily needing the State governments concerned, interfering in

day-to-day administration, etc. I am reminded of a remark by a former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Translated, it was: Goats do not tell tails and States do not need Governors!

A.R. RAMANARAYAN, Chennai

- One fails to understand the necessity for Governors. Most of them are political appointees who act at the behest of the ruling party at the Centre and are at loggerheads with the States concerned, interfering in

under Opposition rule. They live in sprawling Raj Bhavans and have very little to do with State administration. Their duties can easily be discharged by the Chief Justices of the State High Courts. It is high time Parliament abolished the gubernatorial post and reduced administrative flab.

NICHOLAS CHERIAN, Mumbai

- Those appointed Governors are expected to be learned persons of a high

intellectual calibre and great moral fibre. The post has become a parking place for politicians of the party in power at the Centre. That some Governors have made it their mission to give some States governments a tough time is of concern. The time has come to review the functions of the Governor.

KOSARAJA CHANDRAMOULI, Hyderabad

**Mediation**

Unless every lawyer acts as a mediator, the mediation law

which could be enacted will be of no effect. Before filing a case for a client in court, his lawyer should analyse whether there exists an element of settlement of the dispute with his client's opponent and advise the client accordingly. The law should be made such that unless dispute settlement possibilities are explored, no case in respect thereof should be permitted to be filed in court.

K. PRADEEP, Chennai

### Misused

It is unfortunate that there are reports of technology being used to foment violence and communal hatred. That youngsters are behind the use of such technologies, in some cases, is disheartening. The spread of hate and the ability to manipulate social media is having a detrimental impact.

SHARANYA BHATTACHARJEE, Siliguri, West Bengal

# Amendments that are unnecessary

Why a national database of registered births and deaths is not required



K. NARAYANAN UNNI

The Central government had invited comments on the proposed amendments to the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969 (RBD Act). One major proposal is to prepare a national database of registered births and deaths. This is intended to be used to update, for every birth and death, the databases created in accordance with many other laws, such as the National Population Register, voter list and Aadhaar database.

Under the RBD Act, it is the responsibility of the States to register births and deaths. State governments have set up facilities for registering births and deaths and keeping records. A Chief Registrar appointed in every State is the executive authority for implementation of the Act. A hierarchy of officials at the district and lower levels do the work. The Registrar General of India (RGI), appointed under this Act, is responsible for coordinating and unifying the implementation of the RBD Act.

#### Unnecessary provisions

Information registered births and deaths is now stored in State-level databases using a unified software in many States. This system enables citizens to easily obtain the required services. It also helps prevent fake registrations and errors. Birth and death registers also include some personal information about the child born, the child's parents, and the deceased. In addition, some information required for demographic studies is also collected during registration. This information is not included in the register and is used only to collate vital statistics.

On registration of a birth or death, the information can automatically go to the concerned authorities. However, one has to examine the need for each birth and death to be communicated to other databases. It may be important for a population register to get that information instantaneously. For other databases, it may be enough to get that information on a monthly or even annual basis. For example, the election authorities may



Salem Corporation organising a two-day special drive to register births and deaths at its office premises in 2010. • P. GOUMATH

require the list of deaths only once in six months or so for removing dead persons from the database. Cancellation of passports or driving licences on the death of the holder is not very important as they cannot be misused that easily.

In all cases where instantaneous updating is not necessary, the concerned databases should collect the information from the best source. Whether it should be collected from the birth and death database is an important question. The address in the birth and death database may be different from the current or permanent address of the mother or deceased. The mother may have gone to her parent's place for delivery and that address may have been recorded while admitting her in a hospital. Similarly, many people are admitted to hospitals in the city where they may have a temporary contact address. It is thus that gets recorded in the hospital and in the death register. So, some data item, like the Aadhaar number, is necessary to link the information with other databases.

In an ideal situation, a birth and death database need not interact with any database other than a population database. This is because a population database will have all the information, like date and place of occurrence of the birth or death and names of the parents/deceased, that may be required by other databases.

A proposal is to include the Aadhaar number, if available, as one

piece of information to be reported while reporting a birth or death, by amending Section 8 of the Act. This is an unnecessary amendment as the Aadhaar number can be included in the forms used for reporting births or deaths. Having already directed the States to include the Aadhaar number of the deceased in the death reporting form, it is not clear why it is necessary to amend the Act for its inclusion.

State governments maintain databases of births and deaths, some of which are manually done now. Information required for updating other databases for each birth and death can be directly given from the State-level database. Extracting part of the information therein to create a national database to be maintained by the RGI appears an unnecessary duplication and will only create an intermediate administrative layer without any value addition.

The databases maintained by the States now may not follow the same structure for various data items. I am not sure whether they all follow the same standard even for writing the names of individuals. For example, the names of many people in Kerala and Tamil Nadu have the name of the family and father's name preceding the first name of the person while many databases use the first name/ middle name/surname format.

The Central government should prescribe standards for data items in the birth and death database main-

tained by the State governments. This is necessary even if a national database of births and deaths is to be created. These standards should be common for other databases. This would make it easier to communicate information automatically to other databases. The cultural diversity across the country should be kept in mind while prescribing standards so that the citizens are not hassled later on.

There is a proposal that the RBD Act mention that information from the national database would be used to update the Population Register, Aadhaar database, passport database, etc. and that the birth and death certificates issued under this Act should be taken as evidence of date and place of birth for issuing Aadhaar cards, passports and driving licence, for enrolling in voter's list or for school admission. These are unnecessary provisions. The law for each of these databases can specify whether the information contained in the birth and death register should be used for a particular purpose. It may be noted that recently, the instructions regarding application for a passport contained a provision that only birth certificates issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths would be accepted as proof of date and place of birth.

#### Need to look forward

Activities relating to the registration of births and deaths have undergone a sea change in the last decade with computerisation. However, the law has not been amended to take care of this reality. There is a need for updating the law to take care of these and future developments. The proposed amendment falls short of this.

A bill was introduced in Parliament in 2012 to amend the RBD Act to include marriage registration in its purview and to make registration of marriages compulsory. It lapsed as it was not taken up by the Lok Sabha. The Law Commission examined the issue again and recommended in its Report No. 270 that the RBD Act may be amended for including marriage registration. Instead of going for another amendment for this purpose, it should have been taken care of within the current proposals.

K. Narayanan Unni is former Deputy Registrar General (Civil registration System). Email: knunni@gmail.com

# A BIT to review

The Committee on External Affairs' report on India and BITs has novel suggestions but is lacking in some aspects



PRABHASH RANJAN

guarding certain kinds of regulatory measures from ISDS claims rather than limiting BITs to specific sectors.

Third, the committee recommends that India's Model BIT be fine-tuned. This is welcome because the Model BIT gives precedence to the state's regulatory interests over the rights of foreign investors. However, the key question is, what trajectory will this fine-tuning take? The Model BIT should be recalibrated keeping two factors in mind: tightening the language of the existing provisions to circumscribe the discretion of ISDS arbitral tribunals that offer broad interpretations, and striking a balance between the goals of investment protection and the state's right to adopt bona fide regulatory measures for public welfare. The committee's report mostly concentrates on the first factor. If the Model BIT is tweaked with the sole motive to reduce arbitral discretion, it might result in further skewing the balance towards the host state's right to regulate. This would make it arduous for India to convince its potential treaty partners like the EU which already have misgivings about the Model BIT.

Fourth, the committee recommends bolstering the capacity of government officials in the area of investment treaty arbitration. While the government has taken some steps in this direction through a few training workshops, more needs to be done. What is needed is an institutionalised mechanism for capacity-building through the involvement of public and private universities that have competence in this field. The government should also consider establishing chairs in universities to foster research and teaching activities in international investment law.

#### Missed opportunity

A very large proportion of ISDS claims against India is due to poor governance. This includes changing laws retroactively (which led to Vodafone and Cairn suing India), annulling agreement in the wake of imagined scam (taking away S-band satellite spectrum from Devas), and the judiciary's fragility in getting its act together (sitting on the *White Industries* case for enforcement of its commercial award for years). The Committee could have emphasised on greater regulatory coherence, policy stability, and robust governance structures to avoid ISDS claims.

The government should promptly assemble an expert team to review the Model BIT. This team should involve critical voices because plural viewpoints can coalesce into an efficacious policy.

Prabhash Ranjan is Professor and Vice Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O.P.Jindal Global University. He appeared before the said Committee as an expert witness. Views are personal

#### STATE OF PLAY

## A hurried affair

The reallocation process of employees of different categories in Telangana has come under fire

#### M. RAJEEV

The process of reallocating employees of different categories to new local cadres that comprise seven zones and two multi-zones that were created after the reorganisation of districts in Telangana is turning out to be a controversial process. The employees are complaining that the process, being done in a hurried manner, has long-term implications for them. The government has initiated the process for reallocation three years after the Presidential Order – the Telangana Public Employment (Organisation of Local Cadres and Regulation of Direct Recruitment) Order – came into effect in 2018.



#### Seniority over nativity

A study of the Presidential Order indicates that emphasis has been laid on nativity. But the government has drawn flak for considering seniority over nativity. The Presidential Order of 2018, which replaced the old one of 1975, elaborates on the measures that should be followed for choosing local cadres. It says there should be "preference of the persons concerned for allotment to any local cadre when feasible," whereas the Government Order of December 6, 2021, directs the heads of departments to prepare lists of all the allocable employees as per seniority in each of the erstwhile local cadres for new local cadres. Close to two lakh employees, other than those working in the Secretariat and in the offices of the heads of departments like commissioners/directors, are likely to be affected by the reallocation process.

Several employees were given posting on an 'order to serve' basis consequent to the creation of 33 new districts in place of the 10 that existed at the time of the bifurcation of united Andhra Pradesh. There is no clarity on whether they will be allocated to the new local cadres based on seniority or nativity. Moreover, transfer of the employees to the new cadres is

also likely to affect the local status of their children as they would be considered non-normals in the new districts.

Most of the employees showed a preference for Hyderabad and districts like Ranga Reddy, Medchal Malkajgiri and Vikarabad. Several have opted to work in urban centres like Karimnagar, Khammam and Nizamabad but if they fail to secure posting in the State capital or surrounding areas, this will lead to a saturation of employees in these areas and will leave no scope for recruitment in the near future as vacancies will arise only in the remote areas.

Moreover, reallocation of employees to different districts, zones, and multi-zones is tantamount to issuing fresh appointment orders to them and not transfers, which would give them scope to return to their native places at least at some point in the future.

The preferences of employees are not being considered. Any appeal can be made only after they join duty in the new posting. Where is the guarantee that the government will consider employees' pleas once they give their joining reports," asked A. Padma Charly, honorary chairman of the Telangana Udyogya Sangam. He requested the government to appoint a political committee to hear the pleas of employees and resolve them before going ahead with the reallocation process.

The opposition parties have charged the government with harassing employees rather than solving their issues. BJP State president Bandi Sanjay Kumar, who staged a protest in support of the agitating employees, was arrested and sent to remand but was subsequently released. Telangana Congress president A. Revanth Reddy has also expressed his displeasure at the government and extended his support to the employees' cause. It is over to the government now.

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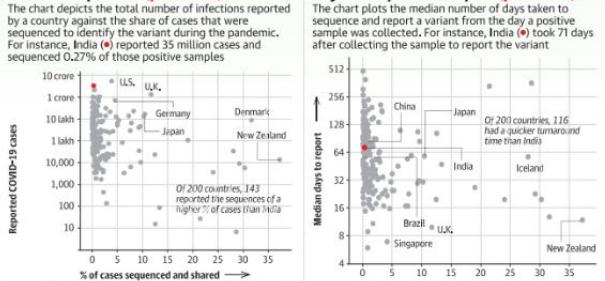
#### DATA POINT

### Variant of concern

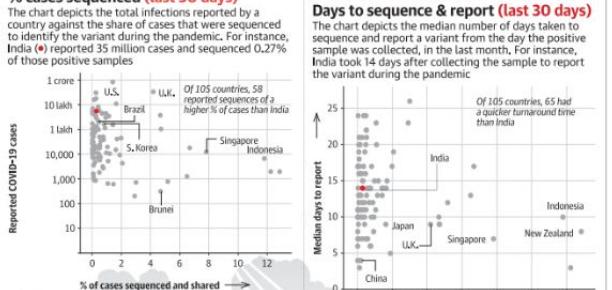
According to a PIB press release published on Monday, more than 1.79 lakh new COVID-19 cases were recorded in just 24 hours. The Omicron variant was identified as the cause for 4,033 cases cumulatively in India until Monday. What explains this small share of this variant in cases if India is in the middle of an Omicron wave? The number of Omicron cases is relatively low as only a small sample of cases is being sent to genome sequencing labs to establish the variant. According to GISAID, a portal that collects and shares genetic sequence data, India sequenced and reported less than 1% of its cases during this pandemic. Also, India took 71 days on average to sequence and report a variant from the day a sample was declared positive. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

**In the last 30 days** | In the last 30 days, India sequenced and reported less than 1% of its cases

**Days to sequence & report (pandemic)** | The chart plots the median number of days taken to sequence and report a variant from the day a positive sample was collected. For instance, India took 71 days after collecting the sample to report the variant



**% cases sequenced (last 30 days)** | The chart depicts the percentage of total infections reported by a country against the share of cases that were sequenced to identify the variant during the pandemic. For instance, India (red dot) reported 35 million cases and sequenced 0.27% of those positive samples



**Source:** GISAID

#### The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

#### FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 11, 1972

Mujib thanks Mrs. Gandhi

Dacca, Jan. 10: The Bangla Desh President, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, to-day expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, for her untiring efforts to secure his release. "There is no single big country which she did not approach for securing my release from Pakistani custody. Personally, I am grateful to her and will never forget it," said the Bangla Desh addressing a mammoth public meeting here. The Sheikh said: "On this day, I convey my heartfelt thanks, on behalf of the seven and a half crore people of Bangla Desh, to the Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, for what she, her Government and the people of India have done to help us in our deepest national crisis." He said despite its own difficulties, India gave shelter to one crore of Bangla Desh people. "For this I express my gratitude to Mrs. Gandhi and the Indian people." The Sheikh was all praise for the Indian Army, but for whom, he said "we could not have overcome the sufferings and oppressions at the hands of the Pakistani army so soon."

#### A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 11, 1922

Boys prisoners shot

A communiqué gives particulars of shooting in the juvenile jail at Bareilly. On 29th December last the inmates refused to work on the ground that Chaudabdal, a political prisoner, was removed from their midst. He was sent to the hospital in consequence of illness. Boys disregarded the Superintendent's order, broke open the warder's almirahs, took out tools and broke open locks and gates and attempted to scale outside the walls. The whole jail was out of hand and it became necessary to call up the guard. 15 shots were fired, several in the air. 8 boys were injured by gunshot wounds mostly in legs and nine with batons in the course of struggle with warders. One hundred and ninety boys were running in all directions and breaking open the gates, so that the situation could not be dealt with successfully by a few warders armed with lights only. Active boys would have been able to scale the wall if left to themselves. Gunshot wounds are not serious. Enquiry has been held by the District Magistrate who is convinced that no unnecessary violence was used. The facts showed that the boys were completely out of hand and this was due to the influence of political prisoners.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## COVID hospitalisations at 5-10%, says govt.

The Minister also advised States to regularly review health infrastructure strengthening, establish tele-consultation hubs in every district. Reiterating that the Centre is dedicated to supporting States in containing the pandemic, Dr. Mandaviya said the Centre had provided support under Emergency COVID Response Plan (EERP-II) for strengthening the health infrastructure nationwide. He urged States to prepare physical infrastructure and efficiently utilise the funds under EERP-II and asked the State Health Ministers to review the implementation of the Plan.

At the meeting, it was suggested that the operational status of infrastructure such as beds, PSA plants and oxygen equipment be filled in by States on the national portal.

States have also been told to review the buffer stock of essential medicines and ensure the shortages, if any, are replenished.

Stating that vaccination ensures low hospitalisation and severity of COVID, the Minister emphasised on administration of 'precaution dose' and urged States to ensure full coverage of the vulnerable population while asking to expedite full coverage of the eligible age group of 15-18 years at the earliest.

SC to set up panel to probe PM security breach

Punjab Advocate General D.S. Patwaria, at the start of the hearing, said the State feared it would not get a fair hearing. It said show-cause notices had been issued by the Centre to its officers, mentioning disciplinary action against them for the security lapse concerning the Prime Minister's convoy. The show-cause notices indicated that the Centre already considered Punjab's police officers *prima facie* guilty. This had been arrived at without any evidence or records, all of which had been seized on the orders of the apex court, he said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said there had been a severe lapse and "complete intelligence failure" on the part of the State. "When there is a complete breach, there is no question of hearing. Officers responsible are served with notice. There is an admitted fact of breach. This is a rarest of rare case," he said.

The court asked the Centre why the judiciary had been asked to intervene if the government had "presumed everything" already. "The impression you give is that we have presumed everything... Then why should the court go into all this?"

The former Minister's counsel D.S. Sobti said his client has been granted interim bail in the matter and would join the investigation into the drug case on January 12.

Mr. Majithia had approached the High Court after a local Mohali Court dismissed his anticipatory bail application in the case.

ducted into the party fold.

According to observers, Mr. Lobo's exit is in line with the BJP's strategem in this election of consolidating the Hindu majority bloc while sidelining the Catholic Christians. Last month, two minority BJP MLAs - Alina Saldanha and Carlos Almeida - quit the party to join the AAP and the Congress respectively. He was also seen campaigning for Kedar Nakl, probable Congress candidate from Saligao.

## Top court to urgently hear hate speeches case

The CJ asked whether any enquiry into the case was already on.

Mr. Sibal submitted, "FIRs have been filed, no arrests have been done. This is in the State of Uttarakhand. No action will be taken without the intervention of Your Lordship."

The CJ said, "We will look into this".

The hate speeches were allegedly delivered between

## Now, only takeaways at Delhi restaurants

In case of 40,000 daily cases, 2,000 patients would be in need of hospitalisation and 23,000 beds would be required. Daily cases rising to 75,000 would see 3,750 patients in need of hospitalisation and 45,500 beds in total.

In case of 1 lakh daily cases, 5,000 patients would need hospital beds, 5,000

would need oxygen, 1,000 would require ICU beds and 46,000 beds would be needed in total. In all five scenarios, patients would require to spend seven days on oxygen bags and as many as 18 days in ICU, if required.

As of January 10, there were 16,380 oxygenated hospital beds ready in 10,369 ICUs.

Some of the lawyers pointed out that the court had been hearing the dispute for the past two to three years. The Bench, however, ordered the court registry to file it before a Bench in which neither Justices Chandrachud nor Bopanna were members after getting the consent of the Chief Justice of India.

The hearing had been very

bitter battles among the States, with Telangana submitting that there was no information from Karnataka for the past 4 years about how much water it had diverted. In turn, Karnataka had argued that a lot of water was wasted to waste and there was a need to harness it for irrigation and to replenish dry regions.

## MHA seeks more time to frame CAA rules

Without the rules being framed, the Act cannot be implemented; the third extension expired on Jan. 9

## VIJAYA SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has sought another extension from parliamentary committees in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha to frame the rules of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, a senior government official said on Monday.

*The Hindu* reported on January 10 that the third and the latest extension expired on January 9 but the Ministry did not notify the rules.

An official in the Rajya Sabha confirmed that the MHA had made a request but no decision had been taken yet to grant the extension as the Chairman of the Committee on Subordinate



To the streets: Citizens staging protests against the CAA and the NRC in Chennai. ■ FILE PHOTO

Legislation Partap Singh Bajwa was travelling due to Punjab elections.

Without the rules being framed, the Act cannot be implemented. The committee in the Lok Sabha was understood to have granted the

extension in November last, an official said.

The committee chairman in the Lok Sabha is YSR Conrau Balashowry Vallabhaneni.

The MHA has to make separate requests to the two

committees.

Earlier, it had had sought time till April 9, 2021, and then July 9, 2021, from the committees to notify the rules, which are to be published in the Gazette of India.

## Three months

As per the Manual on Parliamentary Work, in case the Ministries/departments are not able to frame the rules within the prescribed period of six months after a law is passed, "they should seek extension of time from the Committee on Subordinate Legislation stating reasons for such extension" which cannot be more than three months at a time.

However, last time the ex-

tension was granted for six months.

The CAA was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019, and it received assent from the President on December 12. In January 2020, the MHA notified that the Act will come into force from January 10, 2020.

The CAA provides citizenship on the basis of religion to six undocumented non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. It exempts the members of the six communities from any criminal case under Foreigners Act, 1946 and Passport Act, 1920 if they entered India before December 31, 2014.

## ISYF behind hand grenade attack: police

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

The Punjab police on Monday claimed that they have solved the hand grenade attacks, including the one at Pathankot Army camp, by busting a terror module backed by International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF) group with the arrest of its six operatives.

Punjab DGP V.K. Bhawra

said that Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar police also re-

covered six hand-grenades,

one pistol, one rifle along with live bullets and magazines from their possession.

"Those arrested have been identified as Anand Singh alias Mantri of village Lakhnepur in Gurdaspur, Gurwinder Singh alias Gindi of village Kharal in Gurdaspur, Parminder Kumar alias Rohit alias Rohta of village Kharal in Gurdaspur, Rajinder Singh alias Malhi alias Nikku of village Gunnupur in Gurdaspur, Harpreet Singh alias Phokli of village Gottopur in Gurdaspur and Raman Kumar of village Ghazikot in Gurdaspur," he said.

In two instances, some unidentified persons had hurled hand grenades at Pathankot - one near Chakk-Piull on November 11, 2021, while another grenade attack took place outside Trikam Dwar, 21 km south of Army at Pathankot on November 21, 2021.

He said that during the preliminary interrogation, the accused revealed that they were in touch with self-proclaimed Chief of ISYF (Rode) Lakbir Singh Rode and his aides identified as Sukhneet Singh alias Sukh Bhikhariwal and Sukhpreet alias Sukhi for planning terrorist attacks.

## A walkathon against AFSPA +

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

Hundreds of Nagas took part in a two-day walkathon from Nagaland's commercial hub Dimapur to Kohima demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and justice for the 14 civilians killed by the security forces in Mon district in December 2021. The distance between Dimapur and Kohima is about 75 km.

R. Wetsah, a coordinator of the walkathon, said the participants adhered to the COVID-19 protocols while setting off for Kohima from Dimapur on Monday. They halted at Piphemra for the night and will resume the walkathon on Tuesday morning. "Many people joined along the way to convey their resentment over the AFSPA and displeasure at the extension of the draconian rule on December 30 for six more months," he said. Some of the participants are scheduled to submit a memorandum to the Centre through the Governor.

Police tracking other users of offensive app

## Forensic analysis of laptops under way

and trace all the members of the 'trad' group who were involved in selling the women online...we are using social media engineering and reverse tracking to identify their original accounts," a senior police officer said.

The officer said that since both Twitter accounts that were part of the group have been deleted, efforts are on to trace those accounts through digital footprints. "They used all kinds of names and aliases for their accounts...we will be able to successfully backtrack and trace the person through the IP address," the officer added.

The source said once all the group members are identified and traced, appropriate legal action will be taken and more arrests will be likely.

Officials had said Thakur was part of a 'trad' (radhama-hasaba) group on Twitter and Telegram, where members allegedly aired offensive views.

## India condoles victims of Kazakhstan unrest

It hopes for early stabilisation

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

## India

on Monday expressed "deepest condolences" for the victims of the civil unrest in Kazakhstan.

The former AIADMK Minister was arrested on Wednesday last in Karnataka and brought to Tamil Nadu in connection with a case of an alleged job scam.

Two separate FIRs were registered previously by the Virudhunagar police, following complaints. The alleged victims were promised jobs in State government departments, including in the State dairy cooperative Aavin.

Bhalaji held the milk and dairy development portfolio in the previous AIADMK government.

"India is closely following recent developments in Kazakhstan. We express our deepest condolences to families of innocent victims who have lost lives in the violence."

Arindam Bagchi

Spokesperson

Ministry of External Affairs

stan, we look forward to an early stabilisation of the situation," Mr. Bagchi said. The reference to "early stabilisation" shows that India is watching the developments from the point of view of Republic Day celebrations later this month, when the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, is expected.

## T.N. govt. allows Jallikattu in spite of surge in COVID-19 cases

Double vaccination and COVID-negative certificate must

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI

Despite the surge in COVID-19 cases, the Tamil Nadu government on Monday allowed the conduct of Jallikattu, Manjuvirattu and Vadamadu.

## Various restrictions

Only 50% of the seating capacity will be filled, and the number of spectators will be capped at 150 to ensure adherence to physical distancing norms.

The spectators are also required to produce certificates for two COVID-19 vaccines as well as a COVID-19 negative certificate, a government order issued by Chief Secretary V. Irai Anbu said. The GO.lad out the Standard Operating Procedure for conducting the events.

All department officials and event organisers should possess a double vaccination certificate and a COVID-19



Not more than 300 tamers will be allowed to take part. ■ FILE PHOTO

negative certificate. "Those living in other towns/cities are advised to watch the telecast and web-streaming of the Jallikattu events," the order said.

## ID cards

All tamers are to be issued with identity cards by the district administration after their registration at least three days before the event.

Bull-tamers without these identity cards are not to be allowed inside the arena.

After obtaining permission from the State government, the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules, 2017 and the restrictions imposed by the State government to contain the spread of COVID-19 should be complied with.

## SC grants T.N. time to justify former Minister's arrest

Rajenthra Bhalaji is accused of involvement in a job scam

## LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday granted the Tamil Nadu Police's "hurry" to arrest the former AIADMK Minister when his appeal was already pending in the apex court.

It is proper for your government to arrest him when the matter was pending before the Supreme Court?

Would heavens have fallen otherwise?" Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi asked the state government, represented by its Additional Advocate General V. Krishnamurthy.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India N.R. Ramana, posted to January 12 an appeal filed by Mr. Bhalaji, challenging the refusal of his anticipatory bail plea by the Madras High Court and his subsequent arrest on January 5.

In the previous hearing on January 6, the court had

questioned the Tamil Nadu Police's "hurry" to arrest the former AIADMK Minister when his appeal was already pending in the apex court.

The Bench had, in the last hearing, stayed all further orders against Mr. Bhalaji.

The former AIADMK Minister was arrested on Wednesday last in Karnataka and brought to Tamil Nadu in connection with a case of an alleged job scam.

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## Rahul reviews Goa poll plan with party seniors

No tie-up with Trinamool: Venugopal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday reviewed the party's preparedness for the upcoming Assembly polls in Goa with senior leaders including former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and party general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal.

Mr. Gandhi, who returned from abroad late on Sunday night, met the senior leaders to take stock of the situation where the party is hoping to emerge victorious.

For the 40 Assembly seats, the Congress has announced 15 candidates and formalised a tie-up with the Vijay Sardeas-led Goa Forward Party (GFP).

But the meeting assumes significance as it comes just days after Trinamool Congress Goa in-charge and Lok Sabha member Mahua Moitra said her party was ready for an alliance with the GFP and the Congress.

"The rumour in circula-



Rahul Gandhi

tion that a possible alliance with TMC was discussed by Shri @RahulGandhi today's meeting is completely baseless & untrue. We will put Goa back on the path to progress soon," Mr. Venugopal tweeted late on Monday after his meeting with Mr. Gandhi.

Responding to Ms. Moitra on Saturday, Mr. Chidambaram, the senior poll observer for Goa, had said the Congress was capable of defeating the BJP on its own but added, "If any party wants to support the Congress to defeat the BJP, why should I say no?"

Another BJP MLA joins SP in Uttar Pradesh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

In another addition to the Samajwadi Party in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, a sitting BJP MLA from Buduan district joined the party on Monday.

The BJP's Radha Krishna Sharma won the Bills Assembly seat in 2017. He had secured over 82,000 votes against the BSP's 55,091 and the SP's 50,848 in the last election.

Mr. Sharma follows MLAs Madhuri Verma (Brahairach) and Rakesh Rathore (Sitapur) to shift loyalty from the ruling BJP to the SP ahead of the Assembly election.

Another leader from the BJP, Shashank Tripathi of Prayagraj, also joined the SP on Monday.

Sonu Sood's sister joins Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
CHANDIGARH

Actor-philanthropist Sonu Sood's sister Malvika Sood on Monday joined the Congress, with Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi batting for her candidature from Moga for the February 14 Assembly polls. He added that the party's sitting legislator Harjot Kamal will be suitably adjusted.

Ms. Sood's joining will be a 'game-changer', said Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, who along with Mr. Channi, travelled to the Sood residence in Moga for her joining-in.

"It is very rare that a party (State) chief and the CM both have gone to someone's home to grant the honour, and she deserves it," said Mr. Sidhu. Sonu Sood and Malvika Sood met both, but the actor was not present when Ms. Sood joined the Congress.

Mr. Kamal, who is learnt to be not happy with the party backing her candidature, was also conspicuous by his absence.

**PARADIP PORT TRUST**  
**e-TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
Name of the work: "Improvement to Existing Road near Gate No. 1 area". EMD cost : Rs. 17,89,899/- Last Date and time of submission of Bid: 31.01.2022 up to 17:15 Hrs. For details please refer our Website : [eprocure/app](http://eprocure.gov.in/)  
Executive Engineer  
PPT/PR/138/2021-22, Dt.10.1.2022

## Cong. stalwart Masood switches to SP

Muslim leader from western Uttar Pradesh says only Samajwadi Party and its agenda can stop BJP

ANUJ KUMAR  
GHAZIABAD

In a major setback to the Congress, Imran Masood, the party's prominent Muslim face in western Uttar Pradesh, has switched camps and joined the Samajwadi Party (SP).

On Monday, after a massive show of strength, with supporters carrying him on their shoulders, Mr. Masood said, "We have decided to uproot the fascist government of the BJP, and only SP and its agenda of development can do it. Masood is not just a person. All my followers are reflections of Imran Masood. We will ensure that all the seven constituencies of Saharanpur go into SP's kitty," he said.

On his formal entry to the party, Mr. Masood said he would soon go to Lucknow and meet SP chief Akhilesh Yadav for further discussions. However, sources said he has already had one meeting with Mr. Yadav and Monday's announcement was a mere formality.

A former Independent MLA from Muzaffarabad [re-



Prominent face: Imran Masood with his supporters on Monday. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

named Behat after delimitation in 2008] Mr. Masood is the nephew of former Union Minister and political stalwart of the region Rasheed Masood. He has been advocating a Congress-SP alliance for some time, describing the latter as the only party

that can stop the BJP in its tracks.

Seen as a polarising figure after his alleged hate speech against Narendra Modi during the campaign for the 2014 general elections, Mr. Masood's move could have a major impact not only on the seven constituencies in Saharanpur but also on the neighbouring districts.

Also present at the meeting was Masood Akhtar, Congress MLA from Saharanpur Rural, raising speculations that he too might shift allegiance.

**Close to Gandhis**

Interestingly, Mr. Masood is considered close to Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Rahul Gandhi, with observers saying the party acknowledged his importance by making him a national general secretary of the All India Congress Committee and the AICC in-charge of Delhi.

At Monday's meeting, Mr. Masood said he had the utmost respect for the Congress leadership but added

that the party was not in a position to oust the BJP in the State.

It remains to be seen how the SP, which has not been highlighting its Muslim leaders like Azam Khan in these elections, would use Mr. Masood's skills. Observers said he might not contest the elections but his appeal among the youth could be used to strengthen the SP, which won only one of the seven seats in the 2017 elections, against not just the BJP but also the AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, who is gaining traction in the region.

In a related development, an FIR was lodged by the Saharanpur Police against Mr. Masood and nine others for violation of COVID protocol. Around 300 unidentified people have also been mentioned in the FIR.

Rajesh Kumar Singh, Superintendent of Police, Saharanpur, said the model code of conduct was in place and COVID 19 was on a surge. "Mr Masood had not sought permission for the meeting at his residence," he said.

Amarinder's party gets poll symbol

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Former Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh's recently formed political party, the Punjab Lok Congress, on Monday got the "hockey and ball" symbol for the February 14 Assembly elections.

In a letter to the Chief Electoral Officers of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, the Election Commission said it had decided to extend the concession of a common symbol to candidates of eight registered unrecognised parties. One of them, the Punjab Lok Congress Party, was allotted the "hockey and ball" symbol for use in all the 117 Assembly constituencies.

The former Congress leader had resigned from the party and floated the Punjab Lok Congress in November. In December, he announced that the Punjab Lok Congress would contest the polls in alliance with the BJP.

## No briefing, I called Channi: Priyanka

I was worried about PM's security

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday said she had called Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi after being "worried" about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's safety and the Chief Minister had not briefed her.

Following a comment from Mr. Channi that he had briefed Ms. Vadra about the security scare, the BJP had made it a political issue, questioning what was the "constitutional post" Ms. Vadra held that the Chief Minister had to brief her.

"If the Chief Minister had called me to brief me, then their [BJP] objection would have been right. I don't have any constitutional position."

The truth is when I saw on TV about the Prime Minister, I was very worried. I was very worried about the Prime Minister's safety and wanted to know from Channi if our government had faltered somewhere," Ms. Vadra told the Hindi TV channel *Aaj Tak* in an interview.



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

"I want to make it clear that Modiji is the country's Prime Minister and not of one party. His security is paramount to the country and to every citizen," she added.

The Congress leader said she should prioritise or take the issue of the Prime Minister's security lightly. "Our family has seen what happens when there is politicalisation of security," Ms. Vadra said.

Asked if there was any laxity from the part of the State government, she said, "I don't want to get into the details. Our government has given its version and now there is a Supreme Court inquiry."

## TELANGANA STATE HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

Door No. 15, Premises T-101, Public Gardens Road, Hyderabad, Telangana State - 500 004

File No. TS/HDC/LCP/2021/2030 Dated: January 11, 2022

**Letter of Invitation:** Telangana State Horticulture Development Corporation Limited (TS/HDC) invites tenders for the supply of various verticals of the erstwhile Mahabubnagar Cluster for value chain of Mango, namely:- a) Pre-production and Production ; b) Post-Harvest Management & Value Addition ; c) Logistics, Marketing & Branding.

TS/HDC invites interested and qualified tendering agencies to submit their proposals for implementation of Cluster Development Programme for erstwhile Mahabubnagar (Cluster) via online portal :- [www.hbdc.gov.in/OnlineApplication/Registration.aspx](https://www.hbdc.gov.in/OnlineApplication/Registration.aspx)

Interested tenders are requested to familiarise themselves with the terms and conditions of the bid document and the procedure for submitting the 'Call for Proposals' from the website: [www.hbdc.gov.in](https://www.hbdc.gov.in) and <https://horticulture.tsdc.tslc.in/TSHDCL/index.html>. Last date for submission of tenders is 10.03.2022. TS/HDC reserves the right to cancel the bid at any time and/or reject any tenders if the terms and conditions contained in the bid document without assigning any reasons thereto.

5th

V.C. & M.D.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU  
TAMILNADU MOTOR VEHICLES MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT,  
Velachery, Chennai - 600 042

In Tamil Nadu Motor Vehicles Maintenance tenders are invited during the month of January & February 2022, for the supply of new automotive batteries / tyres and approval of rate for tyre retreading for 2022-2023, coming under the maintenance purview of this department. The details regarding issuing of tender form, last date for submission of tender, opening date of tender, terms and conditions of tender may be viewed in the Government Website [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in)

Director,  
Tamilnadu Motor Vehicles Maintenance Dept.

DPR/01/187/Tender/2022

Tender No. 255/PR/01/2022/Tender/2022

Government of Kerala  
Published Tenders from 03-01-2022 to 09-01-2022

Stationery Department

Tender ID: 2022\_STV\_464962 \* Controller Of Stationery \* Supply of White Paper 70 gsm, A4 \* Closing Date: 19-Jan-2022 \* PAC: Ra18332160

Tender ID: 2022\_STV\_464968\_1 \* Controller Of Stationery \* Supply of Medium Paper 75 gsm, 86 cm reel \* Closing Date: 19-Jan-2022 \* PAC: Ra10734500

Tender ID: 2022\_STV\_465002 \* Controller Of Stationery \* Supply of Mapliflo Paper 75 gsm RA1 (61x86 cm) \* Closing Date: 19-Jan-2022 \* PAC: Ra12099937

Visit: <https://tenders.keralagov.in> for more details.

No.N01450/Jan/2022/PRD/N/13

## Test positivity rate in India climbs to 12%

Nearly 1.61 lakh new cases and 428 deaths reported in country, active cases surge towards 8-lakh mark

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India recorded nearly 1.61 lakh new COVID-19 cases on Monday, compared with 1.8 lakh infections on Sunday. The country also recorded 428 COVID-related deaths. The test positivity rate climbed to nearly 12%.

The figures are based on the State bulletins released until 9.30 p.m. on Monday. Jharkhand, Ladakh, Lakshadweep and Tripura had, however, not yet released data for the day.

The small decline in the case count could be due to a drop in the number of tests conducted on Sunday, the results for which were made available on Monday.

On Sunday, 13.52 lakh tests were conducted, compared with 15.63 lakh on Saturday and 15.29 lakh on Friday.

The cumulative tally stood at 3,58,55,477, with the num-



**Taking care:** Medical staff attending to patients at a COVID Care Centre in New Delhi on Monday. • R.V. MOORTHY

and Gujarat (236), according to the Union Health Ministry press release on Monday morning.

### 9,200 cases in Bengaluru

Karnataka on Monday reported 11,698 new cases, after 15,407 tests were conducted in the past 24 hours, taking the State's cumulative

### COVID-19

tally to 30,63,656. Of the new cases, Bengaluru Urban alone reported 9,221.

With four new deaths, the State's COVID-19 toll rose to 38,374. Karnataka now has an active caseload of 60,148 patients.

Odisha's daily case tally on Monday showed a marginal increase from that of the previous day and stood at 4,829, a jump of 2.43%. The number of Omicron cases detected so far is 103, with 28 more detected on Monday.

## Scanner on Amritsar airport lab after over 200 flyers test positive

They had arrived from Italy on two flights last week

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

After 250 passengers on two flights from Italy tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival at Amritsar last week, the pathology laboratory providing services at the airport is under scanner.

SpiceHealth, a healthcare company launched by the promoters of Spicejet, has been barred by the Amritsar airport from conducting tests "for a few days", and another agency has been contracted to provide these services.

"It was decided on Friday evening that their machines will not be utilised after they reported inconsistencies in 75 test reports. SpiceHealth will carry out technical investigations and share their reports with us after which we will decide the future course of action," V.K. Seth, Airport Director of Guru Ram Janmabhumi International airport, told *The Hindu*.

The official said the agency appointed in the interim



**Virus check:** A January 6 photo of passengers from Italy waiting to undergo COVID-19 screening at the airport in Amritsar. • AFP

had also run out of testing kits and the airport was in touch with the State health official to appoint another company from Tuesday.

Last week, on Thursday, 125 out of 170 passengers on a chartered plane from Rome tested positive on arrival at the airport. The following day, 150 passengers from another chartered plane also from Rome tested positive. Italy is among the countries identified as "at risk" by the Union Health Ministry and according to its guide-

lines, passengers from such countries have to be tested on arrival.

"In view of the alarmingly high positivity rate of passengers arriving on a flight from Italy, we have decided to conduct a detailed technical investigation and decontamination," a SpiceHealth spokesperson said in response to a query. It added that it continues to conduct tests at the departure terminal, and that its services had been suspended only at the arrival terminal.

A pushback, or tow tractor, helps to reposition an aircraft when it is at a parking stand and needs to prepare for a take-off.

There were 80 passengers onboard Air India's Mumbai-Jamnagar flight when the tow tractor caught fire. The incident happened at 11.30 a.m.

A pushback, or tow tractor,

Telangana logged 1,825 cases on Monday, after 70,697 samples were tested in the past 24 hours. One death was also reported on the day.

### Rising in Kerala

New cases continued to rise in Kerala, with the State logging 5,797 on Monday. A total of 45,691 samples were tested in the past 24 hours. However, daily hospitalisation remained more or less steady and the same was the case with ICU and ventilator occupancy. The State's active case pool stood at 37,736. Of these, 1,820 persons are being treated in hospitals across the State.

A total of 19 deaths which occurred in the past few days were added to the State's final list of COVID-19 fatalities. This apart, 147 deaths were added to the cumulative toll as part of the death reconciliation exercise.

Based on this monitoring, the requirement of healthcare workers and their availability/hospital facility wise must also be reviewed daily as was done during the second surge," Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter.

Appreciating that while various States and Union Territories initiated steps for the establishment of jumbo health facilities, field hospitals, temporary hospitals, among others, Mr. Bhushan said both infrastructure and human resources had their limitations.

The Ministry had suggested earmarking of different categories of beds in private clinical establishments for COVID care. "It must also be ensured that charges levied by such health facilities are reasonable and there is a mechanism to monitor and initiate action in cases of over-charging if any," Mr. Bhushan said in the letter.

Therefore, it was important to conserve healthcare workers by initiating staggering wherever possible and by restricting elective procedures in the hospitals, he advised.

It was also important to strictly follow the advisory,

## Keep daily watch on COVID situation, Centre tells States

'Ensure charges levied by health facilities are reasonable'

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday directed the States and the Union Territories to keep a daily watch on the number of active COVID-19 cases, those under home isolation, hospitalised cases, occupied oxygen and ICU beds and those on ventilatory support, saying the "situation is dynamic and may change rapidly".

"Based on this monitoring, the requirement of healthcare workers and their availability/hospital facility wise must also be reviewed daily as was done during the second surge," Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said in a letter.

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It was also important to strictly follow the advisory,



**On call:** A healthcare worker at a 24/7 COVID-19 counselling centre in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday. • SANDEEP SAXENA

issued by the Union Health Ministry on January 9, for managing healthcare workers in basic Care and management at COVID Care Centres. The Health Secretary also suggested requisition of additional ambulances or private vehicles to improve referral transport and facilitate seamless transfer of COVID-19 cases from home isolation or from COVID Care Centres to COVID Dedicated Hospitals.

All district hospitals and medical college hospitals should be used as eSanjeevani teleconsultation hubs. Requisite financial resources for this have already been provided under ECRP-II, Mr. Bhushan said.

The Ministry had suggested engaging retired medical professionals or MBBS students for teleconsultation services

## Test only if contacts of confirmed cases are high-risk, says ICMR

and providing skill training of community volunteers in basic Care and management at COVID Care Centres. The Health Secretary also suggested requisition of additional ambulances or private vehicles to improve referral transport and facilitate seamless transfer of COVID-19 cases from home isolation or from COVID Care Centres to COVID Dedicated Hospitals.

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The ICMR had suggested engaging retired medical professionals or MBBS students for teleconsultation services

and obesity. Also individuals undertaking international travel (as per country-specific requirements) may be tested.

For hospitals, the ICMR directed that no emergency procedure should be delayed for lack of a test, and patients should also not be referred to other facilities for lack of a testing facility.

In another important indication, the ICMR said asymptomatic patients undergoing surgical or non-surgical invasive procedures, including pregnant women in/near labour who are above 60 years of age and individuals with co-morbidities such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic lung or kidney disease, malignancy

develop. It added that patients discharged after home isolation or patients being discharged from a COVID-19 facility need not be tested.

The ICMR said the advisory was generic in nature and could be modified as per the discretion of the State health authorities. "Testing can be undertaken either through RT-PCR, TrueNat, CBAAT, CRISPR, RT-LAMP, Rapid Molecular Testing Systems or through Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)," it said.

A positive point-of-care test (home or self-test/RAT) and molecular test is to be considered confirmatory without any repeat testing, it added.

## SC reinstates its order extending the window for filing appeals

### LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday took into consideration the rising COVID-19 cases to bring back its *suo motu* direction extending the limitation or the time period within which litigants ought to file appeals in the top court.

Last year, the court had invoked its extraordinary

### LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

powers under Article 142 to extend the limitation period for filing appeals from courts or tribunals on account of the pandemic. The court had later on ended this arrangement, keeping in mind the improved situation and the fact that courts had started functioning.

For their survival, Justice L. Nageswara Rao addressed the West Bengal government counsel.

The Uttarakhand government counsel said a meeting would be held on Monday on the issue. He submitted that Aadhaar and voter ID cards were being distributed and 32,984 workers were being given dry rations.

"We realise that your State is going to elections, but that does not mean you cannot file an affidavit," Justice Rao said.

The court gave the States two weeks to file separate affidavits. Previously, the court had directed the States and the Union Territories to immediately start the process

of issuing voter ID, Aadhaar and ration cards to sex workers across the country. It had declared that every person was entitled to basic rights regardless of his or her vocation.

The court had also found that its directions a decade ago to provide sex workers with ration cards was not complied with yet.

## SC questions Bengal, U.P. on ration for sex workers

### LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday pulled up States such as West Bengal and poll-bound Uttar Pradesh for not filing affidavits on whether they are giving dry ration to sex workers, especially in the light of the third wave of the pandemic.

"This is serious... This is

### SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

### Solution to puzzle 13450

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

B	A	C	E	D	F	G	H	I
H	I	E	D	C	B	A	F	G
G	F	B	D	A	C	I	E	H
D	C	I	E	H	F	G	B	A
I	H	F	D	B	C	A	E	G
F	I	D	B	G	A	C	H	E
B	E	G	C	A	D	H	F	I
E	C	A	H	I	D	B	G	F
A	G	H	I	F	E	C	D	B

### FAITH

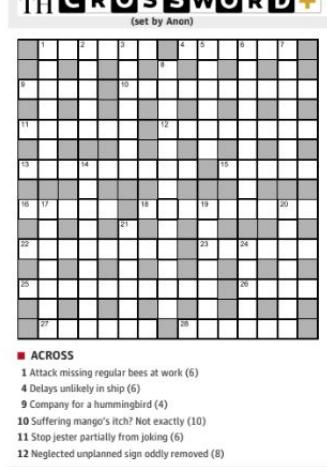
## King among ascetics

Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam gave the name Ramanujar darshana to Visishthadwaita, in honour of Ramanujacharya, who was responsible for giving the philosophy a strong foundation. Manavala Mamunigal, in his Upadesa Ratnamala, points to this, said P.T. Seshadri, in a discourse.

One of the Acharyas of Ramanuja was Thirukkothiyur Nambi, who said Visishthadwaita should be called Ramanuja darshana. When Ramanujacharya gave up grihaastaram and became a sanyasin, Lord Varadaraja of Kancheepuram gave him the name Yatiraja. His devotees have referred to him as Yatiswara, Yatisvarabhauma, Yatiyogapathi, Yatinupati, Yatichakravarthi, Yatipurandara and Yateeswaras Saraswathi.

Yatiraja means the king among sanyasis. Candamardanayagam Kalpa explained the reason for this title. Bodhayana Agama text, to show why festivals are observed for Ramanuja on the same scale as that for the Lord Himself. That is why Ramanuja is Yatiraja, the king among ascetics.

Acharyas who came after Ramanuja have written works in praise of him, all of which use the name Yatiraja given to him by Lord Varadaraja. Thus we have works like Yatiraja Andandi, Yatiraja Saptati, Yatiraja Vimsati, Yatiraja Vijayan, Yatiraja Ashtaka, Yatiraja Dandakan, Yatiraja Dinacharya, Yatiraja Vaibhava Deepika etc. Ramanuja is also known as Bhashyakara, a title given to him by Goddess Saraswathi for his outstanding commentary on sage Vyasa's Brahma Sutra.



## Suu Kyi sentenced to 4 years in prison

Charges include illegal possession of walkie-talkies; ousted leader faces a total six-year prison term

REUTERS  
YANGON

A court in military-ruled Myanmar sentenced on Monday ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four years in jail on charges including possession of unlicensed walkie-talkies, a source familiar with the proceedings said.

The latest sentencing in legal proceedings that rights groups have criticised as a "farce and a courtroom circus" means she faces a six-year jail term after two convictions last month.

She is on trial in nearly a dozen cases that carry combined maximum sentences of more than 100 years in prison. She denies all charges.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi, 76, appeared calm when the verdict was read out on Monday in a court in the capital, Naypyitaw, said another source with knowledge of the court proceedings.



Latest blow: A file photo of Aung San Suu Kyi. • REUTERS

Mrs. Suu Kyi was detained on the day of the February 1 coup and days later, police cast six illegally imported walkie-talkies were recovered during a search of her home.

The court handed her a two-year sentence for breaching an export-import law by possessing the handheld radios and one year for having a set of signal jam-

mers. The two sentences will run concurrently, said the source.

She was also sentenced to two years on another charge of breaching a natural disaster management law related to coronavirus rules, the source said.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the coup against Mrs. Suu Kyi's democratically elected government led to

widespread protests and signalled the end of 10 years of tentative political reforms that followed decades of strict military rule.

On December 6, she received a four-year jail sentence for incitement and breaching coronavirus rules.

That sentence, which was later reduced to two years, was met by a chorus of international condemnation.

Rights group Amnesty International said on Twitter on Monday the new convictions were "the latest act in the farcical trial against the civilian leader".

Called for her release along with thousands of others "unjustly detained" since the coup.

**'Secretive trial'**  
Mrs. Suu Kyi's supporters say the case against her are baseless and designed to end her political career and leave the military free to wield

power untrammeled by any challenge.

The junta says Mrs. Suu Kyi is being given due process by an independent court, led by a judge appointed by her own administration. A spokesman for the military council could not be immediately reached for comment. Her trial has been closed to the media and Ms. Suu Kyi's lawyers have been barred from communicating with the media and public.

The military has not disclosed where Ms. Suu Kyi, who spent years under house arrest under a previous military government, is being detained.

"The Myanmar junta's courtroom circus of secret proceedings on bogus charges is all about steadily piling up more convictions ... so that she will remain in prison indefinitely," Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said.

**'soon'.**  
During a video-conference of leaders from several ex-Soviet countries in a military alliance that sent in the troops, Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin confirmed they would leave as soon as their mission ended.

The Central Asian country has been left reeling in the wake of the worst violence in its recent history, but life in Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty appeared to be returning to normal on

institutions and the seizure of power. It was an attempted coup d'état," Mr. Tokayev said.

The Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) has deployed just over 2,000 troops and 250 pieces of military hardware, the Kazakh leader said, vowing that the detachment would leave the country "soon".

"As of January 10, 7,939 people have been detained," the Interior Ministry said in a statement.

Some have voiced concerns that Moscow could leverage the mission to shore up its influence in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan, with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warning last week that "once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave".



Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

Monday, with Internet coverage restored as the nation observed a day of mourning for dozens killed in the clashes.

Mr. Tokayev told the video-conference that "armed militants" had used the backdrop of protests to try to seize power.

"The main goal was obvious: the undermining of the constitutional order, the destruction of government

institutions and the seizure of power. It was an attempted coup d'état," Mr. Tokayev said.

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"The Central Asian country has been left reeling in the wake of the worst violence in its recent history, but life in Kazakhstan's largest city Almaty appeared to be returning to normal on

In Iran, Taliban hold talks with rival group

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
KABUL

Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers held talks over the weekend with senior leaders of an anti-Taliban alliance, the Taliban said on Monday. The meeting, held in Tehran, was the first of its kind, underscoring Taliban efforts to bring their former opponents into the fold.

During the meeting, the alliance leaders were told they could return to Afghanistan and were promised their safety would be guaranteed, Taliban-appointed Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said in a short video released on Monday.

The alliance, known as the National Resistance Front, is led by Ahmed Massoud, the son of the anti-Taliban fighter Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was assassinated in 2001. The group coalesced after the Taliban swept into Kabul in mid-August as the Afghan government fled.

In December 2021, the Co-

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

No "third party" should interfere in China-Sri Lanka ties, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said, during his recent visit to Colombo, while also proposing a forum for Indian Ocean island nations.

During his nearly 24-hour visit to Colombo, where he met the Sri Lankan leadership, Mr. Wang spoke of the "friendly relationship" between China and Sri Lanka that "benefits the development of both countries and serves the fundamental interest" of both peoples, a statement issued by the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Monday. "It does not target any third party and should not be interfered with by any third party."

The cooperation and strategic mutual trust between the two countries have injected positive energy into regional peace and stability," according to the readout from Beijing.

His visit came at a time when Sri Lanka is battling a severe economic crisis of a repeating dollar crunch, soaring living costs and a shortage of essentials in the import-reliant island nation. Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa urged China to restructure Sri Lanka's debt, and help the country cope with the economic strain.



Wang Yi with Gotabaya Rajapaksa in Colombo on Monday. • TWITTER

**Rubber-rice pact**  
Mr. Wang was on a brief official visit to Sri Lanka – as part of a five-nation tour in the New Year – to launch celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the historic Rubber-Rice Pact, and the 65th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and China.

His visit came at a time when Sri Lanka is battling a severe economic crisis of a repeating dollar crunch, soaring living costs and a shortage of essentials in the import-reliant island nation. Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa urged China to restructure Sri Lanka's debt, and help the country cope with the economic strain.

**FTA talks**  
According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Mr. Wang said the two sides should make good use of "the two engines", referring to the \$1.4 billion China-backed Colombo Port City in Colombo, and the Hambantota Port in the island's Southern Province. He urged Sri Lanka to "tap the opportunities" of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) talk.

Another aspect of Mr. Wang's bilateral discussions in Colombo, which was not captured in local statements or media, was his proposal for a "forum on the develop-

ment of Indian Ocean island countries" to build consensus and synergy, and promote common development.

Mr. Wang, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, told the Sri Lankan leadership: "During my visit to several Indian Ocean island countries this time, I feel that all island countries share similar experiences and common needs, with similar natural endowment and development goals, and have favorable conditions and full potential for strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation," while proposing the forum that sounded similar to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative.

New Delhi would watch any regional forum with interest, amid its own efforts. Last year, a Secretariat for Trilateral National Security Advisors (NSA) on Maritime Security Cooperation among India, Maldives and Sri Lanka was set up in Colombo.

Eight children among 17 dead in U.S. building fire

32 hospitalised with grave injuries

REUTERS  
NEW YORK

Seventeen people were killed, including eight children, and dozens were injured from an apartment building fire in The Bronx borough of New York City on Sunday, according to city officials.



Smoke rising from an apartment building fire in New York City. • REUTERS

suffered from smoke inhalation. "Members found victims on every floor in stairwells and were taking them out in cardiac and respiratory arrest," he said.

"Some 200 firefighters helped put out the blaze, and some ran out of oxygen in their tanks but pushed through anyway to rescue people," Mr. Adams said.

Ugandan children back to school after two years

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
KAMPALA

Uganda ended the world's longest school closure on Monday, ordering millions of students back to the classroom nearly two years after learning was suspended because of the pandemic.

Students poured through school gates that had been shuttered in March 2020

when COVID-19 swept the globe, greeting teachers and friends after 83 weeks outside the classroom.

Education Minister John Muyingo said all primary and secondary students would automatically resume classes a year above where they left off, and urged schools to follow health protocols.

After more than seven hours of talks in Geneva with Russian Deputy Foreign Mi-

nister Sergei Ryabkov, Ms. Sherman said the U.S. was ready to meet again, but that Russia had not offered assurances that it will pull back forces amassed near Ukraine.

Ms. Sherman declined to give full details but said the U.S. made proposals on missile placement and said it was "open to discussing the future of certain missile systems in Europe" along the

lines of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, from which ex-President Donald Trump withdrew.

"We are also open to discussing ways we can set reciprocal limits on the size and scope of military exercises and to improve transparency about those exercises – again, on a reciprocal basis," she said in a telephone press briefing.

If Russia invades, "there will be significant costs and consequences, well beyond what they faced in 2014," when Moscow seized the Crimean peninsula and backed an insurgency in eastern Ukraine, she said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Ryabkov said, "We explained to our colleagues that we have no plans, no intentions to attack Ukraine... There is no reason to fear any escalation in this regard."

**U.S., Russia hold key dialogue on Ukraine**

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman said on Monday that she offered to make reciprocal moves with Russia on missiles and exercises to de-escalate tensions but renewed warnings of major costs if Moscow invaded.

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nister Sergei Ryabkov, Ms. Sherman said the U.S. was ready to meet again, but that Russia had not offered assurances that it will pull back forces amassed near Ukraine.

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At Golden Globes, Power of the Dog, West Side Story win top film prizes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LOS ANGELES

The Power of the Dog and West Side Story on Sunday won the top film prizes at an untelevised Golden Globes that was largely ignored by Hollywood, with awards unveiled via a live blog without the usual A-list glamour.

Jane Campion's dark Western The Power of the Dog became only the second film directed by a woman to win the best drama prize. The film also won for best director and best supporting actor for Kodi Smit-McPhee.

Steven Spielberg's West Side Story remake claimed top honours for best picture, comedy or musical, as well as lead and supporting actress prizes for stars Rachel Zegler and Ariana DeBose.

Will Smith and Nicole Kidman won the prizes for best actor and actress in film dramas for their turns in King Richard and Being the Ricardos.

This year's ceremony was held behind closed doors.

The awards, which are usually closely followed for the imme-

diate boost to box office tallies and Oscar hopes, were hugely overshadowed by a long-brewing row over ethical lapses by the organisers.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, a group of 100-odd entertainment writers with links to foreign publications, has been accused of a litany of failings from corruption to racism.

This year, NBC scrapped its broadcast, the HFPA did not offer a live stream, and the event failed to take off on Twitter.

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# Teams set for high-stakes clash against a fascinating backdrop

Kohli, who has recovered from back spasm, is set to lead India in the decider; Ishant likely to replace the injured Siraj; weather forecast for the Test is good

## INDIA IN SA

S. DINAKAR  
CAPE TOWN

Can the Table Mountain, that forms a fascinating backdrop to the Newlands ground, inspire the Indians to conquer a peak? Winning India's first ever Test series in South Africa.

Skipper Virat Kohli has recovered from his upper back spasm and will lead India in the decider - it is I-1 after two Tests - of the Freedom series, beginning here on Tuesday.

The weather forecast for the Test is good. And a draw is unlikely. The Newlands pitch should encourage pace bowlers. There will be seam movement and bounce.

Winning the toss and braving it out in the first session, putting up a total beyond 300, and then applying pressure as the pitch deteriorates is a viable play for a victory.

If India, losing the toss, is forced to field, then its pacers have to bowl in the right channels and dismiss South Africa inside 225.

With the injured Mohammed Siraj set to miss the Test, India will have to choose between Ishant Sharma, who brings with him an off-stump line and bounce, and Umesh Yadav, a skiddy, faster bowler with two-way movement. Ishant is likely to get the nod.

Once again, a good start is vital for India against a probing South African pace attack. Much hinges on the opening

partnership between K.L. Rahul and Mayank Agarwal. If they put up a sizeable stand as in the first Test, negating the Kookaburra ball's early threat, South Africa could be chasing the game rather than controlling it.

The confidence shown by Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane in the second innings at the Wanderers will be comforting for India ahead of a big game. The side needs runs from its skipper and Kohli will be itching to contribute. He requires to be tight around off and not play across incoming deliveries.

### Conversation

Kohli said the Indian team-management had a conversation with Rishabh Pant regarding stroke selection during training. India wants this explosive southpaw to fire but do judiciously.

India has a pace attack that can hurt line-ups but Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami will have to get their radar right. Shardul Thakur is a tricky bowler with bounce and movement.

There could be a role for off-spinner R Ashwin if the pitch deteriorates. He lends depth to the batting too.

South Africa's inspirational skipper, the left-handed Dean Elgar, will be a stumbling block for the Indian bowlers.

And Aiden Markram, a compelling shot-maker, is finding some form. There is, finally, a shape to the Proteas

batting. Keegan Petersen is a compact and attractive batsman at No. 3. Rassie van der Dussen is a batter with grit and shots of either foot.

Temba Bavuma is an effective striker of the ball with a reasonable defence. And wicket-keeper batter Kyle Verreynne has a decent technique.

Then there is the four-paced pace attack of Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Marco Jansen and Duane Olivier. These pacemen are capable of making serious inroads and the hostile Rabada has rediscovered his mojo. In such a high-pressure face-off, the team that makes the least mistakes carries the day.

### Teams (from):

INDIA VS SOUTH AFRICA IN CAPE TOWN TESTS			
Tests	India	SA	Drawn
5	0	3	2
1993	Drawn		
1997	South Africa won by 282 runs		
2007	South Africa won by 5 wickets		
2011	Drawn		
2018	South Africa won by 72 runs		

TOPPING THE CHARTS* AT CAPE TOWN		SOUTH AFRICA AT NEWLANDS	
Batting	India	South Africa	
vs South Africa	vs India	Overall	
Most runs	Ashwin (49, 2 Inns)	Maharaj (50, 2 Inns)	Elgar (70, 18 Inns)
Highest	Ashwin (37*, 2018)	Maharaj (55, 2018)	Elgar (747 n.o., 19/Aus., 2018)
Bowling	India	South Africa	
vs South Africa	vs India	Overall	
Most wickets	Shami (4, 2 Inns)	Rabada (5, 2 Inns)	Rabada (5, 12 Inns)
Best bowling (Innings)	Shami (3/8, 2018)	Rabada (3/44, 2018)	Rabada (6/25 vs SL, 2017)

\*Players from the current squads

## The Newlands challenge

India will head into the decider looking for its first Test victory at Cape Town and maiden Test series triumph in the Rainbow Nation



### INDIA VS SOUTH AFRICA IN CAPE TOWN TESTS

Tests	India	SA	Drawn
5	0	3	2
1993	Drawn		
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### WHEN INDIA PLAYED THE FINAL TEST OF A SERIES AT CAPE TOWN

JANUARY 1998: Trailing 0-1 in the four-Test series on its maiden tour of South Africa, India could only manage a draw in the decider. Jasprit Simhadri (25/5, 4/33) was the Man-of-the-Match, but his efforts couldn't impact the final result. South Africa visitors finished at 29 for one chasing a target of 215

JANUARY 2000: It was 1-1 when India landed at Newlands, having won the first Test and losing the second. Vinay Jaffer's 116 first-class career was over and they also took a 4-inn lead. But India was blown away for 169 in its second visit and missed a golden opportunity to win the Test and series

JANUARY 2011: The momentum was with India as it had squared the series 1-1. They were set to avert the reverse in the first, Gambhir (93), Tendulkar (146) and their 169-run alliance for the third wicket gave India a slender two-run lead over South Africa. Virat Kohli (161, 5/64, 5/14), Despite Harbhajan's seven for 120, the Proteas' rally on Day 4 was beaten off by 11 runs. The final group of the year was 165 for three (Gambhir 64) when stumps were drawn. It remains India's only drawn series in South Africa

JANUARY 2018: It was 1-1 when India landed at Newlands, having won the first Test and losing the second. Vinay Jaffer's 116 first-class career was over and they also took a 4-inn lead. But India was blown away for 169 in its second visit and missed a golden opportunity to win the Test and series

COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN AND G. PRASAD

I don't need to prove anything to anyone: Kohli

S. DINAKAR  
CAPE TOWN

Virat Kohli, declaring himself fit for the decider, said he doesn't look at himself through the lens that the outside world looks at him with.

Kohli said he asked himself the toughest questions, followed a rigorous process and led with passion, aggression and intensity, so that it rubbed off on teammates. "You have to be hungry for success," he said.

Kohli, searching for runs, said, "This is not the first time that I am going through such a phase. It happened to me in England."

Kohli said he took a lot of pride in playing for and leading India. "I don't need to prove anything to anyone. I am following a process and run with it."

Kohli said the form shown by veterans Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane in the second session at the Wanderers gave the team confidence. "In crunch moments you need experience."

Asked about transition with young batters Hanuma Vihari and Shreyas Iyer walking in the wings, Kohli said, "Transition cannot be forced on a team. It has to happen naturally."

The topic shifted to Rish-



Pujara and Rahane... experience counts.

abb Pant, and Kohli said, "Yes we had a conversation with him regarding stroke selection during the practice session. He is young, talented and will find a way."

Kohli said he has been recovering from a hamstring strain, will not play the third Test.

He added, "The pace bowling has been driving this team for the last seven years. It is difficult to leave out or pick someone. There is so much depth."

Queried whether India missed Ravindra Jadeja, Kohli replied, "Ash (Ashwin) has been doing a fabulous job ever since the Australia tour with the ball and bat. Either Ash or Jadeja, both are very good."

The topic shifted to Rish-

## Fit and ready to go: Elgar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CAPE TOWN

Dean Elgar confidently declared "Everyone is fit and ready to go. And the guys are extremely hungry."

Abouted a possible South African victory in the decider, the South African skipper said, "It will be huge for our cricket, one of our greatest triumphs ever."

Elgar was pleased with the contributions made by Aiden Markram and the Sossies van der Dussen in the second Test.

Elgar said he was not keen on making changes keeping the team balance in mind. "The top six batters have to take responsibility. Marco Jansen at No. 7 has shown he can bat."

The South African cap-



Jansen. • GETTY IMAGES

tain said he was awaiting Kagiso Rabada's 50th Test. KG is a brilliant performer. When he started, he was raw but with pace. He has evolved. He is influential in our group, from inside and outside."

On Virat Kohli's return, he said, "He changes the dynamics of the contest, tactically and strategically. He adds value."

Adversity always stoked his competitive blood. He came from an obscure mining town of Welkom in the Free State, captained the country's under-19 team and then slotted it out for seven years in domestic cricket before gaining the South Africa cap. Elgar comprehended the value of the Proteas cap.

Today, Elgar has 4,541 runs from 71 Tests at 40.25, often in demanding, seaming conditions.

But then, the story of Elgar is not one of numbers.

It's about heart and fight, battling through pain, playing as if your life depended on the innings.

You watch Elgar, now 34, taking blow after blow on his body on a spiffy pitch at the Wanderers and you know, des-

pite young cricketers leaving the longest form for lucrative T20 leagues, Test cricket is alive and kicking.

Elgar is a fearless batter, who can endure hits on his body and helmet grill, hold firm, take responsibility and carry South Africa on his shoulders for one of its greatest Test victories with an emphatic 500.

You look at cricket history and you find these blood and guts batters. England's Brian Close was one such player.

And Collin Cowdrey was well past his prime when he went down under and faced a barrage of short-pitched bowlers from Jeff Thomson and Dennis Lillee, taking several blows on his frame.

India's own Mohinder

Amarnath was as courageous as they come. He came from an obscure mining town of Welkom in the Free State, captained the country's under-19 team and then slotted it out for seven years in domestic cricket before gaining the South Africa cap. Elgar comprehension of the value of the Proteas cap.

Elgar has been more than a brave batter. He has been an inspirational captain who can keep a team together and rule up fast bowlers such as Kagiso Rabada to rip.

As a batter he has his own game. He appears to get better but subtly withdraws his bat at the last possible moment, something another left-hander, from the past, Larry Gomes was adept at.

You see the never-say-die Elgar bunting at the crease and you realise Test cricket is still breathing.

In brief: Elgar was fit to the core and did a great job at the end of his career.



Unflappable: Elgar batted through blows and pain to script one of South Africa's memorable Test wins. • REUTERS

## IN BRIEF



Boufala's strike helps Morocco edge Ghana

YAOUCHE  
Sofiane Boufaal scored in the 83rd minute to give Morocco a 1-0 win over Ghana in the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday. Senegal snatched a last-gasp 1-0 victory over Zimbabwe while Liverpool star Sadio Mane converted a 27th-minute penalty.

The results: Group A: Ethiopia 0 lost to Cape Verde 1 (Tavares 45+1); Group B: Senegal 1 (Mane 90+7 pen) beat Zimbabwe 0; Group C: Morocco 1 (Boufaal 83) beat Ghana 0.

Coch Behar Trophy: quarterfinals suspended due to rain

A day before the quarterfinals were scheduled to begin in and around Pune, the BCCI was forced to suspend the Coch Behar Trophy, the u-19 boys' inter-state cricket championship, on Monday. BCCI secretary Jay Shah said there were "some positive COVID-19 cases within the team environment".

Thalaias prove too good for Steelers

Tamil Thalaias produced an all-round performance to beat Haryana Steelers 45-26 in a Pro Kabaddi League match here on Monday. In the second match, Jaipur Pink Panthers outlasted Dabang Delhi 30-28 in a close contest. ■

## India u-19 posts big win

SPORTS BUREAU  
PROVIDENCE (GOVTNA)

India posted a convincing 108-run victory over host West Indies in the first of its two ICC Under-19 World Cup warm-up matches on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Afghanistan cricket team's participation was in jeopardy as the players were yet to get their visas and hence, their warm-up games against England and the UAE have been cancelled.

The series: U-19 278/6 in 50 overs (Nishant Sandhu 78, n.o., Yash Dhull 52, Layne Yadav 42, Joann Layne 3/51) vs West Indies U-19 170 in 43 overs (Matthew Nandu 52, Kaushal Tambe 3/30, Manav Parekh 3/34). Toss: India.

## Court reinstates Djokovic's visa

But, threat of deportation still hangs over Serbian star

### ASSOCIATED PRESS MELBOURNE

An Australian judge has reinstated tennis star Novak Djokovic's visa, which was cancelled on arrival here last week because he is unvaccinated. Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly also ordered the government on Monday to release Djokovic from Melbourne hotel quarantine within 30 minutes if officials decided he didn't meet.

The Australian government cancelled Djokovic's visa shortly after he arrived in Melbourne late on Wednesday because officials decided he didn't meet. Australian medical authorities have ruled that a temporary exemption for the vaccination rule can be provided to people who have been infected with COVID-19 within six months. Judge Kelly noted that Djokovic had provided officials at the airport the medical exemption given him by Tennis Australia, which is organising the tournament, and two medical panels.

The virtual hearing crashed several times because of an overwhelming number of people from around the world trying to watch the proceedings. AFP adds

**Greatest victory**  
Later, Djokovic tweeted he hoped to still compete in the Australian Open while his mother said the decision to overturn his visa cancellation was the "biggest victory of his career".  
Judge Kelly noted that Djokovic had provided officials at the airport the medical exemption given him by Tennis Australia, which is organising the tournament, and two medical panels.

**Single-minded passion:** No sooner was he out of detention, Djokovic was on court training. •TWITTER@DJOKERNOW



# Text & Context

## NEWS IN NUMBERS



### Infection count

**1.12** In Lakh was the seven-day rolling average of daily COVID-19 cases recorded in India on January 9, 2022. This is the first time in seven months that the average daily recorded infections have crossed the 1 lakh mark. Previously on June 10, 2021, the seven-day average of new cases stood at 1,00,000. On January 9, the country had detected a total of 4,033 cases of the Omicron variant with Maharashtra (2,116), Rajasthan (529) and Delhi (513) having the most cases of the variant. COVID19MAHARASHTRA.ORG

### Warming planet

**5** The standing of 2021 among the warmest years on record, according to the latest annual assessment by the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S). The annual average temperature was 1.1 to 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, measured between 1850 and 1900. C3S said 2021 was the fifth warmest on record globally, marginally warmer than 2015 and 2018. Accurate measurements go back to the mid-19th century. The last seven years have been the hottest on record "by a clear margin", observed C3S. AFP

### Sentence increased

**4** The number of additional years for which ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to prison by a court. She was convicted in December 2021 on two other charges and given a four-year prison sentence, which was then halved. There are about a dozen cases brought against the 76-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate since the army coup in February. Her party won a landslide victory in the 2020 general election, but the military claimed there was widespread electoral fraud, an assertion that independent poll watchers doubt. AP

### Deep pockets

**1447** The number of times Apple Inc boss Tim Cook's pay was over the average employee's at the tech giant in 2021, a filing showed. Cook's stock awards helped him earn a total of nearly \$100 million. In 2021, the median pay for employees was \$46,254 while in 2020 it was \$37,783. Apple, Inc., in 2021, Cook earned \$98.7 million, compared to \$1.8 million in 2020. CEOs in the U.S. were paid 351 times more than the typical worker in 2020, a report by the Economic Policy Institute showed. REUTERS

### Medal prep

**10** The number of athletes recently included in the Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). A few names include Anirban Lahiri, Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar, Olympian equestrian Fouad Mirza and alpine skier Mohammed Arif Khan. While Lahiri, Aditi, Diksha, and Mirza were included in the core group, golfer Shubhankar Sharma, boxer Malik and judoka Yash Chhang, Ummati Sharma and Linthoo Chanbam have been placed in the development group. Overall, the total number of athletes under TOPS rose to 301. n+

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

### EXPLAINER

## Understanding the protests in Kazakhstan

What is the role of the CSTO in ongoing agitations? What does Russia aim to achieve by sending in troops?

UMA PURUSHOTHAMAN

**The story so far:** The new year saw protests in yet another unexpected place: Kazakhstan in Central Asia. Although ruled by autocratic regimes since the USSR's disintegration, it is unexpected because Kazakhstan is the richest Central Asian Republic and is thought to be one of the more stable of these republics.

The protests started on 2 January in the western town of Zhanaozen. They were apparently prompted by the doubling of gas prices in the hydrocarbon-rich country. Protests then spread across the country. While the rise in fuel prices might have been the immediate trigger for the protests, the protests also brought to the fore popular grievances over structural problems like corruption and socio-economic inequality as well as calls for regime change. The protests also appear to be a struggle for power among the Kazakh elites. The situation in Kazakhstan is a classic case of the dilemma of transfer of power in strongman regimes, something which resonates in Russia as well.

The protests have not ended despite the resignation of the Government and the removal of the unpopular Nursultan Nazarbayev as chairman of the country's Security Council. He was also the former President who ruled the country for 28 years.

**The situation in Kazakhstan is a classic case of the dilemma of transfer of power in strongman regimes, something which resonates in Russia as well.**

The Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has called on the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), for help to deal with the protests. The CSTO responded swiftly by sending around 2,500 troops on January 6, including Russian paratroopers and Belarusian special troops. Other CSTO members are also sending troops. Incidentally, this is the first time the CSTO has deployed troops under Article 4 of its treaty, which can be used in the case of attacks against member states which could affect their stability or sovereignty.

**What is the CSTO?** The CSTO is a Russia-dominated security alliance (Russia contributes 50% of its budget) which was established after the

USSR's fall when some members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) signed a mutual defence treaty named the Collective Security Treaty. Meant as a replacement for the Warsaw Pact, the Treaty came into force in 1994. In 2002, it became the CSTO. The CSTO has six members today: Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.



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The organisation is based, as the name indicates, on the principle of collective security or the idea of "one for all and all for one". Essentially, this means that an aggressor against any one state in the organisation is considered to be an aggressor against all other states. So, all the members would act together to repel the aggressor. Collective security is not a bad word: this is also the principle on which NATO, the UN and earlier the League of Nations were founded.

The CSTO has not been very active in recent years though it conducts some joint military exercises and facilitates arms sales between members. It has also created a peacekeeping force and a rapid-reaction force and the members have pursued a common air defence system. The CSTO did

not act, for instance, last year during the stand-off between Armenia and Azerbaijan though Yerevan had asked it for support.

**Why has the CSTO intervened now?** There could be two reasons for the CSTO's intervention in Kazakhstan.

One, Russia is concerned that political instability in the country could lead to the rise of either ultra-nationalists (which could threaten the safety of ethnic Russians who comprise about 19 percent of the population) or radical Islamic forces which could then spread across the region and into Russia itself which shares an open border over 7,500 km long with Kazakhstan. Russia is also worried that the protests might be backed by foreigners and Tokayev has already called the protesters "foreign-trained terrorists". The Kremlin has long been worried about such "external interventions" in what it considers to be its backyard. By sending in troops through the CSTO, Moscow is sending a clear message that it will not tolerate any attempts at "colour revolutions" in its sphere of influence.

Two, if the protests are quelled, the

Kazakh regime would be indebted to Russia, and this would effectively end Kazakhstan's long-standing multi-vector foreign policy of balancing among Russia, China, the West, and Turkey. Russia would gain an ally for good. This might hold true for the other Central Asian Republics as well and Russia would have a more dominant role in their foreign policies, particularly on issues like foreign military bases.

### What next?

It remains to be seen if or when the protests will die down and whether the CSTO troops will leave if they do subside. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken has already warned that "one lesson of recent history is that once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave". China, Kazakhstan's other big neighbour, which is embroiled in a competition for influence with Russia in the region, would be watching with interest as it has large investments through the Belt Road Initiative in Kazakhstan.

Uma Purushothaman is Assistant Professor at the Department of International Relations, Central University of Kerala.

**Violent clashes:** A body of a victim is seen near a burnt-out military truck, which was burned after protests, in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on January 6, 2022. AP

## THE GIST

**■ The protests in Kazakhstan started on 2 January. While the rise in fuel prices might have been the immediate trigger for the protests, they also brought to the fore popular grievances over structural problems like corruption and socio-economic inequality. The Kazakh President has called on the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), for help to deal with the protests.**

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### EXPLAINER

## Flying cars and the future in cities

Are flying taxis a viable option? What are the challenges and where will the energy source come from?

VENKAT VISWANATHAN  
SHASHANK SRIPAD

**The story so far:** As climate change concerns take centre stage and the world tries out cleaner energy options, four companies commercialising urban aircraft have gone public, loading themselves with a war chest to go through the challenging certification process. Over 30 or so companies are running demonstration programmes across the globe (Joby, KittyHawk, Archer and so forth in the U.S., Lilium, Heart Aerospace in Europe, eHang in China, ePlane in India).

**What are flying cars?** Flying cars, technically known as vertical take-off and landing aircraft, can take off vertically from the top of a building much like a helicopter, then shift to cruise like a conventional plane and then land vertically.

Two key breakthrough technologies, decades in the making, have enabled this. The first is going electric – aviation has always had a weight problem in using battery-power for propulsion. Li-ion batteries have been steadily progressing at a rate of about 5% per year and finally,



A prototype "flying car" developed by Boeing in 2019. AFP

we are reaching an inflection point where compelling urban aircraft is possible. By going electric, a second breakthrough propulsion concept is enabled – distributed electric propulsion. The approach is to spread the electric motors throughout the aircraft enabling improved performance and a higher energy efficiency, noise levels and handling performance.

**Is it a sustainable option?** The year 2021 was a turning point for flying cars. The vision that is being sold is urban aircraft jetting passengers across a city in so-called flying taxis. For

sustainability enthusiasts, this raises a natural question: can this be a sustainable solution for urban mobility? Sustainability is closely linked to how much energy is consumed by the aircraft and where that energy comes from. To think about the energy efficiency of aircraft and compare it to ground-based alternatives like cars, we can consider the energy required to transport one passenger across two points in a city. If we assume the distance between the two points is 5 kilometres, then a medium-sized sedan would consume about 1 kWh (1 unit of electricity). A natural question is how much energy

would be consumed to travel that same distance in an urban aircraft? Your intuitive guess is likely to be much more. We unpacked the counter-intuitive answer to this question in a publication in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. A well-designed urban aircraft can exploit cruising using fixed wings of the aircraft at a very low energy consumption – think gliders and how they consume no energy at all. An urban aircraft can cover the same 5 kilometres in as less as 0.6 kWh for small urban aircraft and a touch over 0.9 kWh for slightly larger ones.

**How will it impact travel time?** The interesting aspect of this comparison doesn't stop there. The travel time for the urban aircraft can be about two to six times faster than the car, because there will not be as much traffic in the sky in the beginning.

**Where's the hitch?** The optimistic take gives the impression that one can hop on an urban ride across the city tomorrow. Not quite, the last missing piece is to be able to reliably make these trips for many thousands of flights to make the economics work.

Critical to this is the life of the batteries that power the aircraft. All of us are familiar with the degrading performance of Li-ion batteries in laptops, smartphones and electric cars. In an urban aircraft, there is one additional twist: unlike how consumers accept their videos streaming slower on older battery-powered phones, urban aircraft cannot take-off and land differently as their batteries age. The need to take-off and land vertically imposes a high power requirement, which sets the safety-critical limit for the operation. Given the rapid rate of progress with batteries, it is only a matter of time before we enter the Jetsonian age, where we can skip traffic and travel across metropolitan cities in a matter of minutes for trips that take hours today. Apart from the travel speed, the aircraft will fly at much lower emissions than the internal combustion engine cars today and on par or better than electric vehicles.

Venkat Viswanathan is an Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Carnegie Mellon; Shashank Sripad is a Presidential Fellow and PhD candidate in Mechanical Engineering at Carnegie Mellon.

## THE GIST

**■ Flying cars, technically known as vertical take-off and landing aircraft, can take off vertically from the top of a building, then shift to cruise like a conventional plane and then land vertically.**

**■ Sustainability for such an urban aircraft is closely linked to how much energy is consumed and where that energy comes from. A well-designed aircraft can exploit cruising using fixed wings of the aircraft at a very low energy consumption.**

**■ Urban aircrafts cannot take-off or land easily unless their batteries age. The need to take-off and land vertically imposes a high power requirement, which sets the safety-critical limit for the operation.**



FROM THE ARCHIVES



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Lord of the Dreams

On adapting *The Sandman*  
by Neil Gaiman for television

ANUSUA MUKHERJEE

These days, extreme fatigue counts as a worrying symptom - alarm bells are set off each time we cannot seem to get out of bed. Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* series begins with an epidemic of "sleepy sickness" - people doze off and stay like that for years and dream terrible apocalyptic dreams - making it curiously apt for the times. Perhaps it's not a coincidence that Netflix's adaptation of Gaiman's bestselling series is set to be released soon. It stars English actor Tom Sturridge as the lead character, Morpheus or Sandman, Lord of the Realm of Dream and Nightmare.

Going by the teaser, the characters in the adaptation match the visual impressions we have of them from the DC comics series, superbly illustrated by Sam Kieth, Mike Dringenberg, Jill Thompson, and others. Morpheus, for instance, is that familiar pale, thin, ghostly figure with weary eyes, languishing from decades of imprisonment and trailing inky blue darkness. Gaiman, who is also the series' producer, has said in a Tweet that his involvement in it is "Much more than *American Gods*. Less than *Good Omens*." The latter is the superhero Amazon Prime series based on the novel of the same name by Gaiman and Terry Pratchett. It had followed the original closely, with a few clever changes made under Gaiman's strict supervision.

But unlike *Good Omens*, *The Sandman* is a graphic novel with a set of vividly sketched characters and atmospheres that are difficult, if not impossible, to translate into another medium. It begins with *Preludes and Nocturnes*, where we get to know about Morpheus' powers by learning what his absence does to the world. After he is captured by a magus in 1916, the world goes into shutdown mode: some people fall asleep and don't wake up for decades while others stay constantly awake. Written words start fading, for literature cannot exist without dreams. Thus we have our new superhero, who might not be Superman - he is exhausted, almost powerless without his magic tools, and very lonely - but without him there would no writing, and so, no man or Superman. It's a brilliant meta touch, reminding us why Norman Mailer called *The Sandman* "a comic strip for intellectuals."

And this also explains why the series, originally published from 1989 to 1996, has resisted screen adaptations all these years. More than any other work by Gaiman, it is a story about storytelling, progressing languidly by hand-tipping to other works of literature and popular culture, weaving together fragments, which then expand to become stories in their own right. There are constant references to greats like Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton, as well as to other members of the DC Comics universe like the Justice League, to pop culture songs like the iconic "Dream a little dream of me." Gaiman plays around with archetypes, which he borrows from mythologies and folktales. So, the Sandman is that magical person from folklore who puts people to sleep by sprinkling magic dust or sand on them; Death's brother who visits us every night; the muse of all poets and writers; and the personification of dreams, which birth hope in us.

Unsurprisingly, one of the recurring characters in the series is William Shakespeare, with whom Sandman enters into a pact, giving him endless supplies of inspiration in return for tributes to dreams in his plays. Morpheus is a complex character, poised beyond earthly concepts of good and evil, yet human in his weaknesses. Like Satan at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*, he is devastated when we first meet him, nursing a bruised ego after being captured by a mortal. In the section, 'The Sound of Her Wings', from *Preludes and Nocturnes*, Morpheus is in the pit of despair: a descent into the subterranean caves of the underworld/ mind remains a motif in the series.

With *The Sandman*, Gaiman changed the way comics are thought of, enriching it with mythology, classic literature and psychological studies. Incidentally, *The Sandman* has a disproportionate number of female readers, probably the highest among mainstream comics. That in itself is no mean achievement in a genre we associate with boys and men.

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# GST reform needs a new grand bargain

The GST compensation issue strengthens the necessity for a new system between sovereign and sub-sovereign entities

## THE GIST

AJIT RANADE

VIJAY KELKAR

■ When the GST was put into practice, the States gave up their right to collect sales tax and sundry taxes while the Centre gave up excise and services tax. Their consent was secured by a promise from the Centre of reimbursing any shortfall in tax revenues for a period of five years. But it seems that using an equivalent of the Force Majeure clause in commercial contracts, the Centre is abdicating its responsibility of making up for the shortfall.

■ The Centre should keep its promise for multiple reasons. The States do not have recourse to options that the Centre has. The Centre can command much lower rates of borrowing from the markets as compared to the States. Fighting this recession through increased fiscal stimulus is the job of macroeconomic stabilisation, which is the Centre's domain. And breaking this important promise causes a serious dent in the trust built up between the Centre and States.

■ Keeping in mind the increasing urbanisation and decentralisation, 10% of the 12% GST should be equally shared between the States and the Centre, and 2% must be earmarked exclusively for the urban and rural local bodies, which receive some basic revenue autonomy to them.

■ The onus is on the Centre. This is wrong on many counts. First, the States do not have recourse to multiple options that the

Centre has, such as issue of a sovereign bond (in dollars or rupees) or a loan against public sector unit shares from the Reserve Bank of India.

Second, the Centre can anyway command much lower rates of borrowing from the markets as compared to the States. Third, in terms of aggregate public sector borrowing, it does not matter for the debt markets, nor the rating agencies, whether it is the States or the Centre that is increasing their indebtedness. Fourth, fighting this recession through increased fiscal stimulus is basically the job of macroeconomic stabilisation, which is the Centre's domain. Fifth, and most importantly, breaking this important promise, using the alibi of the COVID-19 pandemic causes a serious dent in the trust built up between the Centre and States.

Cooperative federalism is in the nature of a "repeated game" between the two entities, and every action must think of the future consequences, not just the immediate ones. Will it not weaken the foundation of trust?

Kautilya too would have advised the sovereign against renegeing on the promised bailout, as fulfilling the obligation helps build trust with sub-sovereigns.

### Abdication of responsibility

Their consent was secured by a promise of reimbursing any shortfall in tax revenues for a period of five years. This reimbursement will be funded by a special cess called the GST compensation cess. The promised reimbursement will fill the gap for an assured 10% year on year tax growth for five years, and it was generous to a fault. Neither the national aggregate nor any of the major States had this record for the previous five years.

But that was not the only fault with the design, which had also failed to learn from the successful design of harmonising Value Added Tax (VAT) rates across the nation, implemented just a decade ago. VAT was the precursor to GST and also needed a consensus. That design too had an inbuilt reimbursement formula. But that tapered over the years, making room for incentives for tax effort from the States, sort of "skin in the game".

As the economy battles a pandemic and recession, the tax collection has dropped significantly, while expenditure needs are sharply higher, especially at the frontline of the battle, at the State level. But it seems that the States have been told that they are on their own to meet the shortfall in revenues. Using an equivalent of the Force Majeure clause in commercial contracts, the Centre is abdicating its responsibility of making up for the shortfall in 14% growth in GST revenues to the states.

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Continuing with the same chess player, 3, which former second to Viswanathan Anand and challenger Fabiano Caruana was revealed to be training the teenaged GM in question?

4 Termed "Anand's immortal" and a "Game for the Ages" by world champion Magnus Carlsen, in this game held in 2013 Anand played black and smothered his

Compiled by Srinivasan Ramani