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IN BRIEF



Centre seeks urgent listing of EWS quota case

NEW DELHI  
The Centre on Monday pressed the Supreme Court to list on Tuesday the hearing of a case raising questions about the ₹8 lakh income criterion for identifying EWS to provide them quota in jobs.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Chargesheet filed in Lakhimpur Kheri case

LUCKNOW  
Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra, was present at the site of the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, according to the statements of witnesses, a government counsel said on Monday as the SIT submitted a 5,000-page chargesheet in a local court.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 8

Sidhu promises dole for women homemakers

CHANDIGARH  
Days after AAP promised a monthly sum of ₹1,000 to women in Punjab if voted to power, the ruling Congress on Monday promised ₹2,000 a month to homemakers if the party wins State polls.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

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# More than 40 lakh adolescents get first shot of COVID vaccine

Indigenously developed Covaxin administered; second dose after 28 days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

More than 40 lakh adolescents in the 15-17 age group received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine on the first day of the vaccination drive for the cohort till 8 p.m., Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya tweeted on Monday.

According to the CoWIN dashboard, more than 49 lakh in this age group have registered for the vaccine so far. The vaccination programme, carried out in consultation with schools, is being held at hospitals and health centres. Covaxin, an indigenous COVID-19 vaccine, will be administered in this age group in two doses with a gap of 28 days.

"Only Covaxin is approved for less than 18 years. The 18+ (i.e. born in 2004 or before) – are eligible for all vaccines, including Covishield. For 15-17 years (born in 2005, 2006, 2007), they are eligible only for Covaxin. Validations in place in CoWIN," Vikas Sheel, Additional Secretary, Health Ministry, said.

In Delhi, vaccination for more than 10 lakh adolescents began at 159 centres on Monday, official sources said. A Delhi government spokesperson said a total of 20,998 children were vaccinated on the first day till 6 p.m. More



Building resistance: A student getting her first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at a school in Bhopal on Monday. ■ A.M. FARUQI

than 54,000 got their jab on the first day of the vaccination drive in Haryana.

## Nine dedicated centres

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has designated nine vaccination centres where students can either walk in or pre-register online. The BMC aims to vaccinate nine lakh students in this drive, which was virtually launched by Maharashtra Tourism and Environment Minister Aaditya Thackeray.

A large number of students

from various civic schools arrived at the jumbo centre in the Bandra Kurla Complex to get vaccinated.

In Pune, the vaccination for adolescents commenced at 40 centres, Suryakant Devkar, chief immunisation officer, Pune Municipal Corporation, said. At several centres, teenagers were offered flowers, pens and masks after vaccination.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

YOUNGSTERS RARING TO GO  
AFTER FIRST DOSE ▶ PAGE 2

## India records 33,000 cases

India recorded more than 33,000 new COVID-19 cases in the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Monday. The number of deaths increased by 123, taking the total to 4,82,000. Authorities said that even as the cases have started to rise rapidly in the country, hospitalisations have not gone up. ■ PAGE 10

# China constructing bridge on Pangong lake in Ladakh

It will bring down time to move troops and equipment

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

China is constructing a bridge in eastern Ladakh connecting the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake), which will significantly bring down the time for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move troops and equipment between the two sectors, two official sources independently confirmed on Monday.

"On the north bank, there is a PLA garrison at Kurnak fort and on the south bank at Moldo, and the distance between the two is around 200 km. The new bridge between the closest points on two banks, which is around 500 m, will bring down the movement time between the two sectors from around 12 hours to three or four hours," one of the sources said. The bridge is located around 25 km ahead of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the source stated.

The construction had been going on for some time and it would reduce the overall distance by 140-150 km, the other source said.

Earlier, the PLA had to take a roundabout crossing the Rudok county. But now the bridge would provide a direct axis, the first source said, adding that the biggest advantage with the new bridge was the inter-sector



New link: A satellite image of the region where the bridge appears to be constructed. ■ TWITTER/@DETRESFA

movement as the time would come down significantly. "They need to build piers for the bridge, which has been under way," the source stated.

The bridge is in China's territory and the Indian Army would have to now factor this in its operational plans, the source noted.

India holds one-third of the 135-km-long boomerang-shaped lake located at an altitude of over 14,000 feet. The lake, a glacial melt, has mountain spurs of the Chang Chenmo range jutting down, referred to as fingers.

The north bank, which

has much higher differences in perception of the LAC than the south bank, was the initial site of the clashes in early May 2020, while tensions on the south bank flared up later in August.

The Indian Army got tactical advantage over the PLA on the south bank in August-end by occupying several peaks lying vacant since 1962, gaining a dominating view of the Moldo area. On the north bank too, the Indian troops set up posts facing PLA positions on the ridge-lines of Finger 4.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# Devas shareholders seize over \$30 million of AAI assets

JAGRITI CHANDRA  
NEW DELHI

Devas shareholders on Monday said they had seized more than \$30 million of Airports Authority of India's (AAI) money held by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), following an order from a Canadian court in connection with the arbitration award the telecommunications firm had won against the Indian government. The move also impacts Air India.

"Devas' shareholders have been granted the right

to garnish property belonging to Airports Authority of India held by the International Air Transport Association in Montreal. These actions represent the first fruits of a globally focused effort to attach assets of the Indian government to satisfy the Devas Multimedia's awards," a Devas spokesperson said.

"Air India being one of the biggest users of AAI is highly impacted," the spokesperson added. The enforcement strategy requires IATA to "garnish" air navigation charges, aerodrome charges, among others, held by it on behalf of the AAI, either at its head office in Montreal or at any of its branches worldwide.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

YOUNGSTERS RARING TO GO  
AFTER FIRST DOSE ▶ PAGE 2

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Man booked for extorting money from rape accused

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police have registered a case of extortion and criminal conspiracy against a man for allegedly luring and extorting money from an astrologer booked under the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act and for gang rape in 2018.

The case pertains to Asif Khan alias Ashu Bhai Gurjji, an astrologer in Hauz Khas. Khan, his son Samar Khan, his friend and manager were arrested under Section 376D of the Indian Penal Code for gang rape and sections of the POCSO Act. Khan alleged in his plea that a man named Ram Naresh Sharma approached him after the case was lodged and demanded ₹12 crore to get him out of the case.

The police said Khan and his employee Shiv Kumar said the victim in their case and Sharma were part of an extortion racket. The victim had lodged another FIR involving another group at Mandawali police station.

## Youngsters raring to go after first dose vaccination boost

20,998 beneficiaries on first day of inoculation drive for the 15-17 age group

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

**Elated:** Beneficiaries showing victory signs after getting their COVID-19 vaccine jab in Delhi on Monday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

On a day active cases breached the 10,000 mark in the Capital, 20,998 adolescents got a shot in the arm as the vaccination programme opened for the 15-17 age group on Monday. Jabbed with the first dose of Covaxin, students said they were looking forward to the reopening of schools, catching up with friends, and going out.

At Safdarjung Hospital, the first day of the drive was a smooth affair. Those who had not registered online could walk in and receive a shot, but vaccination authorities at the hospital said they were not accepting school ID card as proof since it did not mention the age.

Sahana, 15, a resident of Chhattarpur, said she hoped her classes would resume soon. "Initially, wearing a mask and social distancing was difficult but gradually I got used to it. But I am not going out as much as I used to do earlier," the Class X student said when asked about what she missed the most during the pandemic.

**E-learning woes**  
Several youngsters saw the immunity boost as an opportunity to say goodbye to Zoom classes and being confined to the four walls of their

class," the ninth grader said. Agreed Poorva, 16, a Class XI student. "It is difficult to connect with teachers during online classes."

For Vicky Tirkey, it was worse - he lost interest altogether during online classes. "You end up playing games on the phone while class is on. Going to school is better as you get to meet your friends and there are other activities too. Now, it is just books," said the 15-year-old.

Moonsun Topno, who trudged to the hospital with his friends from neighbouring Kotla Mubarakpur, hoped

the vaccine shot turns a corner for him. The 17-year-old, who is studying in Class XII through distance education, said he loved to play football and missed his regular training at an academy.

Seventeen-year-old Sudiksha Singh, a Class XII student, was worried about her future. "Now we can't talk freely to teachers or each other about our future. Also,

when we used to go out before the pandemic, it was refreshing. But now that you're spending a lot of time in the house, I feel suffocated and under pressure," she said.

**Gurugram drive**

In Gurugram, teenagers got an opportunity to interact with Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg and offer their feedback as the vaccination drive kicked off at DAV Public School in Sector 49. While there are around two lakh eligible adolescents in the 15-17 group, 7,527 lucky ones got their first dose on Monday.

(With inputs from Ashok Kumar)

## 'Omicron variant found in 81% of positive samples'

Minister asks people to follow norms

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

dose."

Vaccination for children between 15-18 years began on Monday.

There is no need to panic, the Minister said. "The only way to stop the spread of the virus is to always wear a mask when you step out and follow the COVID-19 guidelines. Prevention is better than cure. I urge people to get vaccinated as soon as possible," he said.

The Minister said the number of hospitalisations was less at present. "In the previous waves, a large number of patients were hospitalised. Till yesterday, only 202 patients from Delhi were in hospitals. While the number of [new] cases is increasing, the number of serious cases is not rising proportionally," he said.

Mr. Jain said the Delhi government was ready to fight any variant of the virus, and there were adequate numbers of beds available. "Almost 100% of people are vaccinated with the first dose and around 75% are vaccinated with the second

"Since the cases have gone up in the last three to four days, not all positive samples are being sent for genome sequencing," the official said.

Earlier this month, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that all COVID-19 positive samples would be sent for genome sequencing.

## 3 stab friend to death over taunts, held in Gujarat

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Three youth have been arrested for allegedly kidnapping and killing their friend in outer Delhi's Mangolpuri as he used to taunt one of them over his poverty, the police said on Monday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Parvinder Singh said the accused have been identified as Prince, Harsh and Javed. They allegedly killed Santosh by stabbing him and then throwing his body in a drain.

The police said the three were arrested in Gujarat.

They revealed that on December 25, Prince had asked Santosh to lend his jacket so that he could impress his girlfriend. But Santosh refused and taunted him over his poverty. Santosh also beat Prince's friends, the police said.

The accused then called the victim on the pretext of a party, where they first got him drunk and then stabbed him to death.

## Two Bills tabled in Delhi Assembly

'Govt. should prioritise matters'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Sabu, Bhatinda, Punjab, has been added to the list of existing four head priests of Sri Akal Takhts, who act as nominated members.

After the proposed amendment, the DSGMC would have 46 elected members and 10 nominated members, taking the total tally to 56.

The proposed Bill, as passed by the Assembly, will be required to be reserved by the Delhi L-C for consideration and assent of the President of India.

**Opposition hits out**  
Meanwhile, the Congress said the Delhi government should discuss pressing matters in the Assembly session. Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said it was surprising that the agenda for the two-day session was to pass Bills, which could have been discussed in the budget session, as the present priority should be to plan strategy to arrest the spread of COVID-19.

The Bill was presented to seek the addition of one more member to the list of nominated members of the DSGMC, taking its total from nine to 10 members. Head priest of Shri Akal Takht, Dam-dama Sahib, Talwandi

## Newly opened park a hit with visitors

It houses replicas of monuments

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Since it was opened to the public on December 26, the Bharat Darshan Park in west Delhi has seen a massive response, generating ₹24.81 lakh in ticket sales, according to the data provided by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation.

On January 2, the SDMC sold 5,726 tickets which generated ₹7.28 lakh, while the park witnessed 6,307 visitors and generated ₹8.14 lakh in ticket sales on January 1.

The park was constructed by the SDMC over 22 months in an area spanning across 8.5 acres, which houses replicas of 21 monuments from across the country, including the likes of the Taj Mahal, Victoria Memorial Hall

and Mysore Palace, using 350 metric tonnes of waste material.

Previously, SDMC officials highlighted that the park would serve as a "good source of revenue" for the civic body with the ticket prices for adults costing ₹100 during the day, and ₹150 in the evenings; the ticket prices for children below the age of 12 stand at ₹50 and ₹25 respectively.

SDMC's Director of Horticulture, Alok Singh, said that COVID-19 protocols are being maintained at the park and "no sitting is allowed".

A senior SDMC official said that two proposals for the construction of puzzle parkings will be presented at the civic body's next Standing Committee meeting.

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Fund Name	AUM (₹ in Cr.)	Vintage (years)	Investor Folios (Nos.)
Sundaram Large and Mid Cap Fund	5,100	14	2,59,544
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Sundaram Focused Fund <sup>#</sup>	696	16	41,710

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\*Sundaram Focused Fund was formerly known as Principal Focused Multicap Fund

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Sundaram Financial Services Opportunities Fund	475	13	32,348

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Fund Name	AUM (₹ in Cr.)	Vintage (years)	Investor Folios (Nos.)
Sundaram Liquid Fund <sup>^</sup>	3,086	17	1,22,145
Sundaram Ultra Short Duration Fund	1,264	14	14,444
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Sundaram Corporate Bond Fund	1,067	17	4,527

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Sundaram Aggressive Hybrid Fund	3,074	21	83,765
Sundaram Balanced Advantage Fund	1,619	11	44,030
Sundaram Equity Savings Fund	301	19	10,379

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Fund Name	AUM (₹ in Cr.)	Vintage (years)	Investor Folios (Nos.)
Sundaram Tax Savings Fund <sup>*</sup>	934	25	1,39,770

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## IN BRIEF



Ashes of Congress leader interred at cemetery

IDUKKI

The ashes of late Congress leader P.T. Thomas were interred in his mother's vault at the St. Joseph Church cemetery at Upputhode here in Kerala on Monday.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPC) vice-president V.P. Sajeendran received the ashes from the family at Thomas' house in Palarivattom in Kochi. Hundreds paid homage to the MLA near the cemetery. The ashes were interred as per the last wish of Thomas.

## Sexually assaulted actor writes to Kerala CM

KOCHI

The woman actor who was allegedly kidnapped and sexually abused in 2017 in Kerala has reportedly sent a letter to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan seeking further probe in the case following the "revelations" by filmmaker Balachandran Kumar that he had seen "Pulsar" Suni, one of the accused in the case, at the house of actor Dileep here. The filmmaker had alleged that Mr. Dileep had got a copy of the video on the sexual assault before it was produced in court.

## SC adjourns CBI appeal in ISRO frame-up case again

NEW DELHI

The CBI on Monday got its appeal in the Supreme Court against anticipatory bail granted to former intelligence and police officials accused in the ISRO frame-up case adjourned to January 28. Appearing before a Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Additional Solicitor-General S.V. Raju, for the CBI, sought two weeks to file a rejoinder in the case. The next hearing is on January 28. The case was previously adjourned after a senior lawyer became unwell.

## Don't indulge in hate speech: Venkaiah

'Secularism is in every Indian's blood; every person has right to practise and preach his or her faith'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOTTAYAM

Stress on amity: Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu paying tributes at the tomb of St. Chavara at the St. Joseph's Syro-Malabar Church in Kottayam. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Monday expressed his strong disapproval of attempts to ridicule other religions and create dissensions in society, saying every person has the right to practise and preach his or her faith in the country.

"Practise your religion but don't abuse and indulge in hate speech and writings," the Vice-President said at an event organised to mark the 150th death anniversary of Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, a spiritual leader and social reformer from the Kerala Catholic community at Mananam, near here.

Observing that hate speeches and writings were against India's culture, herit-

age, traditions, constitutional rights and ethos, Mr. Naidu said secularism is in the blood of every Indian and the country is respected

world over for its culture and heritage. In this context, he called for strengthening the Indian value system, an official statement said.

The Vice-President said community service must be made compulsory for students studying in government and private schools to help them develop an attitude of sharing and caring.

## Community service

"Once this pandemic is behind us, I would suggest that government schools as well as those in the private sector must make community service of at least two to three weeks compulsory for students," he said.

Highlighting the contributions of visionary leaders such as social reformer Sree Narayana Guru and St. Chavara, the Vice-President urged other States to take a cue from Kerala in the fields of education, social justice and

women's empowerment.

Stating that Saint Chavara contributed immensely to achieving communal harmony and tolerance in society, Mr. Naidu said that he always showed a deep concern for the wellbeing of all and taught us that peaceful human relationships were sacred and more important than anything else. "Today, we need a Chavara in every community," he said.

Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan, Kerala Minister for Cooperation and Registration V.N. Vasavan, former Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, Lok Sabha MP Thomas Chazhikadan and senior priests and nuns of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate were present.

which are required to be followed before provisioning such reservation for the OBC category.

The apex court had also referred to its order, just two days earlier, directing the State Election Commission of Maharashtra to renotify the OBC seats as general category ones.

In its application seeking a recall of the December 17 order, the Centre has said the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs has been its utmost priority and an inadequate representation of OBCs in the local bodies defeats the "very object, intent and purpose of the idea" of de-centralisation of power and taking governance to the grassroots level.

## M.P. local polls: SC to hear Centre's plea on Jan. 17

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said it will hear on January 17 an application filed by the Centre to recall a December 17 order staying the local body election process to OBC reserved seats in Madhya Pradesh.

"This will come up on January 17," a Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and C.T. Ravikumar said.

The court had on December 17 referred to a Constitution Bench the verdict of 2010 that had mentioned three conditions, including the setting up of a dedicated commission to conduct a contemporaneous rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of the backwardness qua the local bodies in the States,

## ED attaches ₹26 crore assets in fraud case

Probe based on FIR by CBI against DPIL, others

DEVESH K PANDEY  
NEW DELHI

posed padayatra from Meekedatu to Bengaluru seeking early implementation of the drinking water project.

The statue unveiling function was stalled for some time as the unfolding drama led to Mr. Suresh and his cousin S. Ravi, Congress MLC, sitting on a dharma on the stage while Mr. Bommai appealed for calm.

All started when Congress workers started shouting slogans in the protest against Mr. Bommai unveiling the statues, leaving the local MP behind.

The BJP, in a series of tweets, called the DK brothers as "Kanakapura Rowdy brothers", and said the display by Mr. Suresh and Mr. Ravi on Monday violated all protocols and showed flexing of muscles.

sortium of 19 lenders led by the Bank of India.

It is alleged that the company availed itself of higher credit facilities by showing paper transactions with shell companies and related entities.

The funds so raised were diverted.

The ED has filed a charge sheet against DPIL, its directors and 11 others in the case.

**Chargesheet filed**  
In April 2018, in the same case, the ED had issued the first attachment order involving assets worth ₹1,122.72 crore.

It later filed a chargesheet against the former company directors, Amit Bhatnagar, Sumit Bhatnagar and Suresh Bhatnagar, and other accused persons.

**Amid spike in COVID cases, Bengal civic polls as per schedule**

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

The West Bengal State Election Commission (SEC) has decided to go ahead with elections to four municipal corporations despite COVID-19 cases touching a new peak for the past few days.

Elections to the Bidhan Nagar Municipal Corporation, Siliguri Municipal Corporation, Asansol Municipal Corporation and the Chandernagore Municipal Corporation are scheduled for January 22. About 17 lakh voters can exercise their franchise in these elections. On Monday, officials of the SEC held a meeting with the State administration on the poll preparations. The process of filing of nominations is continuing as per the earlier notification issued by the Commission. Elections to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation were held on December 19.

The State government had on Sunday announced restrictions in the wake of rising COVID-19 infections, which included closure of all educational institutions, restrictions on local train and flight services from both domestic and international destinations.

"In modification of the earlier order, local train services will now be extended up to 10 p.m. instead of 7 p.m.," a note from the State government said on Monday.

During the day, there was chaos at railway stations as there was a rush to board the train before 7 p.m. There were also a few incidents of people falling off crowded local trains.

Meanwhile, the COVID-19 positivity rate in the State rose to 19.59%.

## Telangana BJP chief sent to 14-day judicial custody

## MP booked for violating prohibitory orders

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR

The police detaining Bandi Sanjay on Sunday night.

Telangana BJP president and Member of Parliament from Karimnagar, Bandi Sanjay, was remanded in 14-day judicial custody by a local court here on Monday.

Mr. Sanjay and four others were arrested by the Karimnagar police on Sunday night on charges of causing grievous hurt to public servants to deter them from discharging their duties and attempting to hold "Jagaran Deeksha" in defiance of the prohibitory orders promulgated to prevent the spread of COVID-19, sources said.

He was planning to under-

Tense moments preceded the arrest of Mr. Sanjay. Police personnel stormed the camp office building after breaking open the shutter locks with gas cutters and arrested Mr. Sanjay and some others. A local court remanded them in judicial custody till January 17.

**Nadda slams TRS govt.** BJP president J.P. Nadda flayed the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government, terming the arrest a "murder of democracy and constitutional rights".

"This massive use of force and planned attack and violence against the BJP leaders, workers, teachers, and employees is nothing but an act of political vendetta," he said in a statement.

(With inputs from Delhi)

## Change on the ground



**Assured return:** Workers busy in a Bengal gram field on the outskirts of Hyderabad on Monday. The Telangana government is encouraging farmers to cultivate pulses on about 10 lakh acres in the rabi season as an alternative crop to paddy, in the wake of the Food Corporation of India's decision not to procure parboiled rice from the State. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

## NIA arrests woman from Mangaluru in terror case

Mariyam was suspected to be in touch with IS cadre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT



Monday's arrest is a follow-up of NIA searches in Kashmir, Bengaluru and Mangaluru in August.

alleged terrorist activities of Ameen and his associates, who have been running various IS propaganda channels on social media platforms for propagating violent jihadi ideology of the IS and radicalising and recruiting new members for the IS module. Ameen and his associates reportedly succeeded in expanding the

NIA had registered a *suo motu* case against seven known and other unknown accused in connection with

&lt;/div



## Widening the safety net

The need to test other vaccines as an additional dose in adults is overwhelming

Nearly a year after the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines for health-care workers, the primary vaccination schedule to cover 75 million teenagers aged 15-17 years began across the country on January 3. Nearly 0.4 million children received the first dose on the first day. With all adults aged 18 years and above already being covered, the inclusion of teenagers has reduced the eligibility age group to 15 years. The decision to vaccinate teenagers, which was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 25 last year, was based on the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, its spread to many countries in about a month after it was designated as a variant of concern, the global case surge, and the trend in many developed countries of vaccinating adolescents and children. While there is no clear consensus on whether healthy teenagers above 15 should be vaccinated particularly as severe disease and deaths in this age group are relatively low when infected by the virus and a significant percentage of teenagers and children have been already infected as indicated by a few sero surveys, vaccination does increase the level of protection. Unlike in the case of adults who were vaccinated with one of the two vaccines – Covishield or Covaxin – teenagers will be administered only Covaxin. It was found to be safe and immunogenic in teenagers during a phase-2/3 of the clinical trial; only 175 adolescents aged 12 to 18 years were studied. The data of the trial, yet to be peer-reviewed, were posted on a preprint server on December 29. As in the case of adults, the eligible teenagers will receive the second dose 28 days after the first.

Besides providing teenagers with a primary vaccine, health-care and frontline workers and those above 60 years with co-morbidities will be provided with a precaution dose. Providing Covaxin as the precaution dose to all the people who have received the same vaccine as part of the primary vaccination schedule, scientifically called as homologous vaccine booster, will be the best approach at least till there is evidence on using a different vaccine as a booster shot. Though Covaxin accounts for only around 10% of all doses administered till date, the scientific bodies need to factor in vaccine availability too. This becomes particularly important as only Covaxin is used for vaccinating teenagers and its production is very limited in comparison to Covishield. The compulsion to test other vaccines that can be used in place of Covaxin as an additional dose in adults is therefore overwhelming. The approval of two additional vaccines, which are manufactured using different vaccine platforms, will further lessen the reliance on Covaxin for primary vaccination of adults, thus ensuring that the vaccination programme for teenagers does not suffer from shortages midway.

## Safety at all costs

Governments should ensure implementation of safety protocols in the fireworks industry

The death of four workers on New Year's Day in a blast at a fireworks unit in Kalathur village of Vellore district, the hub of the firecrackers sector in Tamil Nadu, reiterates the need for relentless vigil to enforce safety protocols in an industry that deals with hazardous processes. The blast was said to have been triggered by friction caused by the mishandling of chemicals. Apparently, the workers had come to the unit for a pooja to usher in 2022. Even though the authorities have suspended the unit's licence and filed cases under the Indian Penal Code and Indian Explosive Substances Act, they have not cited violations such as the licence holder leasing out the unit to others and manufacturing products unauthorisedly. Over the years, the district has seen numerous blasts and successive State Governments had formed, at times, committees to study the factors that led to the blasts. There have been improvements in the way the firecracker industry has been functioning. For example, the extent of child labour has reduced considerably. But, with regard to adherence to and monitoring of safety protocols, the track record leaves much to be desired.

There has to be a paradigm shift in the manner an event such as the Kalathur blast is viewed. Generally, any blast is called an accident but such usage unwittingly tends to gloss over the role of those who are responsible for the implementation and the enforcement of safety protocols. There can be no compromise on this count. At the same time, the contribution of the firecracker industry to the country's economy, especially that of Tamil Nadu, has to be acknowledged. The sector employs eight lakh people, directly and indirectly, in a backward region of the State with no assured irrigation. However, this does not absolve the industry of the responsibility to the life and the health of workers and the larger sections of society. In any investigation of the event, the authorities concerned should seriously consider translating into action some of the suggestions made by an eight-member committee constituted by the National Green Tribunal after a blast in the district that killed over 20 people in February 2021. Headed by former judge of the Punjab and Haryana, and Madras High Courts K. Kannan, the panel had suggested that the Explosives Act be amended to make punishments more stringent than now, employing only certified persons for operations including mixing, filling of chemicals and the making of colour pellets, and using drones for surveillance of various units. There is no dearth of ideas to improve the working of the industry but what is required is that the authorities, both at the levels of Central and State Governments, should ensure the enforcement of safety protocols.

# A sobering reminder to the powers that be

The present masters of the nation's destiny must remember the solemn assurance their tallest ever leader made in 2003



TAHIR MAHMOOD

**I**t was September 2003 and a leading English daily of India was celebrating its 125th anniversary in Chennai. Inaugurating the grand event, the Prime Minister of the day, the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee said: "... In spite of the unfortunate aberrations, whose recurrence must be prevented, India will always remain an open, inclusive and tolerant nation, with the freedom of faith guaranteed to all not only by the statute book but also by the living traditions of this ancient civilisation."

### A leader, his assurance

He was referring to some ghastly incidents of violence against the two largest minorities in the country witnessed during those days in various regions. The gentle Head of the Government, endowed with exemplary political wisdom, was assuring the nation with confidence that those were just aberrations not to last long, and that the country would soon return to its age-old traditions of pluralism and religious tolerance. Vajpayee's party had lost at the elections next year but, after a gap of a full decade, returned to power with a bang. Would anyone among the present masters of the nation's destiny remember the solemn assurance their tallest ever leader had graciously extended to the nation? Vajpayee did not live long enough to witness the "living traditions of this ancient civilisation" being thrown into the dustbin of history. Unfortunately, even his sad demise did not act as a sobering reminder to the powers that be for the need to translate his pious hope into the ground reality of the day.

In retrospect, Vajpayee wanted the country to religiously continue treading the path it had chosen for itself while throwing away the yoke of colonial rule in 1947. In the year following the advent of inde-

pendence in India, the United Nations had proclaimed a Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirming in its preamble that all members of the world body that had been set up to strive for peace across the globe had "pledged themselves" to the "promotion ... and observance" of all the ideals enshrined in that so-called "Magna Carta of Humanity". The Universal Declaration of Human Rights had asserted at the outset that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." In the coming years, its implications and demands were spelt out in the minutest details in the two International Human Rights Covenants of 1966, later suffixed with several follow-up instruments like the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981) and the Declaration on the Rights of Minorities (1992).

### A masterpiece of wisdom

When the celebrated Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed by the United Nations, the newly freed India was in the midst of writing its Constitution for the future. Its noble architects, all highly enlightened leaders of the day, infused the letter and spirit of that masterpiece of human wisdom into its preamble under which the people of India "solemnly resolved" to secure to all its citizens justice, equality and liberty of all kinds and to promote among them all "fraternity assuring the dignity of individual and unity of the nation". The details of these prefatory pledges were elaborated upon and fortified in Part III of the Constitution on people's Fundamental Rights. Before too long it was realised by experience that there was a pressing need to alert the people of the country, both the rulers and the ruled, also to their constitutional duties to the nation and the society. Part IV A was then added to spell out citizens' Fundamental Duties – joint and several. The foremost among these sacred obligations were, and

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO



remain, "to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions" and "to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities."

Now, so many years after the beginning of the constitutional era, many deeply patriotic citizens of the country see the prevailing ground situation as an antithesis of the Constitution. They have begun wondering if that magnificent charter of governance "enacted, adopted and given to ourselves" two years after Independence was just an Interim Constitution to be replaced in the coming years with a brand new unwritten one drawn on diametrically opposite lines. Have we, they are asking, really decided to completely abandon our old commitments and allegiance to the international human rights instruments and to kick out our constitutional pledges to preserve religious pluralism and maintain the citizens' dignity, equality and fraternity?

### An inoperative IPC

Long before the advent of Independence, India had enacted and given to all its inhabitants an Indian Penal Code with a full-fledged chapter on "Offences relating to Religion" laying down penalties for outraging religious feelings, insulting religion or beliefs, disturbing religious assemblies, wounding religious feelings, and other nefarious activities of the sort. Why are, one may ask, these provisions of the Code lying totally inoperative while many people are openly flouting them in broad daylight? Television and newspapers

regularly report how some of them, masquerading as saints, keep throwing dirt on the founder of the second largest religion of the contemporary world seen by its over two billion followers across the globe as the most highly revered figure next only to God. Does not all this attract application of the IPC offence of outraging religious feelings? And when some of them cross the limits to incite people to commit atrocities against, and even mass-killing, of the second largest group among the nation's citizenry, is their audacity not covered by any provision of our Penal Code or by any other law of the country?

The election law of India laid down in the Representation of the People Act of 1951 declares "promoting or attempting to promote feelings of enmity or hatred" on grounds of religion, etc. between different classes of citizens "in connection with election" to be a punishable offence (Section 125). Referring to it, an eminent apex court judge of the past, the late V.R. Krishna Iyer, had once observed: "It is a matter for profound regret that political communalism is foliating and flourishing largely because parties and politicians have not the will, professions apart, to give up the chase for power through politicizing communal identity." It is indeed saddening that, while the election law with its aforementioned penal provision remains intact, this lament of a deeply concerned jurist-judge seems to have become a permanent feature of political discourse across the country.

### 'Golden thread of unity'

The top court of the nation has in fact been constantly spelling out for us, from the very beginning, the meaning and implications of the road map the Constitution of the country had laid for us soon after Independence. In the case of *Ahmedabad St. Xavier's College vs the State of Gujarat* (1974), a large Bench of the Court had observed: "India is the second most populous country of the world. The people inhabiting this vast land profess different religions and speak different languages. It is a mosaic

of different religions, languages and cultures. Each of them has made a mark on Indian polity and India today represents a synthesis of them all. Despite the diversity of religion and language there runs through the fabric of the nation the golden thread of a basic innate unity."

Twenty years later in the cause célèbres captioned *S.R. Bommai vs Union of India* (1994), an even larger Bench of the Court had proclaimed that "Constitutional provisions prohibit the establishment of a theocratic State and prevent the State from either identifying itself with or otherwise favouring any particular religion" and "secularism is more than a passive attitude of religious tolerance. It is a positive concept of equal treatment of all religions."

### Fading 'light'

Announcing the tragic demise of the Father of the Nation on January 30, 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru had said: "The light has gone out of our lives; that light will be seen in this country and the world will see it for that light represented something more than the immediate present; it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom."

On that sad day, year after year since then, sirens have been blaring out in government offices and educational institutions alerting us to remember the teachings of that extraordinary leader who had played the key role in our struggle for Independence. But do we still have the will and the determination to let India remain what the Father of the Nation wanted it to be, then and always in future? Do we remember our first Prime Minister's optimism that the Mahatma's light "will be seen"? And, do we care for the solemn assurance given to the nation by another great Prime Minister of the country, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in 2003 that "India will always remain an open, inclusive and tolerant nation"? Are there any answers?

Tahir Mahmood is a former Dean of the Delhi University Law Faculty

## India's rights record, America's blinkered vision

Washington's diplomatic embrace is providing New Delhi a certain immunity from international criticism



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

**R**ecent Indian foreign policy has a chequered record, the vacillations over the Taliban resuming control in Afghanistan being one instance. But it cannot be denied that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been remarkably successful in maintaining cordial Indian relations with Washington under United States President Joe Biden despite overt wooing of former President Donald Trump.

### Accommodating view

India is considered a critical ally by the United States, the only designated Major Defence Partner, and Ambassador-Designate to India Eric Garcetti told the Senate, "Few nations are more vital to the future of American security and prosperity than India."

In Delhi last October, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, said of India's purchase of Russian military equipment, "We've been quite public about any country that decides to use the S-400. We think that it is dangerous and not in anybody's security interest," but our authorities did not think it necessary to establish.

A year ago, India ranked 142 in the World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has for successive years recommended that India be listed as a 'country of particular concern' due to its treatment of Muslims and Christians, and In-

dia is ranked in the Open Doors World Watch List for 'extreme' Christian persecution below Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. government has ignored all these findings to the dismay of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists due to Narendra Modi's positioning India as an indispensable partner, and his government has no sympathy for NGOs, portraying their conclusions as biased and uninformed.

The U.S. State Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices itself last March recorded "significant human rights issues" in India, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, violence against minorities, unjustified harassment of journalists, and censorship and blocking of websites. India is rated poorly by the U.S.-based Freedom House which called it 'partly free', Sweden's V-Dem Institute which dubbed it an 'electoral autocracy', The Economist's Democracy Index and the Stockholm Institute for Democracy which India had helped to establish.

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### The world media

Diplomacy does not proceed according to ethical standards; nor does the global media. Six dying in a gust of wind in Australia and six in an Illinois warehouse collapse make headlines, while reports that every 25 minutes an Indian woman commits suicide, 48 persons dying in a volcanic eruption in Java and 208 in a typhoon in Philippines are not newsworthy. Nor is the current heroic popular de-

mand in Sudan for a democratic government.

In past times, third world leaders in countries such as India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria tried to create a rival media platform, and Qatar, China and Russia started 24-hour news channels but cannot match the resources and reach of the entrenched, West-dominated English-medium news ecosystem which includes soft power assets such as music, film and culture. Hence, the Central Intelligence Agency is portrayed as all-knowing, despite its abject failures in the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Iraq's nuclear weapons and the Afghan army's capabilities.

World news is curated by a handful of western capitals, the 'read outs' being for the domestic audience, which can enjoy the U.S. and its allies forever fulminating against opponents who weekly submit to the diatribes. Threats of "massive consequences and severe economic cost" against Russia by G7 countries and the European Union are blandly announced without reference to what might be Russia's concerns for its own security. A boycott of the Winter Olympics in China by irrelevant western officials is heralded, but no boycott is threatened of the Football World Cup at Qatar, an absolute monarchy where there are scant civil and political rights, workers rights are negligible and homosexuality is deemed illegal.

The West's instrument of choice for penalising political adversaries is this: unilateral sanctions of dubious legality in international law. No audit has ever been taken of the immense suffering these sanctions inflict on innocent civilians.

The U.S. Treasury lists 36 groups of multiple sanctions, the latest of which is a typically insensitive measure against seven Bangladeshi, including the police chief, just before the 50th anniversary of that nation's liberation from American ally Pakistan.

### On the U.S.

For the world's oldest democracy to arbitrate on fundamental rights of others is ironic for a country where in 12 months ending March 2021, its police murdered 37 African-American people per million whites, when African-Americans comprise only 13% of the population. The Summit For Democracy hosted by U.S. President Joe Biden was predictably confused about its participants because not every democracy is liberal and not every society considered liberal is fully democratic. Meaningful summits should be global in attendance and concentrate on pressing problems such as inequality, climate change and arms control on earth and in space.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary



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

**Income and quota** It is difficult to swallow the Government's arguments in favour of the income limit set by it given the fact that it had not made any such rationale public while drafting the law (Page 1, "₹8 lakh income 'reasonable' cap for EWS quota, Centre tells SC", January 3). Consequently, the reasons proffered by the Government committee seem more like a post-facto rationalisation. As per data available in the public domain, almost 80% of households in India earn an annual income of less than

₹8 lakh. Income-tax data also show that the proportion of tax-payers earning more than this limit also comes to around 20%. Both these facts imply that this limit includes almost four-fifths of households and excludes merely the highest earners. Such a broad inclusion in the name of the economically weaker sections negates the alleged objective of economic justice. Another oversight in imposing any such income limit at the national level also ignores the wide disparity in incomes which exists across States. Such

bad legislation adds to the litigation pileup in courts. FIROZ AHMAD, New Delhi

**Amity is key** Pakistan and security. Do they really go together? Pakistan is a state that is in the vice-like grip of its military and follows the dictates of fundamentalists and radicals. Perennial hostility toward India has not helped Pakistan in any way. In the absence of a tall leader with vision, Pakistan is being pulled on all sides. More than a national

security policy, amity needs to be given importance. R. RAMANATHAN, Coimbatore

**Assembly polls** It is a matter of grave concern that the Election Commission intends holding polls to the five State Assemblies in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases almost pan India. Equally disturbing is the attitude of political parties in their greed for power. Adding fuel to the fire is most citizens becoming complacent. The heavens will not fall if the elections

are deferred. We cannot forget the bitter experience of the second wave. S. SESHAJIT, Chennai

**Mask protocol** Despite warnings of a third wave, crowding continues. Masks are being worn without covering the nose and mouth. While a vaccine

might help reduce the effects of an infection, only a good mask worn correctly can help cut virus transmission. The blame lies in poor implementation and compliance with COVID-19 protocols. KARTIKE SINGH, Faridabad, Haryana

**CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:** A sentence in the entry corresponding to Fifty Years Ago in the "From the Archives" column of January 3, 2022 – "PM rejects concept of superpower" dated January 3, 1972 – referred to Indira Gandhi talking about the concept of super powers and the resultant balance of power being 'not obsolete'. It should have been now obsolete.

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# The deafening silence of scientists

Few Indian scientists argue for the freedom of thought and are able to stand up against pseudoscience



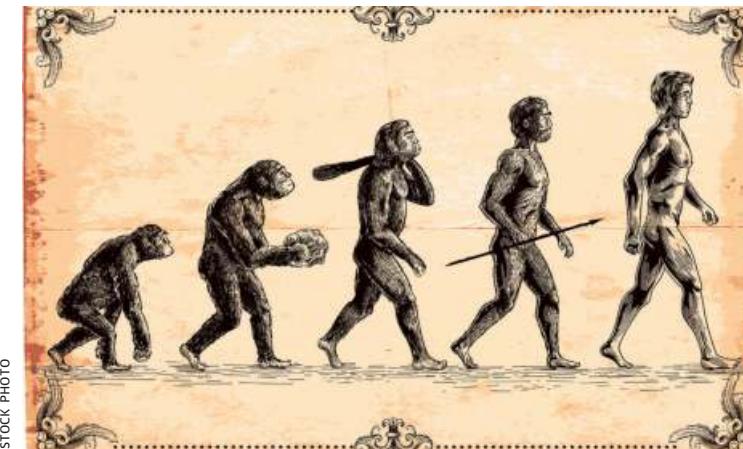
C.P. RAJENDRAN

In December 1954, Meghnad Saha, one of India's foremost astrophysicists and an elected parliamentarian, wrote to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, "My request to you is that you do not smother your Desdemona on the report of men like this particular Iago. I sometimes believe there are too many Iagos about you, as there have been in history about every person of power and prestige". By referring to the characters in Shakespeare's *Othello*, an aggrieved Saha was showing his displeasure at a situation that he perceived to be bad for Indian science wherein the courtship between the state and science was being ruined by the Machiavellian advisers of the then Prime Minister.

## A glorious tradition forgotten

We have come a long way from Nehruvian times when scientists could afford to be directly critical of the Prime Minister and still expect to get a pat on their shoulder in return. Over the past few years, a pernicious political landscape that encourages intolerance and superstition has been developed. This has proved to be non-conducive for the time-tested scientific model and freedom of inquiry. For the creation of knowledge, one should be able to think and express themselves freely. One also needs to have a space for dissent, which is a fundamental requirement for democracies to thrive. Are our scientists vocal enough to argue for the freedom of thought and are they able to stand up against pseudoscience? Their silence has given rise to the perception that they too are complicit in creating an unhealthy atmosphere of ultra-nationalism and jingoism, where the glorious tradition followed by socially committed scientists like Saha is forgotten.

We have seen this lack of reactivity from Indian scientists and science academics on many occasions in the recent past, starting with the conduct of the 102nd Indian Science Congress in 2015. How did a session suffused with extreme nationalism



and promoting junk science find its way into this prestigious meet? How was it vetted and approved by a high-profile committee containing the country's front-ranking scientists? Completely sidelining the real scientific contributions made in ancient and medieval times, ridiculous claims were made in that forum about ancient 'Bharat' being a repository of all modern knowledge. Except a few, like the late Pushpa Bhargava, who always fretted about the lack of scientific temper among Indian scientists, most of our leaders in science chose to ignore something that was patently wrong.

Pseudo-scientific remarks by responsible political leaders have continued to hog the limelight ever since. Even when a former Union Minister insisted that Darwin's Theory of Evolution was scientifically wrong, leading scientists remained silent save a few. More recently, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief made a misinformed statement that the DNA of all the people in India has been the same for 40,000 years. His message clearly goes against the proven fact that Indians have mixed genetic lineages originating from Africa, the Mediterranean, and Eurasian steppes. As a part of revisionist history-writing, the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur has now issued a 2022 calendar. The purpose of it is to argue for a Vedic cultural foundation for the Indus Valley Civilisation – a theory that goes against all the available evidence; morphing an Indus Valley single-horned bull seal into a horse will not solve the evidentiary lacuna. A retinue of junk science propagators and new-age 'gurus' have been flourishing in this

anti-science environment, often marketing questionable concoctions including cow products to cure COVID-19 and even homosexuality, as though it is some sort of disease. Pseudoscience has provided a foundational base for a huge money-making industry that successfully peddles quackery by sustaining and exploiting the people's ignorance.

Our social and political life resonates uncannily with the fascist era of the 1930s-40s when Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini argued that the "white race" was locked in a deadly demographic competition with races of "lesser purity" whose numbers were growing much faster. It can be instructive in our current political climate to reflect on how science failed as a bulwark against such regressive viewpoints. The science historian, Massimo Mazzotti, at the University of California, Berkeley, ably showed how the fascist regime in Italy, using various intimidation and surveillance tactics, made academic elites toe the official line. The faculties did so without making an actual anti-fascist choice. Instead, they entered the grey zone of cynical detachment. It was due to cynicism and careerism that the scientists of Italy derided racist policies as foolish in private but did not bother to question them publicly. Like Italy, racism and 'othering' was very much a part of the political landscape in Germany under the Nazi regime, which saw big exodus of high-ranking scientists with Jewish tags.

## Reasons for toeing the line

As discussed by Naresh Dadhich, an Indian theoretical physicist, in an article, one of the reasons for this ac-

quiescence is that scientific research relies almost entirely on funding from the government. So, a fear of retribution acts against the idea of engagement with society. Another equally valid reason is that our contemporary science researchers remain entirely cut off from liberal intellectual discourse, unlike in the initial years after Independence. For most scientists today, the idea of science as a form of argument remains foreign. For many of them, exposure to the social sciences is minimal at university. They also don't get trained in a broad range of social topics at the school level.

Globally, STEM students downplay altruism and arguably demonstrate less social concern than students from other streams. The blame squarely lies with the pedagogy followed in our science education system. The leading science and technology institutes recruit students right after school and largely host one or two perfunctory social science courses. Students, thus, mostly remain oblivious to the general liberal intellectual discourse. This issue is of major concern, as the 21st century is witnessing a new rise of illiberal democracy with fascist tendencies that generate intolerance and exclusion in various parts of the world, including India. We are also living at a time when scientific advice is marginalised in public policy debates ranging from natural resource use to environmental impacts.

In the early 20th century, many leading scientists were deeply engaged with philosophy and had developed a distinctive way of thinking about the implications of science on society. They were much more proactive about societal issues. The continuity of that legacy appears to have broken. A cowed-down scientific enterprise is not helpful in retaining the secular autonomy of academic pursuits. To regain this cultural space among younger practitioners, science education must include pedagogical inputs that help learners take a deliberative stand against false theories that could undermine civil society and democratic structures.

C.P. Rajendran is an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru and an author of a forthcoming book, 'Earthquakes of the Indian Subcontinent'. Views are personal

# Aiding in governance

The synergy of NGOs, Government and corporates is the holy grail of development



Lijo CHACKO

It is well known that the collaborative effort of markets and the Government leads to development of a country. We also know that engaging with communities and non-state informal institutions is as important as working with the Government machinery.

Section 135 of the Companies Act mandates corporates who are beyond a certain level of profits and turnover to pay at least 2% of their net profits before tax to the development space. This law gives corporates the necessary impetus to collaborate with non-state actors like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). This strengthening of citizenry-private partnerships is a major component of development activities. Non-state actors, because of their depth of engagement with communities, bring patient capital to corporate board rooms and help the state, too, by engaging in welfare activities. This is a classic case of state-driven governance mechanism promoting collaboration among non-state actors.

A key pillar of democratic governance is citizens' power to question the state. NGOs and voluntary groups/organisations have played a significant role in building capacities of citizens to hold governments accountable. With the Government taking the stand that any action by an NGO which is critical of the government is 'anti-national', more so when funded from abroad, the space for foreign grants has shrunk. Hence, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) grants, which wouldn't necessarily have flowed had it not been for the CSR law, have assumed importance to provide the much-needed sustenance to NGOs and CSOs as key players in non-state governance.

## Essential cogs in the wheel

State governance should be evolving in nature. However, the Indian bureaucratic elite have little appetite for risk-taking and innovation because of the constant changing goalposts of their politician-bosses or because the quantum of work is more than what they can efficiently handle. Bureaucrats, therefore, often take recourse to the status quo even if it is to at least get some work done and not stall everything by campaigning for change, especially in the realm of governance. There is also the fear of fail-

ure, with its deep-rooted consequence of non-risk-takers smoothly sailing to the top posts. In such contexts, it is the non-state actor who innovates and creates breakthrough models of community engagement. They also become the vehicle to carry the demands of people to formal institutions. We saw this in the case of the Right to Information (RTI) campaign, which became a law after decades-long efforts by NGOs. The law has brought a dramatic change in the degree of transparency in India, with most Government ministries falling under its ambit.

Corporate houses, when implementing their CSR activities, and governments, when executing their flagship projects, especially in the years preceding elections, are aggressive in their targets. But that doesn't necessarily work in the development sector where change happens at a glacial pace. It is the non-state actors, who know the lay of the land, who bridge the gap between people and firms/stakeholders.

It is common knowledge that the District Collector calls on vetted NGOs/CSOs to implement various schemes during the normal course of the day or to step in at short notice when calamities strike. NGOs and CSOs sometimes do the heavy lift and ensure that schemes reach the last person even in the face of disaster. When non-state actors take a large load off the state's shoulder, the state can focus more on governance.

Research shows that it is the synergy of NGOs, Government and corporates which is the holy grail of development. I have learnt from being on the field that NGOs and CSOs with their penetration are best suited for last-mile delivery of government schemes or implementation of a corporate house's CSR work, thus nudging one another in the path to a developmental state.

The tension between the tenets of liberty and equality is balanced by fraternity provided by the empathetic NGOs and CSOs in the journey towards a development state. The CSR law has made the corporate world not only clean its own mess but has also created a legal framework for corporates to work with NGOs and CSOs. NGOs and CSOs in India, irrespective of the open hostility of the current dispensation, will play a major role in mobilising citizen action to right various wrongs. They can help contribute to better polity as well as better governance. Most importantly, they have the legitimacy to operate not just as actors who must ride into the sunset after their job is done but to be as integral cogs in the wheel of good governance.

Lijo Chacko is with the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, U.K. Views expressed here are personal

## STATE OF PLAY

### Chasing Rajenthra Bhalaji

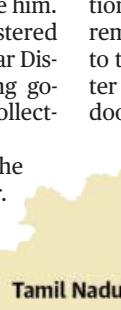
Why the AIADMK is forced to defend him despite his unpopular image

D. SURESH KUMAR

A hunt for former Minister K.T. Rajenthra Bhalaji in connection with two job-related cheating cases is proving to be a challenge for the Tamil Nadu police. Over a fortnight after the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court dismissed the AIADMK leader's anticipatory bail applications, six special police teams have failed to trace him. Among the complaints registered against him by the Virudhunagar District Crime Branch is cheating government job aspirants after collecting ₹1.6 crore.

There are not many in the AIADMK to shed tears for Mr. Bhalaji, though publicly the party has called the police action an act of political vendetta by the DMK government. For, the rustic politician is controversy's second child. He had not only alienated local party functionaries with his aggression but caused much embarrassment to the leadership by taking a pronounced pro-Hindu and pro-BJP stand as Minister. In the run up to the 2019 parliamentary polls, he declared, "[Prime Minister] Modi is our [AIADMK] daddy, India's daddy!" This did not sit well with the cadres who had witnessed former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa lead the party to a historic electoral success in 2014 with an epic remark: "Who is a better administrator – Gujarat's Modi or this Tamil Nadu lady?"

Caught on audio once threatening to eliminate an opponent and later justifying it, and on video manhandling a party man, Mr. Bhalaji has never been known for public niceties. He called for cutting off actor-politician Kamal Haasan's tongue when the latter described Nathuram Godse as "free India's first Hindu extremist". As Minister, he went on record saying if the support for "Islamic terrorism" continued, "nobody can stop Hindu terrorism". Mr. Bhalaji had also embarrassed then Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami by insisting that the murder of a BJP functionary in Tamil Nadu had a "religious angle" despite the police rul-



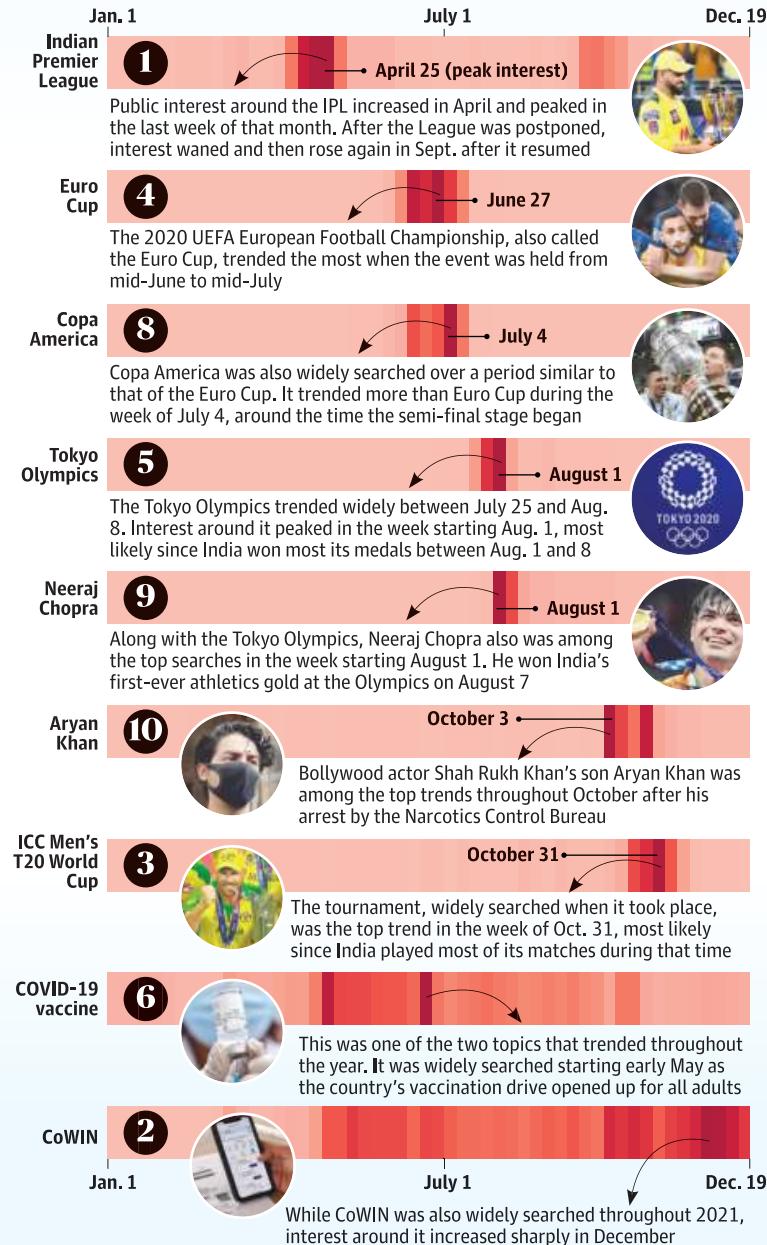
Tamil Nadu

## DATA POINT

### What Indians searched for in 2021

According to Google Trends, the Indian Premier League was the most searched topic in India in 2021. Along with cricket, other sporting events such as the Tokyo Olympics, the Euro Cup and Copa America also garnered wide interest. However, these topics trended only when the events were streamed live. On the other hand, CoWIN and COVID-19 vaccine, which were among the top trends last year, garnered sustained interest throughout the year, especially after the country's vaccination drive opened up for all adults in May. Terms around the pandemic and vaccination also dominated various categories such as "how to" and "near me". Among movies, *Jai Bhim* was the most searched, and among personalities Neeraj Chopra and Aryan Khan were widely searched. By The Hindu Data Team

**1. Most googled** | The chart shows the most searched terms by Indians in 2021. The darker the shade, the higher the popularity of the topic/trend at that specific time. The darkest shade represents the peak popularity of a search term last year. The lightest shade corresponds to nearly no searches for that term on a date. The topics are arranged chronologically based on their peak popularity, and the number indicates the overall popularity rank



## 2. Search categories

The table lists the 10 most searched topics under a category. For instance, under the search category "how to," the topic that found the most interest was "How to register for COVID vaccine". Similarly, under the search category "near me," the topic that was searched the most was "COVID vaccine near me".

**NEAR ME** | 1. COVID vaccine near me | 2. COVID test near me | 3. Food delivery near me | 4. Oxygen cylinder near me | 5. Covid hospital near me | 6. Tiffin service near me | 7. CT scan near me | 8. Takeout restaurants near me | 9. Fastag near me | 10. Driving school near me

**HOW TO...** | 1. How to register for COVID vaccine | 2. How to download vaccination certificate | 3. How to increase oxygen level | 4. How to link PAN with Aadhaar | 5. How to make oxygen at home | 6. How to buy dogecoin in India | 7. How to make banana bread | 8. How to check IPO allotment status | 9. How to invest in bitcoin | 10. How to calculate percentage of marks

**WHAT IS...** | 1. What is black fungus | 2. What is the factorial of hundred | 3. What is Taliban | 4. What is happening in Afghanistan | 5. What is remdesivir | 6. What is the square root of 4 | 7. What is steroid | 8. What is toolkit | 9. What is Squid Game | 10. What is delta plus variant

**MOVIES** | 1. Jai Bhim | 2. Shershaah | 3. Radhe | 4. Bell Bottom | 5. Eternals | 6. Master | 7. Sooryavanshi | 8. Godzilla vs Kong | 9. Dangal | 10. Bhuj: The Pride of India

**NEWS EVENTS** | 1. Tokyo Olympics | 2. Black Fungus | 3. Afghanistan news | 4. West Bengal elections | 5. Tropical cyclone Tauktae | 6. Lockdown | 7. Suez Canal Crisis | 8. Farmers Protest | 9. Bird Flu | 10. Cyclone Yaas

**PERSONALITIES** | 1. Neeraj Chopra | 2. Aryan Khan | 3. Shehnaz Gill | 4. Raj Kundra | 5. Elon Musk | 6. Vicki Kaushal | 7. P.V. Sindhu | 8. Bajrang Punia | 9. Sushil Kumar | 10. Natasha Dalal

**SPORTS EVENTS** | 1. Indian Premier League | 2. ICC T20 World Cup | 3. Euro Cup | 4. Tokyo Olympics | 5. Copa America | 6. Wimbledon | 7. Paralympics | 8. French Open | 9. La Liga | 10. English Premier League

## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 4, 1972

Mujib to be released unconditionally

New Delhi, Jan. 3: Pakistan President Bhutto today announced his decision to release Bangla Bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman unconditionally "in response to world opinion," but left vague the actual date of release. Mr. Bhutto made known his decision at a mammoth public meeting in Karachi at which he sought the "people's approval" for this course in the manner of ancient Roman rulers. "You have relieved me of a great burden," he remarked after the audience, estimated by Radio Pakistan to number lakhs, roared its approval. Mr. Bhutto said he would have comprehensive talks with Mujib on his return to Rawalpindi and would thereafter release him "unconditionally". He did not mention when he would reach Rawalpindi and when the talks with Sheikh Mujib would take place. He said he would go to his home town of Larkhana before returning to Rawalpindi. Mr. Bhutto addressed one of the largest crowds at a political rally in Karachi in 20 years. Speaking in Urdu for 90 minutes, Mr. Bhutto said he first planned to go to his hometown of Larkhana, about 500 km north of here, and then see Sheikh Mujib for talks he said he had started in Rawalpindi. "I will then release him unconditionally and without bargaining," said Mr. Bhutto.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 4, 1922

The ways of the Pro-Consul

The visit of the Prince, it was fondly hoped by some, would bring in its train peace and contentment to the people of India but it is regrettable as observed by Pundit Hridayan Kunzru, that the visit should have roused bitter passions and caused in some places, riot and bloodshed. Strange are the ways of the Pro-Consul of the "land of white Elephants". Nationalist leaders are cast into prison under one section or another of the I.P.C., and under the Defence of India Rules 32 Indians and 16 Burmans have been ordered to leave Rangoon within 24 hours and not to return to Rangoon until January 12th. We are informed by our Rangoon correspondent that it is notified that representations made by Executive members of bodies that have resolved on a campaign of Non-Co-operation or boycott will not be taken notice of by the Government. Another order is still more interesting. It is stated that nationalist papers will be removed from the list of papers receiving the "patronage of government advertisements" and even notices and communiques are not to be sent to them.

## FROM PAGE ONE

## 40 lakh adolescents get first shot of vaccine

Each centre has been provided 250 doses of Covaxin. Half of these vaccine doses will be given to the children registering online, and the rest will be for on-the-spot arrivals, the official said.

In Tamil Nadu, where Chief Minister M.K. Stalin launched the COVID-19 vaccination for children, a total of 3,03,499 children were vaccinated till 6 p.m. on Monday. A total of 33,46,000 children in the 15-17 age group are eligible to get vaccinated in Tamil Nadu. Districts such as Madurai, Salem, Cuddalore, Kanyakumari, Villupuram, Kallakurichi and Tiruvannamalai accounted for a coverage of over 10,000 children on the first day.

As many as 38,417 children in Kerala received the vaccine, on Monday, from a target population of 15.34 lakhs. Thiruvananthapuram had the maximum number of children - 9,338 - receiving the vaccine. As many as 551 vaccination centres had been set up across Kerala.

To avoid confusion, the vaccination centres for children sported pink sign boards to distinguish them from the vaccination centres for adults.

At the end of the day, none of the centres had reported any adverse events following immunisation, State Health Minister Veena George, said.

In Telangana, Health Mi-

nister T. Harish Rao, who participated in the launch event at the Primary Health Centre (PHC), Banjara Hills, said the online registration system is being followed as the density of the beneficiaries is high in municipal corporations and online registrations will ensure less crowding at the vaccination centres. It is estimated that 18.70 lakh children in the age group 15-18 years will receive the vaccine.

The Karnataka government, which had planned to vaccinate 6.38 lakh children, was able to meet 65% of its target. Camps were organised in schools and pre-university colleges across the State.

In Bengaluru, 29,423 children were vaccinated. There were many cases of students who could not get the first shot as they had forgotten to bring parental consent forms or other documents such as identity cards.

Lakshadweep Islands Administrator Praful Patel launched the COVID-19 vaccination drive for children at a function held at the Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Kavaratti.

Vaccination for the 15 to 17 years age group began in all the 10 inhabited islands. A total of 3,469 children has been identified as the target group.

(With inputs from bureaus)

## China constructing bridge on Pangong lake

In February 2020, as part of the first phase of disengagement, both sides agreed for complete disengagement on the north and south banks. The Indian Army has a permanent position near Finger 3, the Dhan Singh Thapa post, while the PLA has a base east of Finger 8. The south bank leads to the Kailash range and to the Chushul sector.

Since the August action, China has taken up construction of alternate roads away from our line of sight, a defence official stated. As reported by *The Hindu* last June, China had intensified construction work behind the main confrontation

points in Aksai Chin.

A satellite image of the area put out by an open source intelligence analyst with Twitter handle @dresfa shows bridge like structure between the closest points of the two banks.

In a separate incident of a video by Chinese media showing PLA soldiers with a map in Galwan on January 01, an Army source said it was not in the location of the clash last year or the buffer zone set up after the first phase of disengagement. "It appears to be propaganda. The place [clash site] doesn't have any markings as shown in the video," the source added.

## Over \$30 million of AAI assets seized by Devas

Devas Multimedia signed a contract with Antrix (ISRO's commercial arm) in 2005 under which the latter would build and launch two ISRO satellites and lease the corresponding S-band satellite spectrum to Devas, which in turn would use it to provide its Internet services. However, following a leaked draft CAG audit report pointing to a number of potential irregularities in the deal, the UPA government cancelled it in February 2011. However, no evidence of bribery was found and two international arbitration hearings ruled against the Indian government for wrongful cancellation of the deal. The Interna-

tional Chamber of Commerce's (ICC) arbitration court in September 2015 ordered Antrix to pay \$672 million to Devas and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), under the Indo-Mauritius bilateral investment treaty awarded on October 13, 2020, over \$111 million plus interest. The action in Canada aims to enforce only the PCA award.

The Superior Court of Quebec found that the AAI is India, in so far as it is an organ of the state of India, inseparable from India or is the alter ego of India. As a result, the Treaty Awards enforceable in Quebec can be executed on the AAI's assets.

## Engineering student detained in app case

Officials had said they were trying to identify accounts that were involved in uploading the pictures and were deactivated after the complaint was filed.

The incident came six months after "Sulli Deals" was uploaded on the same hosting platform. Two separate FIRs were lodged at that time, one in Delhi and the other in Noida. No one has been identified in that investigation and the investigation has not progressed af-

ter no response was given by GitHub, officials said.

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has also taken cognisance of the case and issued summons to the Delhi Police to provide case files of both Sulli Deals and Bulli Bai before January 6.

In Mumbai, Deputy of Commissioner of Police Rashmi Karandikar told *The Hindu*, "We have registered FIR against founder of GitHub and Twitter handles that used photos of women."

## Centre seeks urgent listing of EWS reservation case today

Challenge to 10% quota has delayed postgraduate medical admissions

## LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

**C** Considering that the currently effective Income Tax exemption limit is around ₹8 lakh for individuals, the committee is of the view that the gross annual income limit of ₹8 lakh for the entire family would be reasonable for inclusion into EWS

EXPERT COMMITTEE REPORT TO SC



income criterion to identify EWS among forward classes of society for grant of 10% reservation in NEET medical admissions under the all-India quota (AIQ) category.

The court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by NEET aspirants challenging a July 29 notification of the Centre announcing a 27% quota to OBCs and 10% reservation to EWS in AIQ.

The Supreme Court's query was significant as the One Hundred and Third Constitutional Amendment of 2019, which introduced the 10% EWS quota, is itself under challenge before a larger Bench. The amendment is under question for

making economic criterion as the sole ground for grant of reservation benefits.

## Committee report

On November 25, the Centre had informed the court that it had taken a considered decision to revisit the criterion for determining EWS.

The Union government then formed an expert committee comprising former Finance Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey; ICSSR Member Secretary V.K. Malhotra; and Principal Economic Adviser to the Government of India Sanjeev Sanyal. The committee submitted its report to the government on December 31.

"The current gross annual family income limit for EWS of ₹8 lakh or less may be retained. In other words, only those families whose annual income is up to ₹8 lakh would be eligible to get the benefit of EWS reservation," the report said.

The committee said the ₹8 lakh criterion strikes a "fine balance" between over-inclusion and inclusion errors.

"The figure ensures that most low-income people who are not required to pay income tax are not excluded and are covered in EWS and at the same time it should not be so high that it becomes over-inclusive by including many incomes tax-paying middle and high income families into EWS. Therefore, considering that the currently effective Income Tax exemption limit is around ₹8 lakh for individuals, the committee is of the view that the gross annual income limit of ₹8 lakh for the entire family would be reasonable for inclusion into EWS," the report reasoned.

## Chargesheet filed in Lakhimpur Kheri case

Ashish Mishra, 13 others named

## OMAR RASHID

LUCKNOW

Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra, was present at the site of the Lakhimpur Kheri incident in which eight persons were killed, according to the statements of witnesses, a government counsel said on Monday as the Special Investigation Team submitted a 5,000-page chargesheet in a local court.

The SIT had arrested 13 accused persons in the FIR lodged over the killing of the farmers.

"As per the statement of witnesses, Ashish Mishra was present at the spot," S.P. Yadav, senior prosecution officer, told presspersons, adding that this was part of the case diary.

Mr. Ashish Mishra and his father had been saying that he was not present at the site in Tikonia when three vehicles from his convoy ran over protesting farmers, killing four of them, on October 3.

Mr. Ashish Mishra, alias Monu, had said he was present at his ancestral village of Banveerpur overseeing the annual wrestling event conducted by his family in memory of his grandfather.

A local journalist Raman Kashyap died after being mowed down. Three BJP workers, one a driver, were allegedly lynched by the angry crowd in retaliation.

The chargesheet filed in the Chief Judicial Magistrate court names 13 accused, apart from Mr. Ashish Mishra. They face charges of murder, attempt to murder, and criminal conspiracy, those under relevant sections of the Arms Act, and others.

The SIT had arrested 13 accused persons in the FIR lodged over the killing of the farmers.

The name of the 14th accused Virendra Shukla was added to the chargesheet under Section 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), Mr. Yadav said.

The investigators recorded the statements of 208 witnesses.

The lawyers for the farmers said they were not satisfied with the investigation as the chargesheet did not include the name of the Union Minister, though the vehicle involved in the incident was registered in his name.

## IN BRIEF



**Amit Shah reviews security challenges**

NEW DELHI Union Home Minister Amit Shah convened a meeting on Monday to review the emerging security challenges, the Ministry of Home Affairs said. He stressed the need for better coordination and synergy among the Central and the State security agencies, it said.

## Four additional HC judges made permanent

NEW DELHI Four additional judges – one from the Calcutta High Court and three from the Bombay High Court – were elevated as permanent judges on Monday. The Department of Justice in the Law Ministry said another additional judge of the Bombay High Court was given a one-year term to continue as an additional judge. Before being made permanent judges, additional judges usually serve a term of two years.

## SC notice to Centre, Manipur on ILP system

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Union and the Manipur governments to respond to a plea challenging the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system in the State. Manipur is the fourth state where ILP is applicable. It contended that the ILP provides unrestrained power to the State to restrict entry and exit of non-indigenous people or those who are not permanent residents of Manipur.

## Ganjam district is now child marriage free

BHUBANESWAR Odisha's Ganjam has declared itself as a child marriage free district – the first one in the State. The district administration has been able to stop as many as 450 child marriages and video-record 48,383 marriages in 2020 and 2021. "We decided in 2019 to prevent child marriages on mission mode and at the same time generate general awareness against it," the District Magistrate said.

## MLA moves HC for bail in attempt-to-murder case

MUMBAI Nitesh Rane, BJP MLA, on Monday approached the Bombay High Court seeking anticipatory bail in an attempt-to-murder case. A week earlier, a Kankavli resident named Santosh Parab, 44, had filed a police complaint claiming he was assaulted by certain persons linked with Mr. Nitesh, the son of Union Minister Narayan Rane. The case is likely to be heard on January 4.

## LeT 'commander' killed, say police

Saleem Paray was shot dead in Shalimar Garden; another gunned down in Gusu

## PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR

Two militants were killed by the police in Srinagar and one intruder was shot dead by the BSF near the International Border (IB) at Arnia in Jammu on Monday.

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) "commander" Muhammad Saleem Paray was trapped inside the famous Mughal garden Shalimar in Srinagar in the afternoon. Policemen wearing civilian clothes carried out the operation following a specific tip-off.

The police cornered Paray in Shalimar, but he opened fire [at the security forces]. In the retaliatory firing, he was killed. His killing is a big success for the police. He was involved in around a dozen killings in 2016," Inspector-General of Police Vijay Kumar said.

The apex court took a stern view of the fact that charges have not yet been framed by the trial court in the case. It has sought a report from the Balandshahr trial judge specifying the time needed to do so.

The apex court

police said.

The police identified him as Hafiz, alias Hamza, from Pakistan. "He was involved in the killing of two policemen in Bandipora and after this terror incident, he shifted to the Harwan area of Srinagar," Mr. Kumar said.

Earlier, the police suspected that they had encircled two militants inside the garden but found only one bo-

dy. The second militant, later killed in Gusu, may have fled from the garden.

## Border killing

A BSF spokesman said, "Alert and brave BSF troops on the IB in Arnia area saw the movement of a suspected Pakistani person and he was challenged. He did not pay any heed and was subsequently shot dead by the

troops." The Army on Monday evening said that a group of Pakistani terrorists were trying to attempt to infiltrate from the Line of Control in Poonch district. "Alert troops foiled the infiltration bid, and subsequent search of the area lead to recovery of ammunition and Pakistani currency left behind by the fleeing terrorists," a Jammu-based Army spokesman said.

## Edtech regulation policy on the cards: Education Minister

Pradhan says no place for exploitation or monopoly

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The booming education technology sector, which has benefited from the disruptions in traditional education modes during the pandemic, is likely to come under regulation soon, with Union Ministries discussing framing of a common policy, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

At a virtual event to distribute coupons valued at ₹253 crore for over 12 lakh socially and economically disadvantaged students to get free access to EdTech courses, Mr. Pradhan said, "There is no place for exploitation or monopoly" in the sector.

"We have heard reports that some education technology companies are exploiting students with loans for fee-based courses. If someone wants to subscribe for these out of their own free will, there is no problem. But students should not be lured to take loans by false promises from them," Mr. Pradhan said noting that advisories had been issued late last month by schools and the



Dharmendra Pradhan

ulation by the government, similar to the bricks-and-mortar tuition and coaching services which they are slowly taking over.

"The Government of India does not want to place restrictions but we are firm on certain things," Mr. Pradhan said.

## Large market

"We offer a large market and all are welcome to reach out to Indian students but there cannot be a monopoly. We have a welfare model. [The companies] can come and do business and create wealth. But simultaneously, you cannot exploit my students," he warned.

Repeated Internet disruptions and outage marred Monday's event held at the offices of the Education Ministry, illustrating some of the other challenges for educational technology firms seeking to reach students from poor homes, or in remote areas, with limited Internet connectivity.

"In this modern 21st century world, electricity and Internet have become essentials just like air, water, food, clothing and housing," he said.

## SC judge asks new CBI SIs to inculcate integrity

Strive for truth: Justice Maheshwari

## DEVESH K. PANDEY

NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Dinesh Maheshwari on Monday called upon the newly inducted sub-inspectors of the CBI to inculcate institutional integrity, strive to seek the truth and assist the court of law in coming to a decision which upheld the cause of justice.

Justice Dinesh Maheshwari, who was the chief guest at the investiture ceremony of the 24th batch of the SI trainees, congratulated them and asked them to discharge their responsibilities impartially and in consonance with the oath of allegiance to the country.

"As an individual, the officers have learnt as to what integrity is about, how a person is supposed to be, as we say, of unquestionable integrity," he said, going beyond personal integrity, the officers must understand and inculcate institutional integrity.

"Your individual integrity, we will have no doubt about, but then, institutional integrity, again, calls upon you to understand what your surroundings are, what your institution requires, what is required of the best of your 'I' to our 'we'. The aim of these academies like your academy while training you is ultimately



Justice Dinesh Maheshwari (right) presenting an award during the ceremony.

ly to integrate you into the institutional integrity," he said, according to a CBI statement.

**Adityanath should contest from Braj: MP**

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

After Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath revealed on Saturday that he is amenable to contesting the Assembly polls due early this year in the State, BJP Rajya Sabha member Harnath Singh Yadav has requested that he fight from Braj in the western part of the State.

Mr. Yadav, who hails from the area, has written to BJP national president J.P. Nadda in this regard.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, the MP said he was a "madhyastha" interceding between "Bhagwan Krishna" and Mr. Nadda. "Both Bhagwan Krishna and Yogiji appeared together in my dreams and the next day itself I despatched the letter," he said.

**Demand for temple**  
Braj and the adjoining areas of Mathura and Vrindavan are important pilgrimage spots for those worshipping Lord Krishna.

Significantly, in Mathura, the Sangh Parivar is making demands for a temple again at a spot where a mosque exists.

When asked whether the farmers' movement and the resentment against the BJP among farmer groups may make Mathura or anywhere in western Uttar Pradesh a risky proposition for the Chief Minister to contest, Harnath Singh Yadav denied the possibility.

"Yogiji's government has done a lot of work, including in terms of law and order; he will win from this area for sure," he asserted.

"Kisan ab shaant mann se aankalan karengay [farmers will now assess the situation with a calmer mind]," he observed.

Mr. Adityanath said he was willing to contest any seat, "whether Gorakhpur, Kashi or Mathura" as directed by the party's top leadership.

## Sidhu promises dole for women

He offers ₹2,000 a month to homemakers; AAP has offered ₹1,000 to all women

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Days after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) promised to pay a monthly sum of ₹1,000 to adult women in Punjab if voted to power, the ruling Congress on Monday played its card to garner the support of women voters by promising to pay ₹2,000 a month to homemakers, if the party assumed power in the State.

The announcement was made by Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu at a rally in Barnala district. The AAP was quick to take a dig at the Congress State president, and said Mr. Sidhu was "a person with no stand".

At the rally, Mr. Sidhu said ₹2,000 a month would be provided to homemakers.

"It is important that their [women] hard work be recognised. They will also be provided home- and kitchen-based business opportunities and interest-free loans up to ₹2 lakh to run them.

Further, they will be provided with eight gas cylinders a year to keep their kitchen running under all circumstances," he said.



Poll trumpet: Navjot Singh Sidhu announced rewards to girls on completion of various stages of school. ■ FILE PHOTO

He said women's empowerment was at the centre of the country's narrative and it was important to help women of Punjab to achieve their full potential by giving them visibility, representation and power.

"Giving women freebies as the AAP does will not empower them in this community," he said.

"Unlike the AAP, the Punjab Model under the aegis of the Punjab Congress Committee intends to work towards cohesive growth and not isolated self-serving short-term agendas."

Offering a slew of freebies in an attempt to garner women's support and form the

next government in the State, Mr. Sidhu announced that to battle the high dropout rates of girls from school, it is proposed that girls would be rewarded ₹5,000 on completion of Class 5 and ₹10,000 on completion of Class 8.

### Freebies on offer

"On completion of Class 10, ₹15,000, along with a digital tablet, will be provided to girl students for digital education and finally on completion of Class 12, ₹20,000 shall be given. However, to keep them motivated and continuing their education, electric scooter subsidies will be launched so that the

women can travel safely and independently on long distances to colleges and universities across districts and villages with ease under the Punjab model," he said.

### 'Bid to lure voters'

As Mr. Sidhu advanced 'freebies' to lure voters ahead of the Assembly election, Raghav Chadha, AAP leader and co-in-charge of the party's Punjab affairs, called Mr. Sidhu a person without a stand.

Sharing a video of Mr. Sidhu on Twitter, Mr. Chadha said, "There is a saying in Punjab that 'even a bicycle has a stand, but Sidhu has no stand'."

In the first part of the video, Mr. Sidhu is seen critical of Arvind Kejriwal's announcement of giving ₹1000 to all women above 18 years of age in Punjab. And, in the second part, Mr. Sidhu himself is making an announcement to give ₹2,000 monthly and eight LPG gas cylinders free of cost to women of Punjab.

He accused Mr. Sidhu and the Congress of copying the announcements of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

## Channi's role at top does not mean much for Punjab SCs

Lack of cohesiveness and leadership bogs the group down

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

Punjab has the highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population among States at nearly 32%; yet the community has not seen the emergence of strong leaders across key political parties. Sharp caste divisions within the SCs, landlessness and indifference of political parties are among the key determinants to their rise.

Ahead of the 2022 Assembly election, the Congress's electoral strike in appointing Charanjit Singh Channi as Chief Minister has brought the community back into focus in the political arena.

The Scheduled Castes, as their counterparts in other parts of the country, are not a homogeneous community.

They are scattered among 39 castes and five major religions – Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists – besides being followers of a large number of sects and faiths such as Ravidassias, Ramdassias, Kavirpanthis and Radhasoamis.

Underlining the sharp caste-religious divide, Ronki Ram, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Chair Professor of Political Science at Panjab University, said: "Among the 39 castes, two caste groups constitute about 80% of the SC population (31.91%, 2011 census). The two groups comprise four castes – Valmikis and Mazhabis, Chamaras and Ad-Dharmis. Each of these two main caste groups consists of 40% population of the SC population.

"Politically too, they are equally divided along the ideological lines of the main political parties. Their political divide is vividly exhibited in the bifurcation of SC reservation of 25% into 12.5% for Valmiki and Mazhabis castes and the remaining 12.5% for the rest of the 37 castes. The caste and religious divisions over the years preclude them from developing their own dis-



Reluctant step: Experts say appointment of Charanjit Singh Channi is a move borne out of compulsion. ■ PTI

tinct and effective State-level leadership. Finding it difficult to cultivate an exclusively SC-based leadership at the State level, different caste-based SC factions align with different political parties to get elected in 34 reserved seats [in the 117-member House]."

### Jat Sikhs' dominance

Moreover, the SCs stand nowhere near the Jat Sikhs in the latter's dominance of farmland ownership.

The majority of the SCs are agricultural workers employed by the economically stronger community that has dominated politics,

The leadership in the mainstream political parties, the Congress and the Akali Dal, has been dominated by the Jat Sikhs. They never nurtured any Dalit leader to ensure that their dominance continues. Even now, the appointment of Charanjit Singh Channi is a move borne out of compulsion. Firstly, Ambika Soni declined the offer of the Chief Minister's post, then the party couldn't arrive at a consensus between Sunil Jakhar and Sukhjinder Randhawa. Mr. Channi's name was not even in the contention. His name came up for discussion only after the party ran out of its primary options," Mr. Kali says.

Professor Ram notes that the mainstream political parties have targeted the SC population region-wise, which prompted further factionalism. "Babu Kanshi Ram of the Bahujan Samaj Party that featured Dalits as a political plank for the first time in 1992 when it secured over 16% votes and won nine seats, but it has since seen its support declining to around

1.5% votes in the 2017 Assembly polls.

Observers feel the indifferent attitude of the political parties is another key reason.

Des Raj Kali, a well-known novelist and political analyst, whose work focuses on the Ghadar movement, SC issues and the State's literature and culture, points out that the Congress, the SAD or others have not done anything significant for the SCs other than play appeasement politics.

"The leadership in the mainstream political parties, the Congress and the Akali Dal, has been dominated by the Jat Sikhs. They never nurtured any Dalit leader to ensure that their dominance continues. Even now, the appointment of Charanjit Singh Channi is a move borne out of compulsion. Firstly, Ambika Soni declined the offer of the Chief Minister's post, then the party couldn't arrive at a consensus between Sunil Jakhar and Sukhjinder Randhawa. Mr. Channi's name was not even in the contention. His name came up for discussion only after the party ran out of its primary options," Mr. Kali says.

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## Cong. Uttarakhand theme song mocks 'twin engine' model

Party criticises BJP for changing CMs thrice in five years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI



Harish Rawat during the launch of the theme song in New Delhi on Monday.

ed face, the Congress organised the theme song launch event at the party headquar-

ters in the presence of former Chief Minister Harish Rawat, Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader Pritam Singh, and Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Ganesh Godiyal, along with AICC in-charge for Uttarakhand, Devender Yadav.

The theme song draws attention to the BJP changing its Chief Minister thrice in five years.

But when asked who would be the Congress's Chief Minister face, Mr. Rawat said, "People will be the face and people are clearly asking for a change."

## Adityanath takes potshots at Rahul

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

The spirit of Hindu does not discriminate on the basis of individuals, caste, creed or religion, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday as he took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his Hindu vs Hindutva debate.

Addressing an event in Amethi, Mr. Gandhi's former constituency, Mr. Adityanath said he had no anxiety about saying that he was a proud Hindu.

Mr. Adityanath said Mr. Gandhi did not know about Hindu or Hindutva and was spreading false propaganda.

## With U.P. polls in sight, BJP stays mum on Malik's remarks

'He may be eyeing a political role in elections not necessarily for BJP'

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday maintained a studied silence on the latest remarks by Meghalaya Governor Satyapal Malik wherein he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi behaved arrogantly whenever he (Mr. Malik) had raised the issue of the three controversial farm laws and repealing them.

At a function in Haryana on Sunday, Mr. Malik had said that Prime Minister Modi reacted arrogantly to the former's suggestions that the farm laws be taken back and sensitivity shown with regard to farmers who had lost their lives during the protest movement.

This is not the first time Mr. Malik has made statements that have hurt the image of the party, but likely the first time he has named Mr. Modi directly. However, BJP leaders have refused to respond to the comments and



Governor Satyapal Malik accused Narendra Modi of showing insensitivity towards farmers.

the message down the line seemed to be not to react in any way to the Meghalaya Governor's remarks.

Party leaders, not wishing to quoted, did, however, say that Mr. Malik, who hails from western Uttar Pradesh was probably looking at a political role in the upcoming Assembly polls in the

State, not necessarily on behalf of the BJP.

**Constitutional post**

"He is, however, a constitutional office holder and cannot intervene directly in the politics of the region. Therefore, as such we are not saying anything. The high command also wants to wait this out," said a senior office bearer of the party.

The idea behind the wait and watch attitude seems to be to sit out the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls and not take any action, verbal or official on Mr. Malik.

During the last Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh in 2017, Mr. Malik was one of the party leaders on whom the BJP had relied to communicate with the Jat community in the western region of the State when there appeared to be resentment brewing on the question of reservations for the community.

secretary Randeep Surjewala said the Governor's reported conversation with Mr. Modi reveals the "anti-farmer and insensitive face of the Prime Minister, the BJP and the Modi government".

**Remove or resign?**

"If Governor Satyapal Malik is lying, please sack Governor Malik today and register an FIR against him. And if he is not lying, then Prime Minister Modi must come forward, [Home Minister] Amit Shahji must come forward and

apologise to India's toiling farmers and farm labourers. Otherwise, they will never pardon you," Mr. Surjewala said.

Mr. Surjewala demanded that the Narendra Modi government should announce compensation for the next of the family members of the 700 farmers who died and a government job, withdraw every single criminal case registered in States like Uttar Pradesh and Haryana and constitute the committee to decide the compulsory MSP architecture within 24 hours.

## Congress steps up heat on Modi over Meghalaya Governor's comments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi over Meghalaya Governor Satyapal Malik's claim that Mr. Modi was arrogant over the farm laws and the death of farmers during the anti-farm law protests, the Congress on Monday said the Prime Minister should apologise to the farmers and immediately constitute the committee to legally guarantee minimum support price (MSP).

At a press conference, party chief spokesperson and general

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# 33,000 new cases in India; all States record rise

Maharashtra leads surge with 12,160 new infections, with Mumbai accounting for 8,082 of them; Delhi reports 4,099 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Health Ministry data at 8 a.m. on Monday showed India confirmed over 33,000 new COVID-19 cases in the previous 24 hours. The number of deaths increased by 123, bringing the total to nearly 4,82,000. Authorities say that even as cases have started to rise rapidly, hospitalisations have not gone up.

Maharashtra leads the surge, with the State recording 12,160 new infections taking its active case tally to 52,422. This is a five-fold jump in less than month – the active case pool had been just over 10,400 cases on December 7. The State also reported 68 Omicron cases, taking its tally of the new variant to 578. Of these, 259 have been discharged so far. However, a majority of the cases were either asymptomatic or mild in nature.



**Keeping count:** The COVID-19 test positivity rate is seeing a rise in many States. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Mumbai recorded the most new cases in the State – 8,082, of which, 90% (7,273 cases) were asymptomatic, Health Department authorities said. The total bed occupancy is just 12.2% now. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation said offline classes would be suspended for stu-

dents from Classes I to 9 and for Class 11 from January 4 to 31.

Delhi reported 4,099 new cases, the highest in seven months, a Delhi government bulletin said. This is a 28.3% increase from 3,194 fresh cases on Sunday. The test positivity rate in the national capital increased to 6.46%, from

4.59% a day earlier and the number of active cases has gone up to 10,986, up by 30.8% in a day.

But about 95.3% of the total 9,029 hospital beds are vacant as of Monday and Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the situation was under control.

With its biggest single-day jump of 388 new infections since May in poll-bound Goa during the year-end festivities, the State government on Monday finally imposed a night curfew from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the coastal State.

Four new cases of Omicron were also reported in the State.

A total 66 passengers have tested positive out of the 2,000 samples tested from the cruise ship *Cordelia*. The ship had come from Mumbai and is presently docked at Mormugao. The decision on

allowing the passengers to disembark was awaited.

Uttar Pradesh recorded 572 new cases when 1.47 lakh samples were tested. The active case pool has 2,261 cases. Rajasthan has so far recorded 121 cases of Omicron of whom 60 have been discharged.

## COVID-19

Gujarat recorded 1,259 new cases and three deaths. The active case tally reached 5,858 out of which 16 patients are on ventilator support.

The State also logged 16 new cases of Omicron, taking the total tally to 152. Of this, 85 have been discharged.

For the second consecutive day Odisha reported 424 new COVID cases, taking the tally of active cases to 2,209.

Kerala logged 2,560 new

cases of COVID-19. The Health Department confirmed 29 new Omicron cases, taking the total tally of the variant in the State to 181. Of these, 42 patients have been discharged so far. The State's active case pool has shown a slight increase in the past three days to 19,359. However, hospitalisations are shrinking and just 2,225 persons being treated for moderate or severe COVID.

In Andhra Pradesh, the active case pool has been rising steadily for the past five days with 122 new infections taking the active cases to 1,278.

Karnataka added 1,290 new cases to its tally, taking its active caseload to 11,345. Five COVID-related deaths were also reported. So far, 77 Omicron cases have been reported in the State.

(With inputs from State bureaus and AP)

Allegations on expiry of vaccines are false: govt.

'Shelf life extended based on analysis'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry, on Monday, clarified that all allegations about expired vaccines being administered in India under its national COVID-19 vaccination programme are false and misleading and based on incomplete information.

A release issued by the Ministry said that the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on October 25, 2021, had – in response to Bharat Biotech International Limited's letter – approved the extension of shelf life of Covaxin (whole virion, inactivated coronavirus vaccine) from nine months to 12 months.

"The shelf life of vaccines is extended by the national regulator based on comprehensive analysis and examination of stability study data furnished by the vaccine manufacturers," said the Ministry.



A health worker arranging insulated containers ready to carry vaccines.

months on February 22, 2021.

"The shelf life of vaccines is extended by the national regulator based on comprehensive analysis and examination of stability study data furnished by the vaccine manufacturers," said the Ministry.

## SC tells govt. to decide on repatriation of woman, child

Sonia left India in 2016 to join the IS in Afghanistan

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Union government to consider and decide "expeditiously" petitions filed by a Kerala-based man for the repatriation of his daughter, who left India to join the Islamic State, and minor granddaughter from detention in Afghanistan.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao asked the government to decide the representations made by 65-year-old V.J. Sebastian Francis within eight weeks. The court did not otherwise make any comments on the merits of the case.

Sonia Sebastian, alias Ayisha, left India to join the terrorist organisation Islamic State in 2016. She has been

chargesheeted by the National Investigation Agency for various offences under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. She would face trial in India.

Mr. Francis, represented by advocate Renjith Marar, moved the Supreme Court in July 2021. He conveyed his apprehension that Sonia, at the time lodged in Kabul's Pul-e-Charkhi prison, may be executed amid the fight between the Taliban and government forces. He feared an imminent threat to the lives of his kin. The Taliban have since returned to power in Afghanistan.

Even if the government has changed, the relationship [with Afghanistan] seems to be good from what we read in the newspapers,"

Justice Rao said about the drastic change in circumstances from nearly six months ago when the petition was filed.

The court said the petitioner needed to first "convince" the Indian government to process the extradition.

Mr. Marar submitted that from what the father had heard, the jail in which Sonia was lodged had been demolished and the detainees moved to the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He said that Sonia was still under detention. In his petition, Mr. Francis stated that it was a violation of the fundamental rights that the Indian government had not initiated any steps for the repatriation.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Days after assessing the COVID-19 situation in the five poll-bound States, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has asked them to step up the inoculation drive against the viral disease and ensure that the personnel to be deployed on election duty are "double vaccinated".

In a recent letter to the

Chief Secretaries of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur and Punjab, the EC reminded them that polling personnel came under the category of frontline workers and were eligible for the "precaution dose", sources said. The EC said the polling personnel should be fully vaccinated and those eligible for the second dose should get it on priority.

Let women MPs testify before panel on marriage age: Dev

Men continue to decide rights of women, says Kanimozihi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress MP Sushmita Dev, the only woman member of the 31-member parliamentary panel reviewing the Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, that seeks to increase the legal age for marriage for women from 18 to 21, in a letter to the committee's Chairman Vinay Sahasrabudhe, requested him to allow all women MPs to testify before the panel.

The Rajya Sabha has 29 women MPs and the Lok Sabha 81.

The Bill has been referred to the Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, headed by Mr. Sahasrabudhe, a BJP member.

Many other women MPs have strongly reacted to the gender disparity in a panel that will deliberate on a key gender issue.

Priyanka Chaturvedi, Shiv Sena member in the Rajya Sabha, shot off a letter to House Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu criticising the move to send the Bill to a panel consisting predominantly of men. Stating that participation of women is essential in a discussion on the Bill that concerns issues faced by women, Ms. Chaturvedi said: "This is disheartening to note that a Bill so pertinent to women and the Indian society will be deliberated upon in a committee where the representation is highly skewed."

Other MPs took to social media to express their outrage. "There are a total of 110 women MPs but the government chooses to assign a Bill that affects every young woman in the country to a panel that has 30 men and only one woman. Men will continue to decide the rights of women. And women will be made mute spectators," Kanimozihi, Lok Sabha member of the DMK, said.

Ms. Dev, in her letter to Mr. Sahasrabudhe, invoking Rules 84(3) and 275 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), proposed that "any woman member of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha be empowered to testify in writing or in person before the committee on this issue."

## EC tells States to step up vaccination drive

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social media today, spills onto the streets soon after," the RJD said.

She also said that despite the Information Technology Minister's tweet on the matter, no police officer had contacted those targeted for an investigation.

"Why do they need an FIR when it is all happening in front of their eyes," Sayema asked.

Congress party convener Hasiba Amin, who has also been targeted multiple times, says this is the fifth time since May 2021.

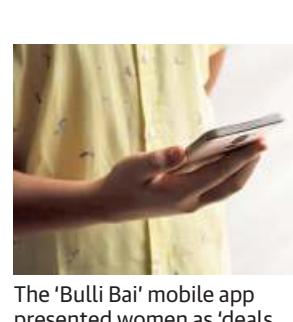
"It started with an auction in YouTube where men used lewd language to describe various Pakistani and Indian

Muslim women and held an auction. Since then there were auctions held on Twitter, Suli Deals app, Clubhouse and now Bulli Bai app," Ms. Amin said.

The Bharatiya Muslim Mahila Andolan (BMMA) called the online auction a result of hatemongering against Muslims.

**Implement cyber laws'**

"This filthy mindset is a result of years of hate-mongering against the community ably assisted or ignored by various governments, so much so that today they have no fear of law... The full force of the cyber laws must be brought to use to identify the



The 'Bulli Bai' mobile app presented women as 'deals of the day'.

but "having said that, they haven't done anything. They themselves would always say that what has happened to us is wrong and horrible but still would do nothing".

Ms. Khan recalled that every time she has approached police officials, they have been kind and cordial to her

but "having said that, they haven't done anything. They themselves would always say that what has happened to us is wrong and horrible but still would do nothing".

After registration of the FIR, she would call for updates every day and even-

tually, it became once a week, then once a month, she said. "I was hospitalised for typhoid in October and after that, my family wanted me to let it go and move on. It became toxic for me," she said.

Ms. Khan said, "Looking at the environment in the country, it isn't far-fetched to say that there can't be bodily harm or they can't reach us in the real world. Now, for instance, I am posted in another city and not many people know. I am not comfortable sharing anything more."

The 'Bulli Bai' mobile app on GitHub hosted pictures of several prominent Muslim women including actor Sha-

bana Azmi and radio jockey Sayema and "auctioned" them as domestic help.

Ms. Sayema, who works for Radio Mirchi, says social media attacks against her are common, but perpetrators are getting bolder in the absence of any police action.

Every single person will have to realise that they are next. I have been facing this for the past four to five years since the time I have been active on social media. I have been called names, and my pictures photoshopped. This is not new, but nothing happens to these goons and they are getting more muscle every time. There is so much impunity. What happens on

social media today, spills onto the streets soon after," the RJD said.

She also said that despite the Information Technology Minister's tweet on the matter, no police officer had contacted those targeted for an investigation.

"Why do they need an FIR when it is all happening in front of their eyes," Sayema asked.

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## Police inertia has emboldened goons, say women who faced online 'auction'

Rights groups seek help from President, PMO and Home Ministry

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# Sudan's PM Hamdok resigns amid crackdown on protesters

He cites lack of political consensus, conflict with military as reasons for move

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KHARTOUM

Sudan's civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok resigned on Sunday, more than two months after a coup and following another deadly crackdown on protesters, with the military now firmly in control.

Sudan had been undergoing a fragile journey toward civilian rule since the 2019 ouster of autocrat Omar al-Bashir, but was plunged into turmoil when military leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan launched his coup on October 25 and detained Mr. Hamdok.

Mr. Hamdok was reinstated on November 21 under a deal promising elections in July 2023, but local media had reported he had been absent from his office for



In turmoil: A file photo of Abdalla Hamdok. • AFP

days, with rumours swirling over his possible resignation.

"I have tried my best to stop the country from sliding towards disaster," Mr. Hamdok said, addressing the nation on state television.

Sudan "is crossing a dangerous turning point that

threatens its whole survival," he said.

Mr. Hamdok was the civilian face of the country's fragile transition, while Gen. Burhan has been the country's de facto leader following Bashir's ouster.

Mr. Hamdok cited "the fragmentation of the politi-

cal forces and conflicts between the (military and civilian) components of the transition" and said that "despite everything that has been done to reach a consensus... it has not happened".

Mass protests against the coup have continued even after Mr. Hamdok was reinstated. Protesters charged that the deal to reinstate Mr. Hamdok simply aimed to give the cloak of legitimacy to the generals.

Thousands of demonstrators on Sunday braved tear gas, a heavy troop deployment and a telecommunications blackout to demand a civilian government. They lambasted the coup, shouting "power to the people" and demanding the military return to barracks.

# String of attacks marks anniversary of Iran General's killing in U.S. strike

President Raisi demands Trump be 'prosecuted and killed'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI

Yemen's Houthi rebels seized a ship in the Red Sea, armed drones targeted Bagdad's international airport, and hackers hit a major Israeli newspaper on Monday – a string of assaults that showed the reach of Iran-aligned militias on the anniversary of America's killing of a top Iranian General.

All three coincided with a massive memorial in Tehran for General Qassem Soleimani,

who was killed by a U.S. drone strike in 2020 in Iraq. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi demanded former U.S. President Donald Trump be "prosecuted and killed." "If not, I'm telling all American leaders, don't doubt that the hand of revenge will come out of the sleeves of ummah," Mr. Raisi said, referring to the worldwide com-



Iranians commemorating the second anniversary of killing of Qasem Soleimani. • AFP

is squeezed by sanctions and a shadow war with Israel.

The taking of the Emirati ship Rubaib marks the latest assault in the Red Sea, a key route for international trade and energy shipments. The Iranian-backed Houthis acknowledged the seizure off the coast of Hodeida, a long-contested prize of the grinding war in Yemen between the rebels and a Saudi-led coalition that includes the United Arab Emirates.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the hacking of the *Jerusalem Post*'s website. The hackers replaced the *Post*'s homepage with an image depicting a missile coming from a fist bearing a ring long associated with Soleimani.

Meanwhile, two armed drones were shot down at the Bagdad airport on Monday, a coalition official said.

# Man charged over blaze in Parliament

REUTERS  
CAPE TOWN

South African police said on Monday they had charged a man with arson over a fire that caused extensive damage to the national Parliament building in Cape Town. The fire flared up again on Monday even as fire fighters struggled to contain the blaze.

The fire broke out early on Sunday at the parliamentary complex, some of which dates back to 1884 and includes the National Assembly, or lower House of Parliament.

It caused the collapse of the roof of a part of the complex housing the upper chamber on Sunday.

A 49-year-old suspect arrested in connection with the blaze is expected to appear in court on Tuesday and will face charges of housebreaking and theft as well as arson, police said.

## ELSEWHERE



Bolsonaro hospitalised after abdominal pain

RIO DE JANEIRO

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was rushed to hospital early Monday with abdominal pain that doctors found was caused by an intestinal blockage, and is facing potential surgery nine months out from elections. Mr. Bolsonaro, 66, was on vacation at the beach in Santa Catarina when the pain started, leading to a rushed evacuation to Sao Paulo in the presidential plane. AFP

### Taliban pour liquor into canal in latest crackdown

KABUL

A team of Afghan intelligence agents poured around 3,000 litres of liquor into a canal in Kabul, the country's spy agency said on Sunday, as the new Taliban authorities crack down on the sale of alcohol. Video footage released by the General Directorate of Intelligence showed its agents pouring alcohol stored in barrels into the canal after seizing it during a raid. "Muslims have to seriously abstain from making and delivering alcohol," said a religious scholar in the video posted on Twitter. AFP

## FDA expands boosters for more U.S. teenagers

Pfizer shots for children as young as 12

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

The U.S. is expanding COVID-19 boosters as it confronts the Omicron surge, with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allowing extra Pfizer shots for children as young as 12.

Boosters already are recommended for everyone 16 and older, and federal regulators on Monday decided they're also warranteed for 12- to 15-year-olds once enough time has passed since their last dose.

But the move isn't the final step. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must decide whether to recommend boosters for the younger teens. Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the CDC's director, is expected to rule later this week.

The FDA said everyone 12 and older who's eligible for a Pfizer booster can get one as early as five months after their last dose rather than six months. FDA vaccine chief Dr. Peter Marks said in a statement the agency made its decision because a booster "may help provide better protection against both the delta and omicron

variants," especially as omicron is "slightly more resistant" to the vaccine-induced antibodies that help fend off infection. Real-world data from Israel tracked more than 6,300 12- to 15-year-olds who got a booster shot at least five months after their second Pfizer dose and found no serious safety concerns, the FDA said.

Children tend to suffer less serious illness from COVID-19 than adults. But child hospitalisations are rising during the Omicron wave – most of them unvaccinated.

Pediatrician and global health expert Dr. Philip Landrigan of Boston College welcomed the FDA's decisions, but stressed that the main need is to get the unvaccinated their first shots.

Meanwhile, thousands of schools have delayed this week's scheduled reopening.

"It is among unvaccinated people that most of the severe illness and death from COVID will occur in coming weeks," he said in an email. "Many thousands of lives could be saved if people could persuade themselves to get vaccinated."

## Johnson: U.K. hospitals will face 'considerable pressure'

Britain is one of Europe's worst affected with toll at 1,49,000

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Monday said that the U.K.'s state-run hospitals will face "considerable pressure" in the coming weeks due to the steep rise in virus infections.

Speaking during a visit to a vaccine centre, Mr. Johnson said "the pressure on our NHS hospitals is going to be considerable in the course of the next couple of weeks and maybe more" as "Omicron continues to surge through the country".

The U.K. saw record numbers of cases in the last days of 2021 though it has not released figures for the whole country this year.

The country is one of Europe's worst affected with a death toll of nearly 1,49,000.

The Prime Minister said that he was aware of high levels of hospital staff absences due to COVID-19, adding: "we're looking at what we can do to move people into those areas that are particularly badly affected".

Around 50,000 NHS staff were absent from work on

Friday because they were ill or self-isolating due to COVID-19, *The Sunday Times* reported.

Chris Hopson, the chief executive of NHS Providers, which represents hospitals in England, told Sky News that "the pressure on hospitals outside London is now growing" after the capital bore the brunt of virus cases earlier.

Mr. Johnson urged the public to get a booster vaccination, saying there are slots available for two million people this week. So far almost 34 million people have received the booster jabs.

The PM defended his decision not to increase virus restrictions over the festive period in England.

"Of course we keep all measures under review, but the mixture of things we're doing at the moment is, I think, the right one", the Prime Minister said.

Omicron variant "does seem pretty conclusively to be less severe than Delta or Alpha," he said. "It is putting fewer people into ICU".

The number of people in hospital with COVID-19 in England was reported on Sunday as the highest since February at more than 13,000, with 769 of those on ventilators.

The PM defended his decision

not to increase virus restrictions over the festive period in England.

The rise of China meanwhile has also raised concerns that tensions with Washington could lead to conflict, notably over the island of Taiwan.

Beijing considers Taiwan part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

Russia welcomed the declaration by the atomic powers and expressed hope it would reduce global tensions.

## World powers vow to stop spread of nuclear weapons

China, Russia, U.S., U.K., France issue statement after NPT review scheduled today was postponed due to COVID-19

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

PARIS

Five global nuclear powers pledged on Monday to prevent atomic weapons spreading and to avoid nuclear conflict, in a rare joint statement ahead of a review of a key nuclear treaty later this year.

"We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented," said permanent UN Security Council members China, France, Russia, the U.K. and U.S., adding: "A

nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

The statement was issued after the latest review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – which first came into force in 1970 – was postponed from its scheduled date of January 4 to later in the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Putting aside current differences that have caused major tensions between both China and Russia and their Western

partners, the five world powers said they saw "the avoidance of war between nuclear-weapon states and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities."

"As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons – for as long as they continue to exist – should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war," they said according to the text released by the White House.

That has raised fears that the Kremlin is planning a new at-

tempt on its pro-Western neighbour.

The rise of China meanwhile has also raised concerns that tensions with Washington could lead to conflict, notably over the island of Taiwan.

Beijing considers Taiwan part of its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

Russia welcomed the declaration by the atomic powers and expressed hope it would reduce global tensions.

## Trump, 2 eldest children subpoenaed in New York

Civil probe into his business practices

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

New York Attorney General Letitia James recently subpoenaed former President Donald Trump and his two eldest children, demanding their testimony in connection with an ongoing civil investigation into the family's business practices, according to a court filing made public on Monday.

The subpoenas for Mr. Trump, his son Donald Trump Jr. and his daughter Ivanka Trump stem from an investigation "into the valuation of properties owned or controlled" by Mr. Trump and his company, the Trump Organization, the filing said.

Messages seeking comment was left with lawyers for the Trumps and Ms. James' office.

The Attorney General's attempt to get testimony from the former President was reported in December, but the court filing on Monday was the first public disclosure that investigators were also seeking information from Ivanka Trump and Donald Trump Jr.

The Trumps are expected to file court papers seeking to quash the subpoenas, setting up a legal fight similar to one that played out last year after Ms. James' office subpoenaed another son of Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump sued Ms. James last month, seeking to end the investigation after she requested that he sit for a January 7 deposition. Mr. Trump's lawsuit, filed in federal court, alleges that the probe has violated his constitutional rights in a "thinly-veiled effort to publicly malign Trump and his associates."

Monday's court filing was the AG office's first public acknowledgement that it has previously subpoenaed Mr. Trump's testimony.

Ms. James, a Democrat, has spent more than two years looking at whether the Trump Organization misled banks or tax officials about the value of assets – inflating them to gain favorable loan terms or minimizing them to reap tax savings.

Ms. James' investigators last year interviewed one of Mr. Trump's sons, Trump Organization executive Eric Trump, as part of the probe.

## aavin THE SALEM DISTRICT CO-OP. MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LTD., Thalaiyappatti Post, Salem - 636 302. Telephone : 7373704802. E-mail : aavinslmnk@gmail.com

### TENDER NOTICE

Salem Milk Union invites sealed tenders for 23 Puffed vehicles for distribution of milk to milk agents and collection of tubs for 3 years under two cover system. The tender form can be obtained from the union by remitting Rs.200/- by DD upto 3.00 pm on 02.02.2022 from the date of tender advertisement and the tender form can also be downloaded from www.tenders.tn.gov.in free of cost. The filled form should be submitted on or before 03.02.2022 by 11.00 A.M. along with EMD. The tender will be opened on 03.02.2022 by 11.30 a.m.

GENERAL MANAGER

SDCMU LTD., SALEM

DIPR-120/TENDER/2022

"காந்தகால கடந்த காலத்திற்கும் அதன்போதும் காந்தகால சர்வதேச மூலப்பொறி"

**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, RUSHIKULYA BAHUDA BASIN, BERPAMPUR-760004**

e-Procurement Notice No. ACE, RBB-17 / 2021-22

e-mail id : se\_sicbam@yahoo.com

1. Type of Work	: System Improvement.
2. Total No. of Works	: 01 (One) No.
3. Amount put to Tender	: Rs.324.05 Lakh
4. Period of Completion	: 11 (Eleven) Calendar months

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Bid Amount (Rs. in lakh) |
<th
| --- | --- | --- |

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	59,183	1.60
US Dollar	74.28	0.01
Gold	47,053	0.38
Brent oil	78.09	--

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	736.60	6.30
Asian Paints	3422.40	39.45
Axist Auto	696.35	17.80
Bajaj Auto	3277.10	27.85
Bajaj Finserv	16981.30	575.10
Bajaj Finance	7219.60	242.20
Bharti Airtel	691.30	7.50
BPCL	386.10	0.65
Britannia Ind	3617.55	11.55
Cipla	930.50	-13.60
Coal India	155.30	9.25
Divis Lab	4651.25	-26.95
D Dr Reddy's Lab	4853.15	-53.85
Eicher Motors	2718.80	126.90
Grafix Ind	1661.60	39.35
HCL Tech	1326.15	7.05
HDPC	2636.40	49.95
HDPC Bank	1519.65	40.25
HDPC Life	650.50	0.95
Hero MotoCorp	2476.60	14.50
Hindustan	478.05	2.50
Hind Unilever	2361.30	1.15
ICICI Bank	764.70	24.55
IndusInd Bank	912.30	24.15
Infosys	1898.45	10.70
Indian Oil Corp	112.95	1.45
ITC	219.10	1.05
JSW Steel	667.05	11.10
Kotak Bank	1824.45	28.35
L&T	1922.85	26.95
M&M	829.80	-7.35
Maruti Suzuki	7523.90	97.45
Nestle India Ltd.	1967.75	-27.75
NTPC	126.00	1.60
ONGC	143.05	0.65
PowerGrid Corp	205.00	0.60
Reliance Ind	2403.85	35.70
SBI Life	1209.40	13.40
State Bank	470.80	10.35
Shree Cement	27247.40	259.95
Sun Pharma	848.95	3.25
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	748.00	4.55
Tata Motors	497.60	15.20
Tata Steel	1142.45	31.00
TCS	3817.75	79.40
Tech Mahindra	1784.80	-5.75
Titan	2523.85	1.45
UltraTech Cement	7723.90	132.85
UPL	764.20	17.10
Wipro	718.70	3.35

## EXCHANGE RATES

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



Audi India sales doubled in 2021 to 3,293 units

NEW DELHI German luxury carmaker Audi on Monday said it more than doubled its sales in India last year, selling 3,293 retail units. The company in a statement said the year-on-year growth of 101% in 2021 was the highest ever growth since 2008 and propelled by five electric cars and the petrol powered Q-range along with A-sedans, the company said in a statement.

**IRDAI mints fresh pay norms for directors**  
HYDERABAD Insurance regulator IRDAI issued an exposure draft proposing changes to norms on remuneration of non-executive directors as well as MD/CEO/whole-time directors of insurers. This, it said, was 'to ensure sound compensation practices and avoid situations resulting from excessive risk-taking... due to inappropriate compensation structures.'

**Nippon India Mutual Fund unveils Auto ETF**  
MUMBAI Nippon Life India Asset Management Ltd. (NAL India), the asset manager of Nippon India Mutual Fund (NIMF), introduced Nippon India Nifty Auto ETF, India's first auto sector ETF. The open-ended scheme will replicate or track the Nifty Auto Index. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will open on January 5 and close on January 14.

**Omicron covered by health policies: IRDAI**  
HYDERABAD Insurance policies that cover COVID-19 treatment costs will also cover the cost of treatment of the Omicron variant, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India said. It advised insurers to put in place coordination mechanism with network providers to make available seamless cashless facility and requested hospitals to honour SLAs with insurers.

# December goods exports touch \$37.3-billion high: Goyal

Numbers show 37% growth; Minister says services sector to see 'good' tidings too

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports in December touched \$37.29 billion, the highest-ever monthly figure, according to Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Mr. Goyal highlighted the pursuit of export-oriented programmes by the Uttar Pradesh and Tripura governments.

"In every sector, there has been significant growth in exports," said Mr. Goyal. He claimed that every month's export data from April to December 2021 had displayed a "historic high".

Export figures for Decem-



Across the board: There has been significant growth in exports in every sector, says Piyush Goyal. ■REUTERS

ber, reflected a 37% increase from \$27.22 billion a year earlier.

**'48.9% rise in April-Dec.'** Merchandise exports grew 48.9% to \$299.74 billion in the April-December 2021,

[services exports] in the first nine months and we are well on track to go up to about \$230 billion or upwards of that, which will also be a historic high [for] services exports," he said, explaining that the sector had performed successfully despite the "big setback" experienced by the travel and tourism industry because of the ongoing pandemic.

He also said that credit should also go to India's diplomatic missions across the world, exporters, industry associations and export promotion councils for collectively working to explore newer global regions and to help expand the "export basket".

Urban unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in December.

## Third wave may undo economic gains'

REUTERS  
NEW DELHI

India's unemployment rate hit a four-month high in December, data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed on Monday. The unemployment rate rose to 7.9% in December from 7% in November, its highest since 8.3% in August. Economic activity has been hit in the country after an increase in cases of the Omicron coronavirus and restrictions imposed by many States.

Urban unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in December from 8.2% in the previous month while the rural unemployment rate was at 7.3%, up from 6.4%, the data



Urban unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in December.

showed. Many economists worry that the Omicron variant could reverse the economic recovery seen in the previous quarter. CMIE's data on unemployment is closely watched by economists as the Centre doesn't release monthly figures.

# Factory output rises at slower rate: PMI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector activities moderated in December but output remained in the growth territory, amid slower rise in sales and new orders, even as business sentiment was damped by concerns surrounding supply-chain disruptions, COVID-19 and inflationary pressures, a monthly survey showed.

The seasonally-adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index eased to 55.5 in December, from November's 10-month high of 57.6. The December data pointed to a 'substantial, albeit slower, rises in sales and output,' it said, adding the reading was at 56.3, its highest since the final quarter of fiscal 2020-21.

## Nomura post-COVID activity index hits high

'But, power consumption slips 3.1%'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Nomura analysts Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi said in a note on Monday.

The note, titled 'Another high in business resumption at the cusp of a third wave', warned that elevated mobility and a rising positivity rate suggest a further rise in new COVID-19 cases, which has already hit 33,750 on Sunday from about 6,500 cases per day a week earlier.

"While early signs point to a lower mortality rate, it bears close monitoring. The restrictions could derail the recovery in contact-intensive services in this quarter, but global experience suggests a smaller impact than previous waves and a swift growth rebound once cases peak," the note said.

Workplace mobility measured by Google dipped 6% from the earlier week, but a 10.4% rise in the Apple driving statistics bumped up the overall index. The labour participation rate inched down to 40.6% from 40.7%,

## Future asks court to declare Amazon arbitration illegal

Indian retail firm cites CCI's stay of 2019 deal to bolster case

REUTERS  
MUMBAI

Future Retail has asked a New Delhi court to declare arbitration proceedings in Singapore with Amazon.com as illegal, arguing that India's antitrust agency had suspended a 2019 deal used by Amazon to assert rights over Future.

Amazon successfully used the terms of its \$200-million investment in debt-laden Future to block the Indian retailer's attempt to sell retail assets to a rival, alleging breach of certain contracts.

But the Competition Commission of India (CCI), in December, suspended the 2019 deal saying Amazon sup-

pressed information while seeking approvals.

The dispute is being heard by a Singapore arbitration panel, but both sides have been fighting parallel cases in Indian courts to enforce or overturn certain decisions taken by the arbitrator. In the latest, the

company argues that since the 2019 deal no longer has antitrust approval, it has 'no legal existence' in India and Amazon can no longer assert any of its rights.

The "continuation of the entire arbitration proceedings is a perpetuation of illegality," Future said in its filing dated December 31.

Future and Amazon did not respond to a request for comment. A source with direct knowledge said Amazon had told the Singapore arbitrator in December that the CCI's suspension of the 2019 deal does not mean the transaction is void, as the watchdog has allowed Amazon to reapply for clearances.



Piyush Goyal

Kingdom, Australia and Canada. He said the agreement with the UAE was 'close to finalisation' while the FTA with Australia was at a 'very advanced stage.'

Mr. Goyal also informed that bilateral free trade agreements are being negotiated with the United Arab Emirates, the United

## Banking stocks lead on bourses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Indian equity markets started the first day of trading in the new year on a euphoria with key indices gaining 1.6% backed by heavy buying in the banking and financial pack followed by metal and auto stocks.

The S&P BSE Sensex gained 929.40 points or 1.6% to 59,183.22. The top Sensex gainers included Bajaj Finserv (3.59%) and Bajaj Finance (3.52%). Similarly, the NSE Nifty 50 index rose 271.65 points, or 1.57%, to close at 17,625.70.

Ajit Mishra, VP, research, Religare Broking Ltd. said market participants overlooked rising Omicron cases and muted global cues.

The General Council is WTO's highest decision-making body in Geneva.

Expressing disappointment over no progress on TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) waiver proposal to deal with the pandemic, India has called for includ-

"We have sought an emergency meeting of the General Council to discuss the WTO's response package to deal with COVID-19 pandemic including patent waiver proposal. WTO will start its meetings from January 10," the official said.

Discussions on patent waiver sought

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

ing this proposal into WTO's proposed response package.

In October 2020, India and South Africa submitted the first proposal, suggesting a waiver for all WTO members on the implementation of certain provisions of the TRIPS agreement in relation to the prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19. In May 2021, a revised proposal was submitted. TRIPs came into effect in January 1995.

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Discussions on patent waiver sought

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Commercial vehicle manufacturer Ashok Leyland Ltd. has reported a 2% dip in total sales volume for December at 12,518 units compared to the year-earlier period, following a drop in light commercial vehicle (LCV) sales.

When computed separately, LCV sales, including exports, contracted 17% to 4,899 units while medium and heavy commercial vehicle (M&HCV) sales rose 11% to 7,619 units, the company said in a statement.

The M&HCV segment was led by buses with an increase of 57% to 1,020 units and trucks by 6% to 6,599 units.

For the nine-month period ended December, total sales grew 41% to 79,607 units. LCV sales rose 21% and M&HCV 64%.

Such transactions would not require an Additional Factor of Authentication. Since the transactions are offline, alerts (by way of SMS and / or e-mail) will be received by the customer after a time lag," it added.

There is a limit of ₹200 per transaction and an overall limit of ₹2,000 until the balance in the account is replenished. The RBI said the framework took effect 'immediately'.

"Under this new framework, such payments can be carried out face-to-face (proximity mode) using any channel or instrument like cards, wallets and mobile devices," the RBI said.

## India wants WTO meet on COVID package</h

# South Africa pacemen call the shots on day one

Jansen scalps four while Rabada and Olivier take three each; Rahul and Ashwin give India some respectability

## INDIA IN SA

S. DINAKAR  
JOHANNESBURG

There were patches of grass on the surface and the ball zipped around. On view was pace, bounce and movement.

Welcome to the Wanderers. The pacemen called the shots at the Bullring and the batsmen struggled to cope.

India was dismissed for 202 and South Africa lost opener Aiden Markram, playing across and being trapped leg-before by a Mohammed Shami delivery that nipped back.

At stumps on day one of the second Freedom Test on Monday, the host was 35 for one.

The Proteas could have been two down but 'keeper Rishabh Pant put down a tough catch after Keegan Petersen sliced at Jasprit Bumrah. In a blow to India, inform seamer Mohammed Siraj appeared to have pulled his hamstring in his run-up and had to leave the field.

For India, captain K.L. Rahul made a 133-ball 50 of typical patience and quality and Ashwin rattled up a 46-ball 50, pulling his weight as an all-rounder.

South Africa's impressive beanie-left-arm seamer Marco Jansen scalped four, while there were three wickets each for the nippy comeback man Duanne Olivier and the fast Kagiso Rabada.

In low-scoring scraps, runs from the lower-order can often swing games and the aggressive Ashwin timed the ball sweetly in a vital knock. He on-drove and cover-drove



Breathing fire: Jansen proved too hot to handle for the Indian batters. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Nigidi with footwork and balance, flicked Rabada, and lofted to the right of Olivier before departing attempting to slash Jansen.

And some lusty blows by the newly promoted vice-captain, Bumrah, took India beyond 200. Rahul won the toss, elected to bat and put on another exhibition of playing, 'leaving' and being in the 'zone' – his mental switch for Test cricket has been striking – before stroking elegantly.

Between periods of defence, he stroked beautifully. A back-foot punch through cover off Rabada was all class.

However, Rahul's patient vigil ended after he miscued a pull from outside off when Jansen pitched short; Jansen's lifters were coming at varying heights. In the morning, Rahul and Mayank Agarwal negotiated the crucial first hour.

In an attacking move, South Africa brought in Olivier for pace bowling all-round Wiaan Mulder and straightforward Protea bowling looked more threatening.

Mayank (26) cover-drove and off-drove Olivier with timing and poise. Jansen, however, ended Mayank's innings, angling the ball across

and finding the edge even as the batter attempted a drive without footwork.

**Twin strikes**

Cheteshwar Pujara was prised out by Olivier with a lifter; Pujara defended from a static position when he should have gone right back.

Ajinkya Rahane perished to the next delivery, playing away from his body and edging an Olivier away-swinger. India needs runs from both these senior batters. Rahane's was Olivier's 50th Test wicket in only his 11th Test. Olivier has a whippy action

and can surprise you with his pace off the track.

India, 49 for three, could have been in further trouble had Temba Bavuma not put down a tough chance at point when Hanuma Vihari (2) slashed hard at Lungi Ngidi.

Vihari settled down to make an impression. There is a solidity about him on these pitches. Strong off his back-foot, he out Oliver. He fell to a brilliant leaping catch at short-leg by Rassie van der Dussen after the batter fended a rather vicious lifter from Rabada. India lost wickets at regular intervals. The most

## SCOREBOARD

### INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

K.L. Rahul c Rabada b Jansen 50 (133b, 9x4), Mayank Agarwal c Verreyne b Jansen 26 (37b, 5x4), Cheteshwar Pujara c Bavuma b Olivier 3 (33b), Ajinkya Rahane c Petersen b Olivier 0 (1b), Hanuma Vihari c van der Dussen b Rabada 20 (53b, 3x4), Rishabh Pant c Verreyne b Jansen 17 (43b, 1x4), R. Ashwin c Petersen b Jansen 46 (50b, 6x4), Shardul Thakur c Petersen b Olivier 0 (5b), Mohammed Shami c & b Rabada 9 (12b, 1x4), Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 14 (11b, 2x4, 1x6), Mohammed Siraj c Verreyne b Rabada 1 (6b); Extras (b-8, lb-3, nb-5): 16; Total (in 63.1 overs): 202.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-36 (Mayank, 14.1 overs), 2-49 (Pujara, 23.3), 3-49 (Rahane, 23.4), 4-91 (Vihari, 38.4), 5-116 (Rahul, 45.5), 6-156 (Pant, 53.4), 7-157 (Thakur, 54.6), 8-185 (Shami, 59.3), 9-187 (Ashwin, 60.5).

### SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Rabada 17.1-2-64-3, Olivier 17.1-64-3, Ngidi 11.4-26-0, Jansen 17.5-31-4, Maharaj 1-0-6-0.

### SOUTH AFRICA – 1ST INNINGS

Dean Elgar (batting) 11 (57b, 1x4), Aiden Markram lbw b Shami 7 (12b, 1x4), Keegan Petersen (batting) 14 (39b, 2x4); Extras (lb-2, w-1); 3; Total (for one wkt. in 18 overs): 202.

### FALL OF WICKET

1-14 (Markram, 3.5).

### INDIA BOWLING

Bumrah 8-3-14-0, Shami 6-2-15-1, Siraj 3.5-2-4-0, Thakur 0.1-0-0.

### Toss: India.

significant one being that of Pant. Jansen, shifting angles cleverly, got one to straighten to Pant who inside-edged to the 'keeper.

It's all happening at the Bullring!

I am playing more of my natural game: Ashwin



Success mantra: Ashwin says he goes with the flow and that has helped his batting. ■ GETTY IMAGES

S. DINAKAR  
JOHANNESBURG

R. Ashwin batted with fluency and freedom and a testing pitch.

He said after the first day's play here, "There was a time when I was keen on being technically right and in the process lost some of my flow."

He added, "Now I am playing more of my natural game. I get into positions to play some shots which some specialists might not be able to do."

Ashwin said, "Right from the Australia series, I have been batting well. Batting coach Vikram Rathour has been helpful."

He said there was no deliberate plan for him to be attacking. "The first ball was straight so I straight drove. So I just responded to the balls."

Asked about Mohammed Siraj's fitness, he said, "The medical team is assessing him. Knowing his history he should come back and bowl for us."

On match-winning totals

at the Wanderers, Ashwin said, "Always good to bat first and post 250. South Africa has made 250 here and dominated Test matches from there."

About the surface he said, "The pitch was two-paced. Little different to a typical Wanderers pitch."

Queried about the impressive left-arm seamer Marco Jansen, who has been impressive against India, he said, "Left-armers always add variety. He's got height and bounce. He's special. Nice side on action, gets close to the wickets."

On K.L. Rahul adapting to Test cricket, he said, "He has found a formula for success in Test cricket. Obviously he has the talent and the skill set. There is no one formula for Tests. It keeps throwing questions at you."

About him playing a part with the ball, Ashwin said, "No one can predict how a pitch will behave. Hopefully, some footmarks would develop and there could be some assistance for me."

# It was like a new debut: Olivier

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JOHANNESBURG

For Duanne Olivier, it was a case of living a dream again.

The comeback paceman said, "It was like a new debut. I was very nervous today."

The man who had given up hopes of playing for the country again, scalped three on day one of the second Test here on Monday.

### The gameplan

About the gameplan of the South African bowlers, Olivier said, "We made them play as much as possible. Stuck to the process, stuck to the basics and reaped the rewards. We also bowled a full length."

Asked to look ahead in the series, Olivier replied, "We are 1-0 down. That's the reality. The focus is on this Test. Tomorrow is a new day. If we bat big, we can win the



Olivier. ■ GETTY IMAGES

grass on it." Olivier conceded that the first hour was tough when openers K.L. Rahul and Mayank Agarwal were unseparated, but said "Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen came on, they bowled very well and created the pressure for us to take wickets."

The paceman said, "Ngidi went wicketless today after bowling so well. On some other days, he might not bowl so well and pick up wickets."

Maharaj's inclusion

About left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj's inclusion in the team ahead of a specialist batter on a seamer-friendly pitch, Olivier said, "Keshav might have bowled only one over today but he could send down 20 in the second innings. The wicket could deteriorate and we might need a spinner."

de Jong does it for Barcelona

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE  
MALLORCA

Barcelona overcame its COVID chaos to sneak a tight victory away at Mallorca in the LaLiga on Sunday.

Barcelona was without eight first-team players who had tested positive last week while a further six were out through injury or suspension.

Xavi Hernandez had said on Saturday it was "crazy" the game had to go ahead, with Jordi Alba, Ousmane Dembele and Gavi were among those infected while Sergio Busquets was suspended and Pedri, Ansu Fati and Memphis Depay injured.

But a patched-up Barcelona team climbed to fifth, just a point behind Atletico Madrid, after Luuk de Jong's header proved the difference.

**The results:**

**LaLiga:** Elche 0 drew with Granada 0; Real Betis 0 lost to Celta Vigo 2 (Aspas 36-pen, 45+2); Alaves 1 (Joselu 58-pen) drew with Real Sociedad 1 (Januzaj 14); Real Mallorca 0 lost to Barcelona 1 (L. de Jong 44).

**Premier League:** Leeds 3 (Harrison 39, Dallas 77, James 90+2) bt Burnley 1 (Cornet 54).

## Kohli pulls out of Test with back spasm

S. DINAKAR  
JOHANNESBURG

So, Virat Kohli will not be playing his 100th Test in South Africa after all.

Coach Rahul Dravid, on Sunday, had been eloquent in defending the India captain for the manner in which he led the team, connected with the boys and kept them insulated from all the "chatter" around him.

Dravid also spoke about celebrating Kohli's 100th Test, at Cape Town, and added that the India captain would be presented before the media ahead of the match. Kohli has not interacted with the press digitally even once on this tour.

Under the circumstances, it was a massive surprise when K.L. Rahul walked out for the toss with Dean Elgar here on Monday. Rahul said

Kohli had a "back spasm." Shortly after the second Test commenced, a BCCI release stated: "Team India captain Virat Kohli had a spasm in his upper back this morning. He won't feature in the second Test against South Africa."

Normally it would be incredibly hard to keep Kohli away from an overseas Test, particularly when he has an opportunity to achieve a historic feat: India winning its first Test series on South African soil. He eats, sleeps and breathes for moments of success overseas, and is incredibly passionate about it.

Could a back spasm keep him out? And he has played with pain in the past.

Sources also reveal that Kohli is "hurt" by all the talk about him, the latest being the remarks by selection committee chairman Chetan Sharma.

But then, it was Kohli who opened the Pandora's box when just ahead of the team's departure from India, he spoke about a lack of communication when he was removed as the ODI skipper. Once he said that, there was bound to be a reaction. Kohli is no longer the all-powerful figure he once was in Indian cricket, someone who could even force a legend such as Anil Kumble out as coach.

Mentally, beneath all the statements meant for public consumption, how is he handling his latest position within the hierarchy? And, we may never know the real reason for Kohli missing the second Test.

Asked to look ahead in the series, Olivier replied, "We are 1-0 down. That's the reality. The focus is on this Test. Tomorrow is a new day. If we bat big, we can win the

## Possibilities enormous for women's IPL: Raman

It will boil down to the commercial side of things too'

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Eight members of the Indian women's team that went on the tour of Australia stayed back even after the multi-format series concluded last October. They had all been signed up by the Women's Big Bash League.

One of them became the Player of the Tournament. Another equalled the record for the league's highest individual score.

Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana were not the only Indians to impress this season at the world's strongest T20 domestic league for women.

Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Varma, Deepti Sharma, Radha Yadav, Poonam Yadav and Richa Ghosh also did their bit for their franchises. Their performances once again put into focus the need for such a professional women's league in India.

"I suppose it will boil down to the commercial side of things too, because IPL is not just all about cricket."

W.V. Raman, former coach of the Indian women's team, believes the possibilities of the women's IPL are enormous.

"There are two ways of looking at it: you say it could inspire a lot of girls to take up cricket or you say take it nice and easy and once you start a full-fledged (women's) IPL you want it to be a grand success straight away," he told *The Hindu*.

He thinks a middle path – a tournament with five

teams that will play each other twice or three times – is workable in the immediate future.

"If the objective of the IPL is to give exposure to the girls, you would think of providing good quality or if you think of commerce, the commercial angle will depend more on the quality of cricket that is played," said the former India opener.

"At the end of the day, you have to put out a package even if it is slow to take off, it will sustain itself and become a big brand later on."

**Expansion**  
He feels the league can be expanded within a couple of years. "They can start it in 2022 (with five teams)," Raman said.

"In another two years, the under-19 girls would have played two World Cups. After the first IPL, a lot of young girls would be encouraged by their parents to take up cricket. So by 2024, you will have enough cricketers in terms of numbers and talent."

## Odisha rallies to stun Mumbai

Down 1-2 with just 20 minutes remaining, it scripts a 4-2 win

### ISL 2021-22

#### SPORTS BUREAU

The ISL produced yet another high-scoring thriller on Monday night. This time around, Mumbai City was at the receiving end as Odisha FC stunned the defending champion and table-topper 4-2 at Vasco's Tilak Maidan Stadium.

## TV PICKS

**South Africa vs India:** Second Test, day 2, Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 p.m.  
**Pro Kabaddi:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**ISL:** Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.  
**The Ashes:** Fourth Test, day 1, Sony Six (SD & HD), 5 a.m. (Wednesday)

## IN BRIEF



Brown's career-best 50 sparks Celtics rally

Jaylen Brown scored 21 of his career-high 50 points in the fourth quarter and grabbed 11 rebounds to help Boston Celtics rally past the visiting Orlando Magic for a 116-111 overtime win on Sunday.  
**The results:** Raptors 120 bt Knicks 105; Celtics 116 bt Magic 111 (OT); Cavaliers 108 bt Pacers 104; Kings 115 bt Heat 113; Hornets 99 lost to Suns 133; Thunder 86 lost to Mavericks 95; Lakers 108 bt Timberwolves 103. REUTERS



**CA chief Hockley tests positive for COVID**  
SYDNEY  
Cricket Australia chief Nick Hockley on Monday became the latest to contract COVID-19 during the Ashes series. Hockley, who is fully vaccinated, developed mild symptoms and immediately got tested and isolated, with a positive PCR result confirmed. Hockley has had no direct contact with either the Australian or England squads. AFP



Froome delays return due to painful knee

Four-time Tour de France champion Chris Froome said on Monday he would delay his return to competition after suffering knee pain while training. The 36-year-old Kenya-born British cyclist believes he pushed himself too hard in the early weeks of training as he seeks to improve on an underwhelming debut season last year for Israel Start-Up Nation. AFP

**Extra day's race in Bengaluru on January 12**  
BENGALURU  
The Stewards of the Bangalore Turf Club have decided to conduct a second extra race day on January 12 (Wednesday).

## Divij exits early

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI  
Divij Sharan was beaten 6-4, 6-2 by Dominic Stricker of Switzerland in the first round of the \$58,320 Challenger tennis tournament in Traralgon, Australia.

Divij, seeded second with Christopher Rungkat of Indonesia in doubles, had won a qualifying match against Patrick Fitzgerald, to make the main event.

In the ATP event in Adelaide, Ramkumar Ramanathan was beaten 6-4, 7-6 (7) in the first qualifying round by the former World No.1 junior, now ranked 103 among men, the 18-year-old Holger Rune of Denmark. Ramkumar will play the doubles alongside Rohan Bopanna.

**The results:** \$52,000 ATP, Adelaide, Australia: Qualifying singles (first round): Holger Rune (Den) bt Ramkumar Ramanathan 6-4, 7-6(7). \$58,320 Challenger, Traralgon, Australia: Singles (first round): Dominic Stricker (Sui) bt Divij Sharan 6-4, 6-2.

## An open field in the men's section

Ailing Sathiyan pulls out; Little to separate among the women

## CENTRAL ZONE TT

K. KEERTHIVASAN  
INDORE

The withdrawal of India's top paddler G. Sathiyan from the UTT-National ranking Central Zone table tennis tournament beginning at the Abhay Prashal Indoor Stadium here on Tuesday has left the doors yet again for a possible new men's singles champion to emerge.

All the three previous National-ranking tournaments have had three different men's winners – Sharath Kamal (North Zone, Panchkula), Sanil Shetty (Dehradun), and Harmeet Desai (South Zone, Puducherry).

And this time, too, the field looks wide open in the absence of Sharath and Sathiyan.

The women's field is also pretty even with very little to separate the top five players. Prapti Sen (North Zone), Sutirtha Mukherjee (Dehra Dun), and Sreeja Akula (South Zone) have tri-



**Front-runners:** Archana and Manav, having won the crowns in the PSPB inter-unit tournament, are favourites to take the honours in the National-ranking competition. ■ FILE PHOTOS: BISWARANJAN ROUT & G. RAMAKRISHNA

umphed so far.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here on Monday, Sathiyan said he wasn't feeling well and hence decided to withdraw.

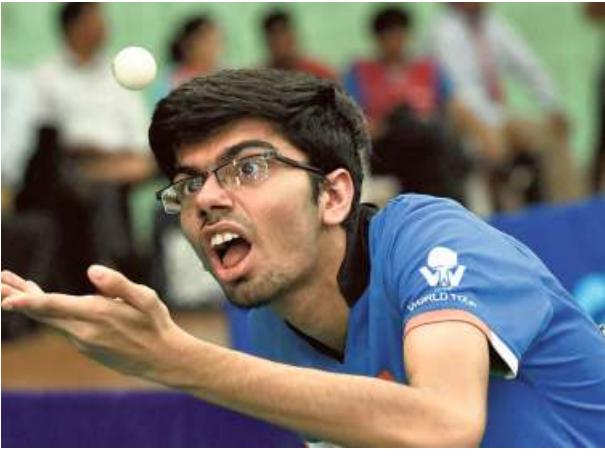
"Feeling feverish, better to rest and recover and get ready for the Senior Nationals. Also, it's better to stay safe and I don't want to put others at risk," he said.

Manav Thakkar and Ar-

chana Kamath are riding on momentum having won the men's and women's crowns in the Petroleum Sports Promotion Board inter-unit tournament held at the same venue a few days back.

## Excited

"Very excited. I hit peak form at the right time. Defeating Sathiyan in the semi-finals of the PSPB inter-unit



was indeed special. Moreover, I have not won any domestic title this season and looking forward to it," said Manav.

Qualifier Archana didn't want to attach too much importance to the PSPB inter-unit win. "Each tournament is different. My win there will have no bearing here," she said.

At the venue here on Mon-

day, all the players and officials underwent an Antigen test for the virus, after which seven players tested positive.

## Four test positive

Competition Manager N. Ganeshan said of the seven players who underwent RTPCR Test four have tested positive and they will have to return home for risk of infecting others.

## NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

## Brilliant bowling by Shubham Sharma

Man-of-the-match Shubham Sharma claimed five wickets without conceding any runs while Sachin Singh Rawat top-scored with 83 runs as Shri Sai Cricket Academy thrashed Ganga International Cricket Academy by 94 runs in the first R.D. Group one-day tournament.

## The scores:

SSCA 258/9 in 40 overs (Sachin Singh Rawat 83, Abhishek Tiwari 55, Yash Verma 53, Tushar 5/20) bt GICA 64 in 17 overs (Pukhraj Singh Vaghela 30, Shubham Sharma 5/0).

## Salman and Aniket sizzle

An unbeaten 102 by Aniket Dhankar and a fifer by Mohd. Salman Ali helped AB Rising Academy beat VS Sports by nine wickets in the R.D. Saini tournament.

## The scores:

VS Sports 141 in 35.4 overs (Sachin Singh Rawat 83, Abhishek Tiwari 55, Yash Verma 53, Tushar 5/20) bt GICA 64 in 17 overs (Pukhraj Singh Vaghela 30, Shubham Sharma 5/0).

## Easy for Dream Chaserz and WCL Academy

Man-of-the-match Priyanshu Arya scored an unbeaten 43 while Ranveer Mehta slammed a 15-ball 46 as Dream Chaserz Cricket Academy (DCCA) beat Dahiya Cricket Academy

## The scores:

DCCA 118/8 in 30 overs lost to DCCA 119/3 in 16.1 overs (Ranveer Mehta 46, Priyanshu Arya 43 n.o., Prince Mishra 3/21); WCLA 289/5 in 30 overs (Tarun Singh 79, Rudra Bidhuri 66) bt YBCA 214 in 30 overs (Paras 120 n.o.).

## DCA by seven wickets in the second Kanta Devi Memorial tournament.

In another match, WCL Academy beat Young Brigade Cricket Academy by 75 runs.

## The scores:

DCA 118/8 in 30 overs lost to DCCA 119/3 in 16.1 overs (Ranveer Mehta 46, Priyanshu Arya 43 n.o., Prince Mishra 3/21); WCLA 289/5 in 30 overs (Tarun Singh 79, Rudra Bidhuri 66) bt YBCA 214 in 30 overs (Paras 120 n.o.).

## Aryan, Sparsh excel

Aryan Raj top-scored with 94 and Sparsh took five wickets as Push Cricket Academy (PCA) downed Kanchan Cricket Academy (KCA) by five wickets in the first D.R. Sharma memorial tournament.

## The scores:

KCA 207/8 in 40 overs (Amol 86 n.o., Sparsh 5/32) lost to PCA 208/5 in 36.4 overs (Aryan Raj 94, Hardik 62 n.o.).

## Joshna returns to the top-10

Lahiri have returned positive results, said a Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) source.

"The CAB had conducted RTPCR tests on all Bengal cricketers as a safety measure. Certain players have tested positive. The CAB is taking all necessary precautions," said association secretary Snehasish Ganguly in a statement.

Sudip Chatterjee, Anupam Majumdar, Kazi Junaid Saifi, Geet Puri, Pradip Pramanik, Sujit Yadav and assistant coach Sourasish

Iyer. Owners: Mr. Rama Seshu Eymuni & Mr. P. Prabhakar Reddy. Trainer: R.H. Sequeira.

The 35-year-old had reached a career-high 10th place for the first time in 2016. She has returned to the elite club of players in 10th position.

Saurav Ghosal has dropped a spot to be 16th in the men's rankings.

## Bengal's Ranji preparations affected due to positive cases

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Bengal's Ranji Trophy preparations have been affected with seven members, including six players, of the squad testing COVID-19 positive.

Sudip Chatterjee, Anupam Majumdar, Kazi Junaid Saifi, Geet Puri, Pradip Pramanik, Sujit Yadav and assistant coach Sourasish

## Junior National basketball from today

## SPORTS BUREAU

INDORE

Justhan looks formidable on paper.

Reigning champion Keralia starts as favourite in girls' section, but Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are teams that can pull off surprises.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

India's leading squash player Joshna Chinappa has returned to the top-10 of PSA world rankings.

The 35-year-old had reached a career-high 10th place for the first time in 2016. She has returned to the elite club of players in 10th position.

Saurav Ghosal has dropped a spot to be 16th in the men's rankings.

## Count Of Savoy lives up to the billing

HYDERABAD: Trainer S.K. Sunderji's Count Of Savoy (C.S. Jodha up) claimed the Laknavaram Cup, the feature event of Monday's (Jan. 3) races. The winner is owned by Mrs. M.B. Dubash & Ms. Farida B. Dubash.

## THE RESULTS:

1. THUNDER LIGHT PLATE (DIV. II) (1,400m), 4-y-o & upward, rated upto 25 (Cat. III): MISS LITTLE ANGEL (Antony Raj) 1, Sve Ra (Ajeeth Kumar) 2, My Master (Gaurav Singh) 3 and New Hustle (Surya Prakash) 4. Not run: Inception, Nk, 2/1/2 and 1/1/4. Im, 27.57s. T15 (w), 11, 19 and 15 (p). SHP: 54, THP: 40, SHW: 12 and 41, FP: 96, Q: 74, Tanala: 339. Favourite: Miss Little Angel. Owners: Mr. V. Narendra Reddy & Mr. Eswarachandra Rajagopal Triparaneni. Trainer: G. Shashikanth.

2. FIRECREST PLATE (1,400m), 4-y-o & upward, rated upto 20 to 45 (Cat. III): ANGELITA (Ajeeth Kumar) 1, Beauty Flame (Gaurav Singh) 2, N R Sport (Akshay Kumar) 3 and Siri (Rupa Singh) 4. 2/3, 2/4 and 2m, 25.95s. T39 (w), 13, 19 and 13 (p). SHP: 54, THP: 40, SHW: 14 and 68, FP: 309, Q:

Trainer: R.H. Sequeira.

5. LAKNAVARAM CUP (1,600m), 4-y-o & upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II): COUNT OF SAVOY (C.S. Jodha) 1, N R Infinity (B.R. Kumar) 2, November Rain (Mukesh Kumar) 3 and Moringa (Surya Prakash) 4. 3-1/2, Nk and 3, Im, 38.47s. T11 (w), 10, 15 and 10 (p). SHP: 20, THP: 29, SHW: 10 and 18, FP: 27, Q: 21, Tanala: 49. Fm, 7.25s. T55 (w), 17, 27 and 43 (p). SHP: 88, THP: 83, SHW: 17 and 70, FP: 640, Q: 439, Tanala: 18, 551. Favourite: Wandering Warrior. Owners: Mr. Rama Seshu Eymuni & Mr. P. Prabhakar Reddy. Trainer: R.H. Sequeira.

4. STREAK OF DAWN PLATE (1,200m), Maiden, 4-y-o & upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III): PACIFIC COMMAND (Akshay Kumar) 1, Grand Finale (A.A. Vikrant) 2, Ok Boss (Santosh Raj) 3 and Special Effort (Surya Prakash) 4. 2-3/4, 1/2 and 1/2, Im, 13.34s. T18 (w), 11, 31 and 19 (p). SHP: 124, THP: 134, SHW: 13 and 19, FP: 134, Q: 134, Tanala: 1,981. Favourite: Pacific Command. Owners: Mr. Peddi Reddy Prabhakar Reddy & Mr. P. Prabhakar Reddy. Jackpot: 70%; ₹1.282 (274 tks.) & 30%; 142 (1,053 tks.); Treble: (i) 566 (93 tks.), (ii) 89 (928 tks.); Mini Jackpot: 442 (266 tks.).

5. STREAK OF DAWN PLATE (1,200m), Maiden, 4-y-o & upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III): PACIFIC COMMAND (Akshay Kumar) 1, Grand Finale (A.A. Vikrant) 2, Ok Boss (Santosh Raj) 3 and Special Effort (Surya Prakash) 4. 2-3/4, 1/2 and 1/2, Im, 13.34s. T18 (w), 11, 31 and 19 (p). SHP: 124, THP: 134, SHW: 13 and 19, FP: 134, Q: 134, Tanala: 1,981. Favourite: Pacific Command. Owners: Mr. Peddi Reddy Prabhakar Reddy & Mr. P. Prabhakar Reddy. Jackpot: 70%; ₹1.282 (274 tks.) & 30%; 142 (1,053 tks.); Treble: (i) 566 (93 tks.), (ii) 89 (928 tks.); Mini Jackpot: 442 (266 tks.).

## Argentina blanks Greece

## ATP CUP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SYDNEY

World No. 4 Stefanos Tsitsipas crashed to defeat in his first singles match since elbow surgery, losing an epic battle against feisty Argentinian Diego Schwartzman 6-7 (5) 6-3, 6-3 at the ATP Cup here on Monday.

He showed up to play 11th-ranked Schwartzman and looked at his battling best in winning the first set tie-break, moving freely with little sign of his right elbow causing problems. But the 23-year-old lost his focus, and with it, five games in a row.

Chile stunned Serbia 2-1. Dusan Lajovic, standing in as Serbia captain in Novak Djokovic's absence, retired hurt at 0-3 down after sharing the first two sets with Cristian Garin.

**The results:** Group A: Spain bt Norway 3-0 {Roberto Bautista Agut bt Casper Ruud 6-4, 7-6 (4); Pablo Carreno Busta bt Viktor Durasevic 6-3, 6-3; Alejandro Davidovich Fokina & Pedro Martinez bt Lukas Hellermann & Andrej Petrovic 6-4, 6-3, [10-6]}.

**Group D: Poland bt Georgia 3-0** {Hubert Hurkacz bt Aleksandar Metreveli 6-7(3), 6-3, 6-1; Kamil Majchrzak bt Aleksandar Bakst 6-1, 6-1; Szymon Walkowiak & Jan Zieliński bt Bakst & Zura Tkemaladze 6-7 (2), 6-4, 6-2, [10-6]}.

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# Text & Context

## NEWS IN NUMBERS



### Barely represented

The number of women out of the 31 MPs in the parliamentary panel which has been assigned to examine the bill which seeks to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21. According to the members' list of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, led by senior BJP leader Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, available on the Raya Sabha website, Trinamool Congress MP Sushmita Dev is the only woman among the 31 members. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha during the winter session. PTI

### Rising tally

**179** In percentage, the proportion of increase in the seven-day rolling average of daily COVID-19 cases in India on January 2, 2022 compared to that on December 26, 2021. On Sunday, India recorded 33,682 new cases. This is the first time since September 23, 2021 that daily cases crossed the 30,000 mark. As on January 2, 2021, 1,700 cases of the Omicron variant had been detected in the country. The three States with the highest prevalence of the variant are Maharashtra (510), Delhi (351) and Kerala (156). COVID19BHARAT.ORG PIB

### Rising unemployment

**7.90** In percentage, India's unemployment rate in December, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). The unemployment rate rose to 7.9% in December from 7.0% in November, its highest since 8.3% in August. The urban unemployment rate rose to 9.3% in December from 8.2% in the previous month, while the rural unemployment rate was up 7.3% from 6.4%. Economic activity and consumer sentiment have been hit after a rise in COVID-19 cases and restrictions in many States. REUTERS

### Through the roof

**36.08** In percentage, Turkey's yearly retail inflation in December, according to the country's official data. This is the highest in 19 years. The Turkish Statistical Institute said the consumer price index increased by 13.58% in December from the previous month, further eroding peoples' purchasing power. The yearly increase in food prices was 43.8%. Inflation has been rising in the country while the Turkish lira has been slumping to record lows. AP

### Squash rankings

**10** The world ranking of Indian squash player Joshna Chinappa. The 35-year-old had reached a career-high 10th place for the first time in 2016. She has returned to the elite club of players in the top 10. On the other hand, Saurav Ghosal has dropped a spot and now occupies the 16th position in the latest men's rankings. Dipika Pallikal, who was the first to break into the top 10, was blessed with twins earlier this year and is expected to return to action soon. The sport will be in focus this year during the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

### EXPLAINER

## Extending the GST compensation

What is the GST payment due to States? Why are several States demanding a continuation of the compensation beyond June 2022?

### THE GIST

■ Ahead of the 46th meeting of the GST Council, Finance Ministers of several States at a pre-Budget interaction with the Union Finance Minister demanded that the GST compensation scheme be extended beyond June 2022.

■ The adoption of GST was made possible by States ceding almost all their powers to impose local-level indirect taxes and agreeing to let the prevailing multiplicity of imposts be subsumed into the GST. This was agreed on the condition that revenue shortfalls arising from the transition to the new indirect taxes regime would be made good from a pooled GST Compensation Fund for a period of five years that is set to end in June 2022.

■ With the finances of most States having been severely hit in the wake of the pandemic, States have been hard pressed to find ways to garner the resources to meet the essential and additional spending necessitated by the public health crisis.

SURESH SESHADRI

**The story so far:** Just a day ahead of the 46th meeting of the GST Council on December 31, the Finance Ministers of several States had a pre-Budget interaction with the Union Finance Minister and demanded that the GST compensation scheme be extended beyond June 2022, when it is set to expire. Citing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall economy and more specifically States' revenues, the States including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh stressed that while their revenues had been adversely impacted by the introduction of GST, the hit from the pandemic had pushed back any possible rebound in revenue especially at a time when they had been forced to spend substantially more to address the public health emergency and its socio-economic fallout on their residents.

**What is the GST compensation?** The Constitution (One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016, was the law which created the mechanism for levying a common nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST). The adoption of GST was made possible by States ceding almost all their powers to impose local-level indirect taxes and agreeing to let the prevailing multiplicity of imposts be subsumed into the GST. While States would receive the SGST (State GST) component of the GST, and a share of the IGST (Integrated GST), it was agreed that revenue shortfalls arising from the transition to the new indirect taxes regime would be made good from a pooled GST Compensation Fund for a period of five years that is currently set to end in June 2022. This corpus in turn is funded through a compensation cess that is levied on so-called 'demerit' goods. The computation of the shortfall is done annually by projecting a revenue assumption based on 14% compounded growth from the base year's (2015-2016) revenue and calculating the difference between that figure and the actual GST collections in that year.

**What is the shortfall for the current fiscal year ending on March 31?** On October 28, the Union government said the Ministry of Finance had released ₹44,000 crore to the States and Union Territories "under the back-to-back loan facility in lieu of GST Compensation". After



**Interestingly, even now the compensation cess will continue to be levied well beyond the current fiscal year since the borrowings made in lieu of the shortfalls in the compensation fund would need to be met.**

taking into account earlier releases amounting to ₹1,15,000 crore, the total amount released in the current financial year as back-to-back loan in-lieu of GST compensation was ₹1,59,000 crore, it added at the time. The Centre clarified that this sum was in addition to normal GST compensation "being released every 2 months out of actual cess collections" that is estimated to exceed ₹1 lakh crore. "The sum total of ₹2.59 lakh crore is expected to exceed the amount of GST compensation accruing in FY 2021-22," the Union Ministry of Finance said at the time.

It also explained that the decision for the Union government to borrow the ₹1.59 lakh crore and release it to the States and UTs, which had been taken in the 43rd GST Council Meeting held on May 25, 2021, was aimed at bridging the resource gap due to the short release of compensation on

account of the amount accruing into the Compensation Fund being inadequate.

**Why are several States seeking an extension of the GST compensation sunset timeline?**

With the finances of most States having been severely hit in the wake of the pandemic and the economic slowdown that had preceded the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, the State governments have been hard pressed to find ways to garner the resources to meet the essential and additional spending necessitated by the public health crisis.

Tamil Nadu's Finance Minister Palanivel Thiagarajan had last week stressed that with the States' revenues yet to recover, and considering the huge revenue shortfall that was anticipated, it was necessary that the period of GST compensation be extended by at least two years beyond June 2022. He emphasised that at the time of introduction of GST, the States had agreed to forego their fiscal autonomy with an assurance from the Union government that their revenues would be protected. However, over the last five years, there had been a widening gap

between the actual revenues realised and

the protected revenues guaranteed. While the trend had been visible even before the pandemic, the gap had widened ever since, Mr. Rajan had observed. This view was broadly echoed by other States including Kerala, Rajasthan and Delhi, with most of them seeking an extension for five years.

**Can the deadline be extended? If so, how?**

The deadline for GST compensation was set in the original legislation and so in order to extend it, the GST Council must first recommend it and the Union government must then move an amendment to the GST law allowing for a new date beyond the June 2022 deadline at which the GST compensation scheme will come to a close.

Interestingly, even now the compensation cess will continue to be levied well beyond the current fiscal year since the borrowings made in lieu of the shortfalls in the compensation fund would need to be met. In September, the GST Council decided to extend the compensation cess period till March 2026 "purely to repay the back-to-back loans taken between 2020-21 and 2021-22".

**Tax dilemma:** Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman chairs the 46th GST Council meeting, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on December 31, 2021.

PTI

### EXPLAINER

## What Russia hopes to do by ratcheting up tensions with Ukraine

Why is Russia continuing its military build-up along the border it shares with Ukraine? How is the West responding?

G. SAMPATH

**The story so far:** Tensions between Russia and the West have been rising for months now. Russia has amassed more than 1,00,000 troops at its border with aspiring NATO member Ukraine, prompting fears that it is planning to invade its neighbour. While Russia has denied such plans, it has, at the same time, stated that the troop deployment is in response to NATO's refusal to cap its steady expansion eastward. Putting the onus of de-escalation on the West, Kremlin has put forward a series of proposals outlining the conditions that must be met before it would scale back its mobilisations. But the U.S. and NATO, while agreeing to talks, have said Moscow's proposals cannot be taken seriously. U.S. President Joe Biden has also assured his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky that the U.S. will "respond decisively" in case of an invasion by Russia.

**What are Russia's demands?** At a press conference in December, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, when asked if he could guarantee that Russia won't invade Ukraine, replied that it



Ukrainian troops undergo military exercises on December 25, 2021. ■ PTI

would depend on "unconditional compliance with Russian security demands". Russia released these demands in the form of draft security pacts in December. Foremost among them is that NATO should withdraw troops and weapons from all countries in

Europe that joined the alliance after May 1997, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. This would effectively mean that NATO cannot operate in any of the Baltic nations that border Russia (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania), central European states such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, and Balkan states such as Croatia and Slovenia. Russia also wants NATO to drop plans of any further 'enlargement', which means committing to not accepting Ukraine and Georgia as members.

Another demand is that NATO must not hold drills in eastern Europe, Ukraine and Georgia without prior approval from Russia. What has been the West's response to Russia's proposals?

American and NATO officials, while indicating that they are open to negotiations, have bluntly stated that Russia's proposals are unrealistic. Citing the principle of sovereignty, they insist that Ukraine, and every other country in eastern Europe, has the right to determine its foreign policy without outside interference and join whichever alliance it wants. They have also dismissed the idea of Russia wielding

veto power over who gets to become a member of NATO, and pointed out that NATO would not take decisions affecting eastern Europe without involving the countries concerned. In other words, they believe that Russia, by amassing troops at the Ukrainian border and ratcheting up tensions, is hoping to negotiate the regional security architecture directly with Washington, bypassing the small European states. But both the U.S. and NATO have indicated that they would not want to fall into this trap and will instead consult their European allies on their negotiations with Kremlin.

**How do the rising tensions impact the Nord Stream 2 pipeline?** The Nord Stream 2 pipeline is complete but has to get multiple clearances before gas starts flowing through it. As and when it gets operational, it would double the volume of gas supplied by Russia's Gazprom to Europe's industrial powerhouse Germany. With Greens a part of the ruling coalition, Germany is keen to phase out coal and nuclear energy. It desperately needs cheap gas, which is why former Chancellor Angela Merkel approved the Nord Stream 2. But

Germany's Vice Chancellor and Economic Affairs and Climate Action Minister Robert Habeck (from the Green Party) has termed the pipeline as "a mistake from a geopolitical perspective", and has warned of "severe consequences", including stopping the Nord Stream pipeline, if Russia were to invade Ukraine. American state department officials have also indicated that sanctions against Nord Stream 2 are a certainty in case of an invasion.

**What next?**

Senior officials from the U.S. and Russia, led by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, will hold talks in Geneva on January 10 to try and work out a path towards de-escalation. Negotiations are also expected to continue a couple of days later at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) in Vienna. While Russia is expected to continue its tactic of deploying brinkmanship in pursuit of geopolitical goals, the U.S. will seek to leverage the possibility that an actual invasion would only make the states in the region cling tighter to NATO, by making the Russian threat more real and urgent.

### THE GIST

■ Russia has amassed more than 1,00,000 troops at its border with aspiring NATO member Ukraine. Russia stated that only if NATO withdraws their forces from all countries in Europe that joined the alliance after May 1997, would they de-escalate the military build-up.

■ The U.S. and NATO officials have bluntly stated that Russia's proposals are unrealistic. They insist that Ukraine and every other country has the right to determine its own foreign policy.

■ Germany has also warned Russia that the Nord Stream pipeline would be stopped if they were to invade Ukraine.



The fight continues: Participants of a protest demanding the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in New Delhi in 2014. ■ FILE PHOTO



## ABSTRACT

## Post the prohibition of dowry

How transactional attitudes towards marriage keep the practice of dowry alive

PRASHANTH PERUMAL

Calvi, R., & Keskar, A. (2021). 'Til Dowry Do Us Apart: Bargaining and Violence in Indian Families. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3783911>

Laws against dowry, the practice wherein the bride's family pays money and other gifts to the family of the groom during marriage, have been made more stringent over the decades. These anti-dowry laws, which allow for a jail sentence of up to 5 years for members of the groom's family who are found to be guilty, are widely believed to have reined in at least the explicit exchange of dowry items. However, the downfall in the practise of dowry shows only one side of the story. There may be other unseen and unintended consequences resulting from the strict legal ban on dowry that need to be taken into account while evaluating anti-dowry laws.

In "Til Dowry Do Us Part: Bargaining and Violence in Indian Families," economists Rossella Calvi and Ajinkya Keskar look into the amendment to the Dowry Prohibition Act and its various effects on the Indian family setup. In 1961, India enacted the Dowry Prohibition Act that made the giving and receiving of any dowry illegal. This law proved to be unsuccessful in curbing the practice and hence, in 1984, it was amended with stricter provisions. As a result, there was a significant increase in convictions and greater public awareness around the anti-dowry law.

The researchers note that after the anti-dowry law was amended by the Government in 1984, the value of the gifts that were exchanged as dowry between families dropped by as much as 20% between 1985 and 1990. Further, while the prevalence of dowry dropped among the Hindus who came under the purview of the anti-dowry law, it remained unchanged among the Muslims who were not covered under the law. All this suggests that the anti-dowry laws curbed the practise of dowry to a significant extent.

The encouraging drop in the exchange of dowry gifts for marriage, however, had other negative consequences. The authors argue that there is always an implicit bargain that happens between the bride's side and the groom's side with each side trying to maximise its gains from the marital partnership. Laws against dowry changed the terms of bargaining between the two sides to some extent. For instance, with stricter anti-dowry laws, the groom's family could no longer explicitly bargain for money and other gifts as a condition for marriage. But anti-dowry laws do not take other bargaining tools out of the equation of marriage. The groom's family could still bargain in other ways implicitly. When dowry is outlawed, the groom's family may expect the bride to have a job that brings a steady flow of earnings to the family. The researchers, in fact, found that parents of daughters started investing more in their daughters' education and career to compensate for the absence of dowry.

More importantly, the outlawing of dowry also led to a drop in the status of women within the family after marriage. The researchers found that women's decision-making powers within the family (such as their say on how to spend their husband's earnings) dropped by around 3 percentage points after dowry was outlawed. This is because when dowry could no longer be used as a bargaining chip by women, the influence that women had within the family began to drop. In such a scenario, unless women brought something else other than dowry that was lucrative to the table, the groom's family was likely to be disappointed with the marriage deal. Violence against women also witnessed a rise of about 2 percentage points after dowry was outlawed. Further, given the widespread social stigma against divorce, women had no choice but to stay in these abusive marriages. The researchers thus warn that prevailing social attitudes, such as the transactional view that many people have towards marriage must be taken into account when framing laws to protect women.

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

## Weighing in on the efficacy of female leadership

It is necessary to get rid of inherent biases and perceptions about the effectiveness of women in roles of authority

BHASKAR DUTTA

*The lack of representation of women in a parliamentary panel examining a bill to increase the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years has come under scrutiny following the comments of Rajya Sabha MP Priyanka Chaturvedi. In this piece dated September 24, 2020, Bhaskar Dutta explains how prejudices about the efficacy of women in key political roles need to be systematically eradicated.*

What do Germany, Taiwan and New Zealand have in common? These are all countries that have women heading their governments. And although they are located in three different continents, the three countries seem to have managed the pandemic much better than their neighbours. Much along the same lines, a detailed recent study by researchers in the United States reports that States which have female governors had fewer COVID-19 related deaths, perhaps partly because female governors acted more decisively by issuing earlier stay-at-home orders. The authors of the study conclude that women leaders are more effective than their male counterparts in times of crises. There will be several critics (no need to guess their gender) who will question the reliability of this conclusion by pointing out deficiencies in the data – admittedly somewhat limited – or the econometric rigour of the analysis. Many will also point out that it is dangerous to make sweeping generalisations based on one study.

The point about the danger of making sweeping generalisations is valid. Of course, studies such as these do not establish the superiority of all female leaders over their male counterparts. All female leaders are not necessarily efficient, and there are many men who have proved to be most effective and charismatic leaders. The important takeaway from the recent experience and such studies is the necessity of getting rid of inherent biases and perceptions about female effectiveness in leadership roles.

**India's gram panchayats**

Importantly, female leaders also bring something quite different to the table. In particular, they perform significantly better than men in implementing policies that promote the interests of women. This was demonstrated in another study conducted by Nobel Laureate Esther Duflo and co-author Raghabendra Chattopadhyay, who used the system of mandated reservations of *pradhans* in gram panchayats to test the effectiveness of female leadership. Their study was made possible by the 1993 amendment of the Indian Constitution, which mandated that all States had to reserve one-third of all positions of *pradhan* for women. Since villages chosen for the

mandated reservations were randomly selected, subsequent differences in investment decisions made by gram panchayats could be attributed to the differences in gender of the *pradhans*. Chattopadhyay and Duflo concluded that *pradhans* invested more in rural infrastructure that served better the needs of their own gender. For instance, women *pradhans* were more likely to invest in providing easy access to drinking water since the collection of drinking water is primarily, if not solely, the responsibility of women.

In addition to the instrumental importance of promoting more space for women in public policy, this is also an important goal from the perspective of gender equality. The right to vote is arguably the most important dimension of participation in public life. There are others. What proportion of women stand for election to the various State and central legislatures? How many are elected? Perhaps more important, how many women occupy important positions in the executive branch of government?

**About suffrage**

Independent India can rightly be proud of its achievement in so far as women's suffrage is concerned. Women were allowed to vote from 1950 onwards and so could participate on an equal footing with men from the first general election of 1951-52. This is in striking contrast to the experience in the so-called "mature democracies" of western Europe and the United States. In the U.S., it took several decades of struggle before women were allowed to vote in 1920. Most countries in Europe also achieved universal suffrage during the inter-war period. Since most able-bodied men went away to the battlefields during the First World War, increasing numbers of women had the opportunity to show that they were adequate substitutes in activities that were earlier the sole preserve of men. This, it is suggested, mitigated the anti-female bias and earned women the right to vote in European countries.

We have had and have charismatic female leaders like Indira Gandhi, Jayalalitha, Mayawati, Sushma Swaraj and Mamata Banerjee among several others. Interestingly, a glaring example of gender stereotyping was the labelling of Indira Gandhi as the "only man in the cabinet". Apart from these stalwarts, the overall figures are depressing. The female representation in the current National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre is probably not very far from the typical gender composition in Indian central and State governments. Female members make up only about 10% of the total ministerial strength. The underrepresentation of female Ministers in India is also reflected in the fact that

Ms. Banerjee is currently the only female Chief Minister.

The underrepresentation of women in Indian legislatures is even more striking. For instance, the 2019 election sent the largest number of women to the Lok Sabha. Despite this, women constitute just over 14% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha. This gives us the dismal rank of 143 out of 192 countries for which data are reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Tiny Rwanda comes out on top with a staggering 60% of seats in its lower house occupied by women.

Since women running for elections face numerous challenges, it is essential to create a level-playing field through appropriate legal measures. The establishment of quotas for women is an obvious answer. I have mentioned earlier that mandated reservation for women in gram panchayats was established in all major States since the mid-1990s. Attempts have also been made to extend quotas for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies through a Women's Reservation Bill. Unfortunately, the fate of this Bill represents a blot on the functioning of the Indian Parliament. The Bill was first presented to the Lok Sabha by the H.D. Deve Gowda government in 1996. Male members from several parties opposed the Bill on various pretexts. Subsequently, both the NDA and United Progressive Alliance governments have reintroduced the Bill in successive Parliaments, but without any success. Although the Rajya Sabha did pass the bill in 2010, the Lok Sabha and the State legislatures are yet to give their approval – despite the 24 years that have passed since it was first presented in the Lok Sabha.

**Steps to reducing prejudice**

Of course, there is a simple fix to the problem. The major party constituents of the NDA and UPA alliances can sidestep the logjam in Parliament by reserving a third of party nominations for women. This will surely result in increasing numbers of women in legislatures and subsequently in cabinets. The importance of this cannot be overstated. There is substantial evidence showing that increased female representation in policy making goes a long way in improving perceptions about female effectiveness in leadership roles. This decreases the bias among voters against women candidates, and results in a subsequent increase in the percentage of female politicians contesting and winning elections. So, such quotas have both a short-term and long-term impact. Indeed, voter perceptions about the efficacy of female leadership may change so drastically in the long run that quotas may no longer be necessary!

Bhaskar Dutta is Professor, Ashoka University. The views expressed are personal

## THE GIST

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The underrepresentation of women in Indian legislatures is striking. Even though the 2019 election sent the largest number of women to Lok Sabha, women constitute just over 14% of its total strength. Attempts have also been made to extend quotas for women in parliament through a Women's Reservation Bill. But even after being tabled 24 years ago, it has not been passed by the lower houses.

The researchers note that after the anti-dowry law was amended by the Government in 1984, the value of the gifts that were exchanged as dowry between families dropped by as much as 20% between 1985 and 1990. Further, while the prevalence of dowry dropped among the Hindus who came under the purview of the anti-dowry law, it remained unchanged among the Muslims who were not covered under the law. All this suggests that the anti-dowry laws curbed the practise of dowry to a significant extent.

## THE DAILY QUIZ

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is celebrating its 74th Independence Day today.

A quiz on one of India's neighbours.

1 In which year was the country's official English name, which it had held since 1885, changed from Burma to Myanmar?

2 Name one of Asia's mighty rivers that rises and flows wholly within the country.

3 Name the ancient city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in the Mandalay Region that has more than 2000 Buddhist temples and pagodas.

4 Kutupalong in Bangladesh is the world's largest refugee camp housing more than 80,000 members of which ethnic group from Myanmar?

5 By indulging in what traditional activity do Burmese celebrate their new year called Thingyan?

6 Name the political party founded by Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi that was ruling the country before being ousted from power last February.

7 Name the former First Lady of India who was born Ma Tint Tint in Burma in 1923 and became an Indian citizen in 1951.



► Name this Burmese, the first from Asia to hold a global diplomatic post between 1961 and 1971. ■ THE HINDU ARCHIVES

Please send in your answers to the [dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in](mailto:dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in)

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The second R stands for Reuel. His full name is John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, 2. Oxford English Dictionary, where he worked mainly on the history and etymology of words of Germanic origin beginning with the letter 'W', 3. Shortage of paper after WWII, 4. Misty Mountains, 5. The Silmarillion, 6. 17 with The Return of the King picking up the most statuettes, 7. C.S. Lewis, 8. Leonard 'Mr. Spock' Nimoy, 9. Tengwar.

Early Birds: Terri Thomas| Mohd. Kiron Karim| Mahmood Lebbai| Anuj Mavlankar| John Ryan Jijo