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DELHI
CITY EDITION
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BJP releases Assam poll manifesto, promises corrected NRC
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NEARBY

Singhu roars again on Shaheed Diwas

NEW DELHI

Shaheed Diwas brought back the waning cheer and spirit at the Singhu protest site on Tuesday. People, especially youth, reached the Delhi border to participate in the agitation to mark the martyrdom of freedom fighters.

CITY ▸ PAGE 2

12 women among 13 killed in accident in M.P.

GWALIOR

Twelve women and a man were killed when an auto-rickshaw they were travelling in collided with a speeding bus in Old Chawni area of Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday morning. State Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput announced an inquiry into the accident.

REGION ▸ PAGE 7

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OPPORTUNITIES ▸ PAGE 5

As cases rise, govt. gives nod to inoculate all over 45 from April 1

No need for a certificate on co-morbidity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Citizens above the age of 45, irrespective of co-morbidities, will be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination from April 1, the government announced on Tuesday. At present, only citizens above 60 and those over 45 with co-morbidities are allowed to get the vaccination.

"This decision has been taken by the Union Cabinet on the basis of the advice of the COVID task force and experts," said Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, while making an appeal to eligible citizens to register for vaccination. According to him, over 4.85 crore people had received at least one dose of the vaccine. He added that 80 lakh had received the second dose so far.

The cut-off date for the 45+ years category is those persons born before January 1, 1977, the Health Ministry said.

Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan has on Tuesday written to the States/UTs stating that while the government has expanded the prioritised age group to include all persons aged 45 years and above for COVID-19 vaccination, accordingly there will now be no need for a comorbidity certificate for people aged 45 years to 59 years, from April 1.

Miles to go | While India administered the third-highest number of COVID-19 vaccine doses in the world as on March 22, only 3.54 doses were given per 100 people

Country	Doses administered (IN CRORE)	Doses per 100
U.S.	12.65	37.83
China	7.5	5.21
India	**4.85**	**3.54**
U.K.	3.03	44.6
Brazil	1.41	6.64
Turkey	1.32	15.73
Germany	1.09	12.96
Israel	0.98	112.99
Chile	0.87	45.65
France	0.86	12.66

SOURCE: OUR WORLD IN DATA

Software modified

"The Co-WIN software is also being suitably modified for doing away with the need for confirmation of co-morbidities," he said.

The Secretary added that the registration on Co-WIN would begin from April 1 and directed officials to immediately undertake measures for expansion of the vaccination drive.

"While ensuring wider dissemination of information for increased uptake of vaccination services, the focus should be on optimal utilisation of the capacity of COVID-19 Vaccination Centres (CVCs) while minimising the wastage of vaccines," noted Mr. Bhushan in his letter.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10
MORE REPORTS ▸ PAGE 12

Test, track and treat, MHA advises States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued fresh COVID-19 guidelines on Tuesday, asking the States to strictly enforce the "test, track and treat" protocol.

The "guidelines for effective control of COVID-19" issued under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, will be effective from April 1 to 30.

The MHA asserted that local authorities could impose restrictions at district, sub-district and city or ward-level. "There shall be no restriction on inter-State and intra-State movement of persons and goods, including those for cross land-border trade under treaties with neighbouring countries. No separate permission, approval or e-permit will be required," the Ministry said.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10

Refund penal interest on EMIs, SC directs lenders

It lifts govt. bar on banks declaring accounts as NPAs

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed banks and financial institutions to refund compound interest, interest on interest or penal interest collected on EMI for loans during the period of moratorium from March 1 to August 31 last year.

"It is directed that there shall not be any charge of interest on interest/compound interest/penal interest for the period during the moratorium," a Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R. Subhash Reddy and M.R. Shah said in a 148-page judgment.

The court said the amount accumulated as compound/penal interest or interest on interest during the six-month moratorium on term loan EMIs should be given as "credit/adjusted in the next instalment of the loan account".

Justice Shah, who authored the judgment, reasoned that additional interest in the form of compound or penal is usually collected from loan defaulters. When the payment of instalments had already been deferred during the moratorium, what was the need to burden borrowers, already reeling under the financial loss of a pandemic and lockdown, the court asked.

> By and large, everybody has suffered due to the COVID-19 lockdown. Even the government suffered because of non-recovery of GST... Merely since the reliefs announced by the Union of India/RBI may not suit the desires of the borrowers, the reliefs/policy decisions related to COVID-19 cannot be said to be arbitrary or violative of Article 14 of the Constitution
>
> SUPREME COURT

The judgment also spelt relief for banks and lenders with the court lifting its nearly six-month bar on them from declaring accounts of borrowers as non-performing assets (NPAs). In October last, the top court had stopped banks and lenders from declaring accounts of borrowers as NPAs.

The judgment concluded that the government's scheme to restrict the waiver of interest on interest to loans worth only up to ₹2 crore as irrational. This scheme, introduced in October, was limited to debts in MSME, education, housing, consumer durables, credit card, auto, personal and consumption categories within the ₹2 crore limit.

"There is no justification shown to restrict the relief of not charging interest on interest with respect to the loans up to ₹2 crore only, and that too, restricted to the aforesaid (eight) categories. There is no rationale to restrict such relief," Justice Shah noted.

But the court refused to entertain complaints from petitioners that the government did not do enough to ease the burden of financial strain during the pandemic.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10

Five policemen killed in Chhattisgarh Naxal ambush

13 injured in landmine blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RAIPUR

Five police personnel were killed and 13 others injured when Naxals blew up a bus in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district on Tuesday, senior police officials said.

The landmine explosion took place between Kanhargaon and Kadenar villages under the Dhaudai police station limits.

Personnel of the police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) were returning in the bus to Narayanpur town, 300 km from capital Raipur, after a counter-insurgency operation, said Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P. "Five DRG personnel, including the driver, were killed in the explosion," he told *PTI*.

Reinforcements were rushed to the spot. The bodies were removed and the injured personnel were evacuated from the forest. The injured were being airlifted to Raipur in an Indian Air Force chopper for treatment, the IG added.

Earlier, while confirming the incident, the State's Director General of Police D.M. Awasthi said over 20 security personnel were on board the bus.

Mangled remains: The bus blown up by Maoists in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on Tuesday. • PTI

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10

India abstains in UNHRC vote on Sri Lanka

Resolution gets nod from 22 members

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

India on Tuesday abstained from a crucial vote on Sri Lanka's rights record at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The resolution on 'Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka' was, however, adopted after 22 states of the 47-member Council voted in its favour.

Sri Lanka, which had earlier deemed the resolution "politically motivated", was quick to reject the UN move to collect and preserve evidence of war crimes in the country, committed by the armed forces and the LTTE.

"Without the consent and acceptance of the country concerned, it cannot be implemented," Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena said in Colombo. The statement made clear Sri Lanka's resistance to the process envisaged in the resolution to prosecute war criminals through an international evidence gathering and investigation mechanism.

The money allocated – an estimated $2.8 million – for the effort would find better use towards providing housing for the war-affected people, the Minister said, even as scores of Tamils continue seeking their lands and jobs from his government.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 10

'Foreigners can apply after rules are notified'

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Tuesday told the Lok Sabha that "foreigners" covered under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, "may submit applications for grant of Indian citizenship after appropriate rules are notified by the Central government".

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in a written reply in the Lower House that the CAA was notified on December 12, 2019, and came into force from January 10, 2020. "The Committees on Subordinate Legislation, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have granted time up to April 9, 2021, and July 9, 2021, respectively to frame these rules," the reply said.

DETAILS ON ▸ PAGE 11

'No public celebration on Holi, other festivals'

Govt. issues order as cases breach 1K

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Tuesday issued an order restricting public gatherings during Holi and other upcoming festivals in city as the number of new COVID-19 cases rose to 1,101 over 24 hours, the highest in more than three months.

"All authorities concerned will ensure that public celebrations and gatherings, congregations during upcoming festivals like Holi, Shab-e-Barat, Navaratri etc. shall not be allowed in public places/public grounds/parks/markets/religious places etc. in NCT of Delhi," an order issued by Chief Secretary Vijay Dev read.

The order said that if the gatherings happen, it may pose a "considerable threat" of spread of the virus.

Also, there are many "super spreader areas" in the city such as weekly markets, metro services, religious places and others, the government said in another order and directed all DMs to "greatly intensify their enforcement efforts".

"The past fortnight has seen a persistent increase in the COVID-19 cases in Delhi and positivity is also on the rise. It has been observed that COVID-appropriate behaviour is not being followed amongst the general public," the order said.

Random testing

The government has also decided to conduct random testing of people coming from other States.

"All District Disaster Management Authorities shall conduct random testing (RAT/RT-PCR) of passengers coming from the States where COVID-19 cases are surging/rapidly increasing, at all airports, railway stations, inter-State bus terminals (ISBT) and other alighting points (for private buses) in NCT of Delhi. It shall be ensured that samples are taken randomly at the alighting points for conduct of tests," said another order.

Passengers who are found COVID-19-positive, shall be mandatorily quarantined at their place of stay or a government facility for 10 days.

SEE ALSO ▸ PAGE 6

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V-C will continue to hold office till successor is appointed: JNU

It condemns 'malicious propaganda' by teachers' union

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Responding to allegations made by the JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA) on the conduct of the Academic Council meeting by "interim administrator" Vice-Chancellor M. Jagadesh Kumar, the administration said that according to the JNU Act and its statutes, there is no nomenclature as "caretaker V-C", "officiating V-C" and "interim administrator" as it clearly states that the V-C will continue to hold office until his successor is appointed.

It said that it strongly condemns the "downright falsehood and malicious propaganda" being spread by a "small section" of faculty member of JNU about the conduct of the Academic Council meeting on Monday.

Damaging reputation

"These faculty members seem to be only interested in damaging the reputation and public image of JNU by spreading stories about the conduct of the Academic Council meeting and decisions taken in it. During the meeting, a large number of council members from assistant professors to senior professors and deans of schools, participated in the deliberations in a very democratic and enthusiastic manner and arrived at the decisions," the varsity said.

The JNUTA has alleged that Mr. Kumar had allowed only select members to speak and had questioned if the "interim administrator" had the power to conduct meetings deciding the future of the university.

JNU Registrar Anirban Chakraborti said that the Academic Council meeting was held in a "very cordial and positive atmosphere with an attendance exceeding 100 members" and said many important decisions were taken at the meeting.

The council resolved to conduct the JNU entrance examination 2020-2021 in collaboration with the National Testing Agency (NTA) and that the university will admit students through the Central Universities Common Entrance Test whenever the NTA decides to conduct it, he said.

"The council decided to start a new MA programme in Hindi translation in the Centre of Indian Languages, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies. The council also approved granting of recognition to Arun Jaitley National Institute of Financial and Management Faridabad, to award PG Diploma in Management [Finance] and PG Diploma Management [Financial Management]," the Registrar said.

The Centre had permitted Mr. Kumar to continue at the university, after the expiry of his term on January 26, till a successor is appointed.

CAG officers to now be JNU graduates

NEW DELHI

Jawaharlal Nehru University and Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Tuesday signed an MoU to initiate an association by which all officers graduating from the National Academy for Audit and Accounts, Shimla, will be JNU graduates. JNU V-C M. Jagadesh Kumar said that officers of the CAG will henceforth be graduates of JNU.

Singhu roars again on Shaheed Diwas

Large number of protesters, especially youth, reach Delhi borders to participate in the agitation

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Shaheed Diwas brought back the lost cheer and spirit at the Singhu protest site on Tuesday. People, especially youth, reached the Delhi borders to participate in the agitation to mark the martyrdom of the freedom fighters.

Three huge photographs of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev adorned the main stage at the protest site. The crowd wore yellow, orange and green *pagdis*. A call was given in Punjab and Haryana villages for the youth to join the protest.

"All those wearing yellow *pagdis* signify youth. This whole protest is essentially for them and their present and future," said a member of the stage management committee.

Soil collection

Soil collected from various historical places – revolutionary Kartar Singh Sarabha's village Sarabha, Bhagat Singh's village Khatkar Kalan, Hussainiwala Border, Anandpur Sahib, revolutionary Udham Singh's village Sunam, Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, and Sirhind – was also kept on the stage.

It was collected by youth and student organisations and brought to Singhu and Tikri borders.

Tractor shows and several langars which had lately vanished also came alive.

A girl participates in the farmers' rally to mark Shaheed Diwas at the Singhu border in Delhi on Tuesday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

'Govt. will have to bend'

Women also gathered at the Singhu border on Tuesday said that no matter what happens, they'll continue to protest. Preeti (23), from Haryana's Sonipat who had come with a group of women, said that the government will have no other option but to bend.

A 22-year-old fashion designer from a private college, a resident of Delhi, said that she has spent the last one month here as part of the exam on human rights, she recently wrote.

"I have conducted a deep study here and it is not Punjabis here, there are people from across States and all walks of life – those who believe in the cause," she said.

Two wheelchair-bound men also came to Singhu from Fatehgarh Sahib to join the protest. Lakhwinder Singh who has been on the wheelchair since 2015, said that he belongs to a labour family and there has been a growing anger over the farmers' issue.

"Shaheed Bhagat Singh has taught to fight for our rights at all costs and that's what we are doing," said Rao Varinder Singh who has been on the wheelchair for the last 10 years, following an accident in the fields.

'Fighting our people'

Drawing the crowds, Punjabi singer Ravinder Garewal sang for nearly two hours. He said, "Shaheed Bhagat Singh did not know that we'll have to fight our own people for the freedom, and our own people will become like the British. People ask me about the dwindling numbers at the protest site, and I tell them that this is not the only protest happening. There's a protest inside every household," he said.

However, those managing the protest also realise that the spirit seems to be going down. "Strategy needs to change. This cold wave cannot continue and is not good for the protest," said a committee member.

HC grants cover to interfaith couple after attack

Court directs police to file status report after hearing plea, lists matter for April 6

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Tuesday granted police protection to an interfaith couple, who got married recently and fear for their life after their house was attacked by a mob on March 20.

Justice Anu Malhotra directed the police to file a status report in the case and listed the matter for further hearing on April 6.

The High Court was hearing the petition by the couple, who were also present, urging the court to provide police protection to them and the man's family as after the attack they feel unsafe in their locality.

They sought direction that Rapid Action Force be deployed in the sensitive area to ensure that the situation should not erupt into a communal riot.

Own free will

Advocate Monika Arora, representing the couple, said the man and the woman are consenting adults and got married of their own free will and their house was attacked by a mob of around 50 people.

The counsel also showed photographs of injured persons, who received stab injured in the attack.

"CCTV footage of the area shows the mob entering the narrow lanes and breaking pots and coolers, pelting stones and banging doors to threaten petitioner no. 2 (man), his family and neighbours while people could be heard screaming from inside. Another video shows damaged bikes and cycles lying on the street," said the petition, filed through advocates Manish Kumar, Akaksh Vajpai, Riddhima Gaur and Archit Vasudev.

The plea said the petitioner woman is an adult and is free to take her decisions and her family should not harass her just because she married a man from another community.

Ms. Arora submitted before the court that houses of Dalits were attacked and casteist slurs were made by the mob but the police has not invoked the provisions of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in the FIR.

Advocate Nandita Rao, representing the police, said the relevant provisions of the SC/ST Act have been invoked in the case and an officer of ACP level is investigating the matter.

Court upholds jail sentence for AAP MLA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday upheld an order sentencing AAP MLA Somnath Bharti to two years in jail for assaulting AIIMS security staffer in a case registered in 2016.

After the pronouncement of the order, Mr. Bharti was taken into custody, a lawyer said. A magistrate court had in January sentenced him to two years in jail.

Special Judge Vikas Dhull partly dismissed Mr. Bharti's appeal and convicted him for the offences under Sections 147 (rioting) read with 149 (unlawful assembly) of IPC and under Section 3 (mischief causing damage to public property) of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act. The court, however, set aside his conviction under Sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 353 (assault or use of criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) read with Section 149 of the IPC.

In January, Mr. Bharti was granted bail to enable him to file an appeal before the HC against his conviction and jail term.

According to the prosecution, in September 2016, Mr. Bharti, along with 300 others, brought down the fence of a wall at the AIIMS. The case was lodged based on a complaint from R.S. Rawat, Chief Security Officer, AIIMS.

DU inaugurates Bhagat Singh Smarak

University commemorates martyrdom of freedom fighters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Tuesday organised a programme to commemorate 90 years of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru at which Minister of Education Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank" paid homage to Bhagat Singh in the chamber located in the basement of the Viceregal Lodge of the University where he was imprisoned.

Shaheed Bhagat Singh Smarak was inaugurated by the Minister virtually and an existing collection of books on freedom fighters has been converted into "Shaheed Smriti Pustakalaya" to be accessed by students and teachers of the university.

Vice-Chancellor P.C. Joshi said that the Bhagat Singh Smarak shall remain open to students and the university community to inculcate values of freedom and sacrifice.

Tribute was paid to Bhagat Singh and his associates through patriotic songs by students and faculty members of the Music Faculty. Students who had won awards in competitions related to Shaheed Diwas were felicitated.

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Sl. No.	Subject	Details
1.	E-Auction Notification Date	23.03.2021
2.	Last date to submit EMD	29.03.2021
3.	Time of Auction	30.03.2021 11.00 A.M. onwards

For further details contact : Office of The Special Officer & Competent Authority (IMA), 3rd Floor, Podium Block, V. V. Tower, Bengaluru. Helpline No : 080 – 46885959, 080-29565353, 080-29566556, 8660519889.

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Justice Kaul inaugurates web portal

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court Judge Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul inaugurated the SAHYOG web portal, a first-of-its-kind platform that connects student research assistants with lawyers and organisations who have taken up pro bono cases, on Tuesday.

Justice Kaul said he was happy to inaugurate the web portal as it was well timed. "I am sure the judiciary can equally utilise in some way the opportunity of interaction with these dynamic youngsters," Justice kaul added.

SAHYOG was founded by Adya Jha and Dakshita Chopra, alumni of the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences. Since its inception in September 2019, SAHYOG has contributed over 2,500 pro bono hours while collaborating with lawyers and organisations such as International Justice Mission, Centre for Social Justice and Justice Ventures International.

Unable to identify personnel who rounded up youth, police tell HC

Video of officers assaulting five Muslim youth had gone viral

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police has informed the Delhi High Court that it has not been able to identify the officers who were seen in a viral video rounding up five Muslim youth and forcing them to sing the national anthem on February 24 last year.

The police made the statement in response to a petition filed by a 61-year-old Kismatun seeking constitution of a court-monitored Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe into the alleged custodial death of her son Faizan (23), who was last seen in the viral video.

Ms. Kismatun alleged that "the policemen kicked the five Muslim men with their boots, beat them and prodded them with their lathis and taunted them saying, '*Ye lo azaadi* [Here, take freedom]', and forced them to sing the national anthem while they were lying down, helpless in a grievously wounded condition".

In a report filed before the court, the agency said it has taken on record four video clippings related to the incident. In the clips, persons in police uniform are seen assaulting Faizan and four others – Farhan, Kauser, Rafique and Wasim.

The police said that three clips are distantly shot videos in which the pictures of these persons are blurred and are not recognisable as they are wearing helmets and other safety gadgets except one person who is seen without a helmet.

Verdict likely in Nikita Tomar murder case today

ASHOK KUMAR
FARIDABAD

The District and Sessions Court here is expected to pronounce verdict in the Nikita Tomar murder case on Wednesday. The 20-year-old was shot point-blank allegedly by her former school mate on October 26 last year in broad daylight.

Additional Sessions Judge Sartaj Baswana is expected to pronounce the judgment in the case almost four months after the trial began on December 1 last year.

Defence counsel P.L. Goyal told *The Hindu* that 55 witnesses, including two defence witnesses, deposed before the court during the trial and final arguments were concluded on Tuesday. Both sides presented final arguments in the case for almost four hours on Monday and again for almost 30 minutes on Tuesday.

Nikita's father Moolchand Tomar said that he was hopeful that justice would be done to his daughter.

The prosecution produced three eyewitnesses in the case, including Nikita's friend who accompanied her at the time of murder, and the CCTV footage. However, the alleged weapon of offence recovered from the spot did not bear the fingerprints of the accused Tosif, said Mr. Goyal.

Government of Telangana
Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board

Office of the Chief General Manager (E),
PCC-II, HMWS&SB, Khairatabad, Hyderabad.

e- PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

Sl.No.	e-tender Notice No. and Date	Name of work	Approximate Estimate Contract Value
1)	EP.No.18/CGM(E)/PCC-II/Sunkishala-Intake-PS/2020-21, dated:22-03-2021.	Construction of Intake Well and Pumping Station at Sunkishala including Electro-mechanical equipment, Sub-station, Instrumentation works at Sunkishala and Transmission mains from Sunkishala to Kodandapur WTPs including Manning, Operation and Maintenance for a period of 24 months.	Rs.1167.94 Crores

1. The bid documents download starts online from **26.03.2021.**
2. Name and address of Chief General Manager (Engg), concerned-Chief General Manager (Engg), Project Construction Circle-II, HMWSSB, Khairatabad, Hyderabad-500004.
3. The contractors/firms are requested to upload the information in the 'ZIP' format preferably.
4. Further details can be seen @ http://www.eProcurement.gov.in

Chief General Manager (Engg), PCC-II, HMWSSB, K'bad, Hyd.

Centre ducks query on dissolution of air quality panel; Cong. doubts commitment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Cornering the government on premature dissolution of the Commission for Air Quality Management set up by the Narendra Modi government by way of an ordinance that lapsed on March 12, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh questioned the government's commitment towards the issue.

Mr. Ramesh said that the government that is usually agile in converting an ordinance into an Act, let this important ordinance lapse. This despite the fact, Mr. Ramesh said, that the Business Advisory Committee for Rajya Sabha had allocated three hours' time for the discussion on the conversion of the ordinance to a Bill.

Mr. Ramesh's question went unanswered in the Rajya Sabha, with Deputy Chairman Harivansh pressing to take up other listed business. The session is slated to end on Thursday and it is unlikely that in the last two days, the government will bring in a fresh Bill to reactivate the commission.

"No clarification was forthcoming. A much-hyped measure to tackle air pollution languishes," Mr Ramesh tweeted.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and adjoining areas, as it is called, came into being after the 22-year-old Environmental Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) that has so far addressed air pollution in Delhi, was dissolved in October.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR

Delhi	244	Gurugram	226
Ghaziabad	298	Faridabad	286
Noida	279	Greater Noida	338

Good 0-50 | Satisfactory 51-100 | Moderate 101-200 | Poor 201-300 | Very Poor 301-400 | Severe >400

Air Quality index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) | Source: CPCB

Timings
DELHI

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 24		
RISE	06:21	SET 18:35
RISE	13:58	SET 03:22
THURSDAY, MAR. 25		
RISE	06:20	SET 18:35
RISE	15:00	SET 04:08
FRIDAY, MAR. 26		
RISE	06:18	SET 18:36
RISE	16:05	SET 04:50

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	30	22
Safdarjang	30	22
Palam	29	22

Delhi Palam Today
32ºC Rain and thunderstrom may affect over few places upto early hours. Clouding would decrease gradually.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
32ºC A pleasant cool morning and dry slight warm day with few clouds likely. Moderate gusty winds during day.

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IN BRIEF

Two found dead on railway track in Narela

NEW DELHI

The bodies of a woman and her brother-in-law were found on Tuesday on railway track in north Delhi's Narela, the police said, adding that no note was recovered.

Monthly deadlines for Chandni Chowk work

Pedestrianisation of stretch to be completed by end of May

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Monthly deadlines have been set to ensure speedy completion of the Chandni Chowk redevelopment project, which has suffered several delays due to the COVID-induced lockdown and curbs, said Delhi government sources.

The first phase of the project, related to the redevelopment and pedestrianisation of the 1.3 km stretch between Red Fort and Fatehpuri Masjid, is expected to be completed by May 31, said sources. Once completed, it will pave the way for a futuristic solution to one of the area's historical problems: last-mile connectivity.

Ongoing redevelopment of Chandni Chowk in old Delhi.
• SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Free connectivity

The authorities are exploring the possibility of deploying golf carts and trambuses to provide free connectivity on the stretch.

"The main corridor is almost complete except for installation of streetlights and CCTV cameras. We expect this to be accomplished by the end of April," said a government official.

"Traffic diversions have been put in place at the Red Fort junction. Work on this junction as well as near the Fatehpuri Masjid is expected to be done by the end of April as well. The Transport department has been asked to explore the provision of e-vehicles for last-mile connectivity for the elderly and infirm," the official said.

Another official associated with the project said work related to phase II of the project, which includes façade restoration, will see the appointment of a consultant by the end of April.

Meanwhile, a significant portion of overhead electric cables have been removed from the stretch, and multiple pick-up and drop sites for goods, which was a demand of local businesses, have also been demarcated.

The stretch between Red Fort and Fatehpuri Masjid is being turned into a vehicle-free zone - between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. - though non-motorised vehicles will be allowed. There will be tree-lined footpaths on either side and a wide central verge. There will also be seating space for visitors.

Most of the work is being done in red sandstone, keeping the Mughal-era architectural style in mind.

Undertaken at a cost of ₹90 crore and part of a larger redevelopment plan for the Walled City of Shahjahanabad, the project was scheduled to be completed by March-end last year.

Government sources said this was mainly due to issues over procurement of construction material as well as components to be installed as part of the initiative from neighbouring States such as Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Brothers held for killing hawker over business rivalry

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two brothers have been arrested for allegedly killing a hawker in Najafgarh over a business rivalry, the police said on Tuesday. The victim, Rambilash, used to sell eggs and *chhole bhature* at Delhi Gate, they said.

The accused – Kishan Pal (25) and Vijay Pal (22) – were engaged in the same business at the same place. An officer said they have also arrested a 43-year-old man, Mani Ram, for supplying an illegal weapon to the duo.

Shot near his home

The incident happened on March 17 when the victim was headed for home after work, said an officer. Just before he could enter his house near Naya Bazar, Kishan shot at him and both sped off.

Rambilash was rushed to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital where he succumbed to injuries, the officer said.

The accused had even tried to kill the victim on the intervening night of March 9-10 but since Rambilash was with another hawker, who could have identified them, they dropped the plan. They instead robbed a fruit seller of ₹10,000 at gunpoint.

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Retired Army man shot dead by two in west Delhi

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 43-year-old retired Army man was shot dead by two unidentified persons in west Delhi's Jaffarpur Kalan, the police said on Tuesday.

The deceased has been identified as Mukesh alias Fauzi, a resident of Jaffarpur Kalan.

At 5.30 p.m. on Monday, Mukesh was with his friends in a field of one Rajender near Firni Road when two men came to the spot on a motorcycle and inquired about one Rakesh, an officer said. They told the duo that Rakesh was not with them.

"The man who inquired about Rakesh opened fire at Mukesh with a countrymade pistol and sped off," said DCP (Dwarka) Santosh Kumar Meena. A case under relevant sections of the IPC has been registered.

It is suspected to be a case of personal enmity, however, the exact cause will be ascertained after the arrest of the accused persons, said the police.

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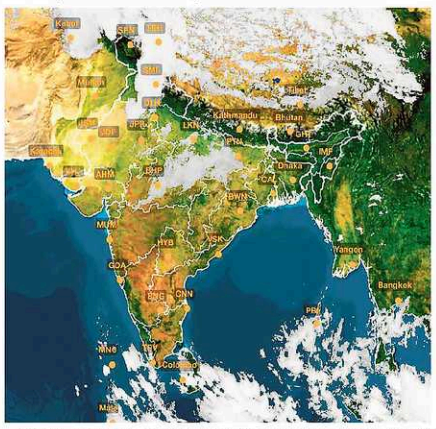
ASSEMBLY POLLS

DELHI THE HINDU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 15.00 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorm with lightning/hail/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Sikkim, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, central Maharashtra, Marathawada, Telangana, Kerala, Mahe and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	–	36.3	19.6	Kozhikode	–	34.6	26.4
Ahmedabad	–	38.3	23.0	Kurnool	–	39.0	22.2
Aizawl	–	29.6	13.3	Lucknow	–	35.6	21.3
Allahabad	–	36.9	20.4	Madurai	–	35.6	25.5
Bengaluru	–	35.6	20.7	Mangaluru	–	37.0	26.1
Bhopal	–	35.7	20.4	Mumbai	–	35.3	22.4
Bhubaneswar	–	39.0	25.5	Mysuru	–	35.4	18.2
Chandigarh	–	28.9	19.2	New Delhi	–	29.6	21.5
Chennai	–	33.6	24.8	Patna	–	37.2	20.0
Coimbatore	–	36.1	23.6	Port Blair	–	32.8	27.0
Dehradun	–	25.8	15.1	Puducherry	–	32.9	22.5
Gangtok	0.1	20.2	12.5	Pune	–	34.7	19.2
Goa	–	34.6	24.6	Raipur	–	38.6	21.5
Guwahati	–	35.0	17.8	Ranchi	–	35.3	19.6
Hubballi	–	36.0	23.0	Shillong	–	25.6	13.5
Hyderabad	–	35.7	24.5	Shimla	19.7	12.4	8.4
Imphal	–	33.9	12.6	Srinagar	33	13.2	3.2
Jaipur	0.2	34.0	21.2	Thiruvananthapuram	–	33.9	24.8
Kochi	3	33.2	25.2	Tiruchi	–	36.8	24.2
Kohima	–	25.8	12.0	Vijayawada	–	37.4	23.5
Kolkata	–	37.4	25.1	Visakhapatnam	–	34.0	24.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing — **Yesterday**

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	65	83	36	171	212	
Bengaluru	8	51	50	90	95	
Chennai	8	22	55	85	98	
Delhi	19	46	23	193	304	
Hyderabad	5	78	30	144	147	
Kolkata	40	24	45	326	255	
Lucknow	15	58	35	272	249	
Mumbai	5	40	88	274	182	
Pune	6	82	65	142	113	
Visakhapatnam	13	65	35	117	173	

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Siliguri, West Bengal recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 339 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Mangalore, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 38

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Rhinos stray into Assam poll rhetoric

Activist against victimisation of locals challenges AGP chief Atul Bora

RAHUL KARMAKAR
BOKAKHAT (ASSAM)

The one-horned rhino appears to have strayed into Assam's poll rhetoric.

Assam has an estimated 2,640 rhinos in four protected areas. About 2,400 of them in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR) have become an issue for 23.19 lakh voters, more specifically for more than 3 lakh voters across six Assembly constituencies that straddle the World Heritage Site.

Among the achievements that the BJP has listed is having checked rhino poaching in the State. Records with the State Forest Department say poaching has reduced by 86% in the last three years. From Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the booth level party worker, almost every BJP leader has been wearing the "conservation success" like a badge.

'Poaching stopped'

"No government before us took on the poachers like we did, putting many of them behind bars and instilling fear in them. We have also taken unprecedented steps to clear Kaziranga and other wildlife habitats of encroachers," Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said.

Pranab Doley, holding his election symbol torchlight, campaigning at the Bokakhat market. • RAHUL KARMAKAR

The encroachers are often equated with "illegal immigrants" or "Bangladeshis".

But the anti-poaching and anti-encroachment drives have affected ally Asom Gana Parishad more than "big brother" BJP. Bokakhat and Kaliabor, the two adjoining constituencies that cover much of the KNPTR that has expanded to 1,300 sq km, are represented by the AGP's heavyweights - party president and Agriculture Minister Atul Bora and Water Resources Minister Keshab Mahanta. Mr. Bora is apparently feeling the heat more than Mr. Mahanta.

Apart from the responsibility of saving the space of regionalism in the State from the Assam Jatiya Parishad, a new political party, his prime challenger is 35-year-old activist Pranab Doley who believes conserving rhinos cannot be at the cost of the lives of local people.

A founding member of the Jeepal Krishak Sramik Sangha, a mass organisation that has been leading land and farmers' rights movements in the Kaziranga area, Mr. Doley is an independent candidate backed by the Congress-led Mahajot or grand alliance.

"I have been fighting for justice for the families of over 50 people gunned down since a shoot-at-sight policy adopted by the Kaziranga authorities in 2008. They were killed in cold blood in the name of rhino conservation and the killings were never investigated," he told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Doley also dismissed the claims that the park authorities evicted encroachers. "Why do they compensate people then? They keep adding swathes of land to the park and tagging people living there as Bangladeshis. Most are our own people. Conservation cannot be at the expense of the local people who have known how to coexist with animals for ages," he said.

'Eviction on court order'

KNPTR Director P. Sivakumar declined to speak citing poll restrictions, but an official said the evictions were carried out on the orders of the Gauhati High Court and the squatters multiplied after areas were added to the park four decades ago.

"I have never interfered in the conservation efforts in Kaziranga because we care about ecology. But at the same time, the people matter too," Mr. Bora said, confident of retaining Bokakhat where the KNPTR's headquarters is located. The AGP and the BJP supporters believe a slew of developmental projects would see Mr. Bora through, but those behind the Mahajot believe Mr. Doley could spring a surprise. So do the supporters of Jiten Gogoi, another independent candidate who had won the seat twice before Mr. Bora and claimed to be the "king of Kaziranga". There are eight other contestants for the key seat.

'BJP govt. will not allow infiltrators to enter Assam'

Surveillance has begun across the Indo-Bangla border: Rajnath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUMDING/HOJAI (ASSAM)

Appealing not to indulge in politics over illegal immigration, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the BJP, if voted to power, will not allow Bangladeshi infiltrators to enter Assam at any cost.

Addressing an election rally here, Mr. Singh said the BJP government has started electronic surveillance across the Indo-Bangla border in Assam to stop infiltration from the neighbouring country.

"We will not allow Bangladeshi infiltrators to enter Assam at any cost...We will not allow politics over illegal immigration problem," he said.

Mr. Singh added that the BJP has governments in Assam and Tripura, and it will come to power in West Bengal this time, and then the infiltration problem from Bangladesh through these three States will be solved.

He said misinformation is being spread by the Opposition that the BJP is attacking and destroying the civilisation, culture and identity of Assam. "If we had any bad intention, we would have not conferred Bharat Ratna on Dr. Bhupen Hazarika. We respect Assamese culture."

The Defence Minister also said that misinformation is being spread regarding the BJP's role in the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Talking about the perennial flood problem, Mr. Singh said the BJP government, once it is back to power again, will do everything possible in this regard and make Assam a 'flood-free' State.

Mr. Singh said the Congress could have made Assam among the top States in India had the party 'even partially' fulfilled its election promises.

EC revises rule for polling agents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India has decided to revise its rules for polling agents, allowing a party to nominate an agent for any booth within the Assembly segment where the person is a voter, a senior official said on Tuesday. Earlier, a polling agent had to be a voter of the booth where he was to be an agent.

"This new rule will help the political parties to appoint one polling agent to each booth, since amid the pandemic getting agents may be difficult," he said.

Make the right choice

Social activist and artist Suman Mitra painting a graffiti in Kolkata on Tuesday urging people to elect good candidates in the upcoming West Bengal election. • PTI

NIA offered bail if I joined BJP, RSS: Akhil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GUWAHATI

Anti-CAA activist Akhil Gogoi in a letter from jail on Tuesday alleged physical and mental torture in custody and claimed he was offered 'instant bail' by the NIA interrogators if he joined either the RSS or the BJP. The letter released by Mr. Gogoi's Raijor Dal said he was taken to Delhi on December 18, 2019, without the court's permission. Mr. Gogoi claimed he was offered money for an NGO and threatened also.

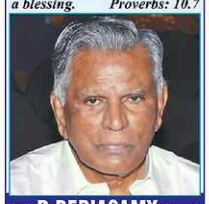
BJP spokesperson Rupam Goswami said, "These are baseless allegations...nothing but cheap politics."

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

1st YEAR DEATH REMEMBRANCE

The memory of the righteous is a blessing. Proverbs: 10.7



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REMEMBRANCE

1st Year Remembrance

Born 21.11.1951 — Died 24.03.2020

SMT.LEKSHMY AMMAL
Retd. HM at NKT National Girls Hr. Sec School, Triplicane, Chennai

This day last year, we lost our dearest "Prema" – the most compassionate and talented stalwart who left behind a trail of accomplishments and insurmountable deeds of unfathomable essence.

We are still basking in the glory of her magnificence and thriving on her unparalleled energy. Her absence in our lives is immeasurable and the sorrow is infinite.

The indelible memories of her smile, empathy, affection, boundless love, and an unfaltering purpose that she lived for, keep us from imploding. We reminisce of her life - an epic that is everlasting.

Deeply missed and remembered by:
S Srinivasa Raghavan (Husband)
S Balaji Subrahmanyam & Priya (Son & D.I.L)
Jairam, Abhirami & Family
(Son in Law, Daughter & Grandchildren)
Brothers : Ananthakrishnan & Family, Lakshmanan & Family, Shankar Iyer & Family
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BUSINESS OFFER

CREDIT CARD & Loan Problems, Property Loan, Cibil 8939116893

PERSONAL

LOST & FOUND

It is notified for the information that my original qualifying examination certificate of Main Senior Secondary Examination of year 2009 & Roll No 6218270 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Priyanka Pandey, B-100 Lal Bagh, Loni, Ghaziabad, UP. Finder Cont: 9213198822

LEGAL NOTICE

Before the Honourable Family Court, Kozhikode, Kerala State
OP.No: 1217/2020
Petitioner : Dr. Deepa Chandramohan
Respondents
1) Anubhav wahi
S/o Ashok Kumar wahi,
H.No. 39, Road No: 54, Punjabi Bagh west, New Delhi - 110 026
2) Sudha wahi,
W/o Ashok kumar wahi,
H.No: 39, Road No: 54,
Punjabi Bagh west, New Delhi - 110026
Notice to the respondents
Please take notice that OP 1217/2020 stands posted to 26.04.2021 for appearance of the respondents and for hearing
Dated this the 23rd day of March 2021
Sd/- Adv N Prakasan
Counsel for the petitioner

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE
CORRIGENDUM-II
With reference to the Expression of Interest (EOI) Vide reference number SVSASL/54/2020-21. dated: 27-02-2021 and Corrigendum reference number SVSASL/55/2020-21. dated: 09-03-2021. since no Expression of Interest (EOI) has been submitted by any prospect bidder so far, therefore the Sub- Committee (Planning and Works) and Tender Committee has decided to extend the period of EOI till 4th April - 2021 up to 2:00 pm.
Further details are as under: -
1. Sale of EOI document (start) - 24th March - 2021 from 11:00 a.m.
2. Sale of EOI document (end) - 3rd April - 2021 up to 4:00 p.m.
3. Submission of EOI document (start) 25th March - 2021 from 11:00 a.m.
4. Submission of EOI document(end) - 04th April - 2021 up to 2:00 p.m.
5. Opening of bids 4th April 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
All other terms and conditions will remain the same.
By order
KEWAL SINGH (Secretary)
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GENERAL

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SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

Bhawna Mehra @ Meenu

General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Bhawana Mehra @ Meenu, D/o** Sh. Ajay Kumar Mehra, **R/o** H.No. B-194, 3rd Floor, Back Side West Patel Nagar, Delhi, **Age:** 17 years, **Height :** 5'2", **Hair:** Long, **Built:** Medium, **Complexion:** White, **Identification:** A Heart symbol is engraved on the Right Shoulder, **Wearing:** Blue Jeans Pant, Brown Colour Top and Ladies Chappal in her feet has been missing/kidnapped since **15.03.2021** from her home. In this regard a **FIR No. 72/21, u/s 363 IPC** dated **16.03.2021** has been registered at **PS Patel Nagar, Delhi.**

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. if any one having any information about this girl please inform to the following.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.nic.in
Ph.: 011-24368638,24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
SHO
PS Patel Nagar, Delhi
Ph. : 011-25872637, 8750870434
DP/720/CD/2021

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED

SEE SECTION U/S 82 Cr. P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **(i) Fahim,** S/o Saleem, R/o 25, Tarinan, Chauhatta, Khurja, Distt. Bulandshahar, UP **(ii) Monu,** S/o Zakir Hussain, R/o Awas Vikas Colony, Near Brilliant School, Bulandshahar Road, Hapur, UP **(iii) Wahid,** S/o Md. Yusuf, R/o Bakery Wali Gali, Kot Mohalla, Khurja, Bulandshahar, UP **(iv) Bhawani,** S/o Bajrang Singh, R/o H.No. 1, Kalyanpuri, Satya Nagar, Jhotwada, Jaipur, Rajasthan **(v) Abhishek @ Rinku,** S/o Ajeet Pradhan, R/o Vill. Bahlolpur, Post Nihula Lalganj, PS Minaj Ganj, Azamgarh, UP **(vi) Atul,** S/o Abhay Narayan Singh, R/o Vill. Sihuka Abirpur, PS Minaj Ganj, Azamgarh, UP **(vii) Taushif,** S/o Saleem Qureshi, R/o H.No. 184, Bakrakaswan, Sikandarabad, Bulandshahar, UP **and (viii) Firoj,** S/o Sartaj, R/o Khala Par, Mujaffar Nagar, UP, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under **case FIR No. 367/20, u/s 420/468/471/411/413/120B IPC, Dated 10.08.2020 at P.S. Okhla Indl. Area, New Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Fahim, Monu, Wahid, Bhawani, Abhishek @ Rinku, Atul, Taushif and Firoj** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Fahim, Monu, Wahid, Bhawani, Abhishek @ Rinku, Atul, Taushif and Firoj** have absconded (or are concealing themself to avoid the service of the said warrant)

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Fahim, Monu, Wahid, Bhawani, Abhishek @ Rinku, Atul, Taushif and Firoj, of case FIR No. 367/20, u/s 420/468/471/411/413/120B IPC, Dated 10.08.2020 at P.S. Okhla Indl. Area, New Delhi** are required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **30.04.2021.**

By Order
Sh. Deepak Kumar-II,
MM, Court No. 513, South-East District,
Saket Court Complex, New Delhi
DP/66/SE/2021-(Court Matter)

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE.
OPEN TENDER NOTICE NO. WCR-CRWS-MANIFOLD-20-14

E-tenders are invited from experienced contractors on behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work. **Name of work:** Maintenance of Oxygen, D.A., CO2 & LPG Pipeline & Manifold system of CRWS, Bhopal. **(1) Cost of Work:** ₹ 8,49,807.60/- **(2) Cost of tender form:** ₹ 0.00/- **(3) Earnest Money:** ₹ 0.00/- **(4) Time of Completion:** 24 months **(5) Online tender closing date and time:** 12.04.2021, upto 15.00 hrs. **(6) Date and time of opening of Tender:** 12.04.2021 at 16.00 hrs. Detailed information about tender and tender format is available on website **www.ireps.gov.in.** and tender notice on notice board of CWM, CRWS, Bhopal's office.

Chief Workshop Manager
CRWS, WCR, Nishatpura, Bhopal

CENTRALISED RAILWAY HELPLINE NO. 139

WESTERN RAILWAY

TENDER FOR MECHANIZED CLEANING OF PLATFORM RETURN TRAINS

Department: Mechanical **Executive:** Sr. CDO - MMCT **Tender Notice No.:** BCT-MCC-STR-2020 **Dated:** 20.03.2021. **Name of Work with Location:** Mechanized cleaning of Primary / Secondary / STR / Platform Return Trains including Depot Premises of Mumbai Central Coaching Depot **Approx. Cost of work :** ₹15,10,66,158.94/- (including EPF, ESIC & GST) **EMD:** Nil **Date & Time of submission (closing) :** 19.04.2021 at 15.00 Hrs. **Date & Time of opening :** At 15:30 hrs. on 19.04.2021. Please visit **www.ireps.gov.in** to download the tender document, corrigendum and further details. D-0747

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SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

Seema

General public is hereby informed that a lady namely **Seema, W/o** Krishan **R/o** I-1015, Mangolpuri, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 06.10.2020. In this regard, **FIR No. 357/20 dated 06.10.2020 has been registered at P.S. Sarai Rohilla, Delhi.** Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing/kidnapped lady but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing/kidnapped lady is as under:

Name: Seema, **Gender:** Female, **Age:** 25 years, **Height:** 4'11", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Hair:** Black, **Wearing:** Suit and salwar.

If anyone has any information regarding this missing/kidnapped lady, kindly inform SHO/Sarai Rohilla, Delhi.

E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax : 011-24368639
SHO
P.S. Sarai Rohilla, Delhi.
Ph. No. 011-23691106, 23693611
DP/636/N/2020

Four dead, 2 rescued after soil caves in at building site

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SURAT

Four labourers were killed on Tuesday after soil caved in while they were engaged in building a basement wall in Surat's Mota Varachha area, an official said.

Two people were rescued from the debris and had been hospitalised, the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) fire brigade official said.

"Six labourers were trapped after soil caved in while they were constructing a wall in the basement of a multi- storey building project. Four died and two were rescued and rushed to hospital," SMC's East zone fire officer Jagdish Patel said.

They were working in the lower part of the basement when the mishap occurred, Mr. Patel added.

Fadnavis alleges irregularities in police transfers, seeks CBI probe

NCP says 80% of transfers discussed in alleged phone conversations never took place

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The ongoing political turmoil escalated on Tuesday after Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis alleged of irregularities in transfer of police officers in Maharashtra citing a confidential report from the former commissioner of State intelligence department, Rashmi Shukla, who had put several phone numbers on surveillance. Mr. Fadnavis demanded an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the matter.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), a partner in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, denied the allegations saying 80% of the transfers discussed in the alleged phone conversations never even took place, and the rest were confirmed by a committee of senior IPS and IAS officers of which former Maharashtra Director General of Police Subodh Jaiswal was a member.

"For lower posts, a well-established police board generally submits its recommendations and then the further process takes place," NCP's Mumbai president and State Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik said.

The NCP said that Ms. Shukla had illegally put phone numbers of several political leaders on surveillance, when the MVA government was being formed, to help the BJP. "That was the reason why she was shunted out from the intelligence department after the government was formed," Mr. Malik said.

The party alleged that Ms. Shukla and Mr. Jaiswal worked for the BJP. "When the BJP realised that it could not buy our MLAs, it started working on officers," he said.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Fadnavis at a press conference claimed that he was in possession of 6.3 GB data of phone interceptions which he would produce before the Union home secretary and demand a CBI probe.

"Ms. Shukla had sought permission from then DGP Mr. Jaiswal and through proper channel with approval from the then additional chief secretary of Home Department, several important phone numbers were put on surveillance," Mr. Fadnavis said.

He added that on August 25, 2020, Ms. Shukla submitted a report to Mr. Jaiswal and the next day, he forwarded it to the Chief Minister office.

Test, negative report must for entering malls in Navi Mumbai on weekends

RAINA ASSAINAR
NAVI MUMBAI

With COVID-19 cases rising, the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has issued a notice to the shopping malls directing them to make rapid antigen test mandatory for entry of visitors after 4 p.m. every Friday and for the whole day on Saturdays and Sundays. The entry should be allowed if the antigen report is negative or with a RT-PCR negative report of the last 72 hours.

NMMC Commissioner Abhijit Bangar has also asked officials to open the temporarily closed COVID-19 Care Centres in phases and reactivate the mobile antigen van for housing societies.

Department stores have been asked to start a token system by deciding on the number of visitors allowed at one time depending on space. " A fine of ₹50,000 will be levied on the management each time a mall is found to be overcrowded without proper social distancing," Mr. Bangar said.

ZONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS JAMMU
Email : igjammu@jkpolice.gov.in Tele: 0191-2542696, 2544332 Fax: 0191-2560417

e-NIT NO. 01 of 2021 Dated : 18/03/2021

Sub:- Hiring of Vehicles.

For and on behalf of the Lt Governor J&K UT, e-tenders under two Bid System i.e, Technical Bid and Financial Bid, are hereby invited from transporters, authorised dealers and registered firms for hiring of Multi utility Passenger / Commercial vehicles (i.e Trucks, Buses, MMV, LVA Viz Inova, Scoprio, Taverra, Bolero etc) for use by Subordinate units without fuel, which will be provided as per Government approved fuel consumption for the particular type of vehicle during Financial Year 2021-2022 for carriage of troops & equipments etc. The tenders should be addressed to IGP Jammu Zone, Jammu.

The scope of work, qualifying criteria and terms and conditions (as indicated in the detailed in SBD & BOQs), specific to the contract are given in Section-I. The general terms and conditions of the contract are given in Section-technical and financial bids are required to be submitted in the formats given in Section-IV & Section-V respectively.

Important Dates:-

i)	Date of Publishing from	20/03/2021 (1600 hrs)
ii)	Downloading from	20/03/2021 (1700 hrs)
iii)	Online Bid Submission start date	21/03/2021 (1400 hrs)
iv)	Online Bid Submission Closing date	29/03/2021 (1600 hrs)
v)	Last date for receiving the Hard Copies (Original challan & EMD)	29/03/2021 (1500 hrs)
vi)	Date and time of tech. Bid Opening.	30/03/2021 (1400 hrs)

The bidding documents can be downloaded from J&K State e-procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in from 20/03/2021 at 1700 hrs onwards.

The Bids shall be uploaded in electronic format on the website www.jktenders.gov in from 21/03/2021 (1400 hrs) to 29/03/2021 (1600 hrs)

The complete bidding process will be ONLINE and only hard copies of Bid Security and tender fees will be accepted and it should submitted to Accounts Section ZPHQ Jammu as per the date mentioned in the tender.

No Hard copy of the financial Bid / Rate quoted will be accepted, rates must be quoted in the BOQ online Only.

The Tenders (Technical bids only) will be opened online on 30/03/2021 at 1400 hours at IGP Jammu Zone Office. In case of unforeseen circumstances, the date of opening will be next working day or else as notified separately.

Detailed tender documents with terms and conditions are available on J&K State e-procurement Portal www.jktenders.gov.in.

Sd/-
Inspector General of Police,
Jammu Zone, Jammu.

DIP/J-13606/20

ENTERPRISE CONNECT

A Business Initiative

NTPC wins 'Role Model' award in the prestigious CII National HR Excellence Award 20-21

NTPC Ltd has been conferred with the prestigious 'Role Model' Award category in the most coveted and prestigious 11th CII National HR Excellence Award 2020-21. This award is the highest level of recognition in the field of Human Resource by CII. Since the institutionalization of CII National HR Excellence Award, this is the second time, when the award of Role Model has been conferred to an Organization, that too after a period of 10 years. NTPC is the only PSU to have received this prestigious award. This signifies NTPC Commitment towards demonstration of Excellence in development and management of Human Resources through continuous process improvement. The successful implementation of HR practices is undoubtedly due to the untiring efforts of all employees of NTPC Limited and commitment of the senior management for the development and well being of its employees and stakeholders.CII National Committee Chairman on Leadership and HR, Mr.Sanjay Behl presented the award, along with Ms Indrani Kar, Head of CII's Suresh Neotia Centre of Excellence for Leadership to Shri D.K.Patel, Director(HR) in the virtual conference "Learn from the Achievers" held today amidst senior leaders from the industry and HR assessors.

GAIL and Ranchi Municipal Corporation sign agreement for setting up Compressed Biogas plant

GAIL (India) Limited and Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) have signed a Concession Agreement (CA) for setting up Compressed Biogas (CBG) plant in Ranchi. The agreement was signed in the presence of Hon'ble Chief Minister of Jharkhand Shri Hemant Soren, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas Shri Ashish Chatterjee, Director (Business Development), GAIL Shri M V Iyer and Executive Director (Business Development), Shri Santanu Roy by Ranchi Municipal Commissioner Shri Mukesh Kumar, IAS and Executive Director (Projects), GAIL Shri K B Singh. As per the agreement, GAIL will setup CBG Plant for processing 150 Tons per Day of Organic Municipal Solid Waste (MSW). The CBG plant will produce 5 Tons of Compressed Biogas (CBG) per day and approximately 25 Tons of Fermented Bio Manure per day.CBG plant would be beneficial for people of Ranchi by producing clean & green fuel and will be a step towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

NBCC Organises Unity Cup Tennis Ball Cricket Tournament

NBCC organized Unity Cup Tennis Ball Cricket Tournament on March 14, 2021 at CSOI, Sports Complex, New Delhi to encourage Team building and promote Fit India Movement of GoI. The Tournament inaugurated by Shri Durga Shankar Mishra, Secretary, MoHUA held between mega Teams from MoHUA, NBCC, HUDCO & CPCB. The series of exciting matches kick-started with the inaugural match played between MoHUA & CPCB. After all the contesting matches' enjoyed by all, MoHUA won the final strike and Sh. Durga S. Mishra lifted the winning Trophy on behalf of the Team. The sporty event was followed by presenting 'Man of the Match' to Sh. Sunil Kumar, from MoHUA. CSOI ground was filled with cheers by the officials from Ministry & participating PSUs who thoroughly enjoyed watching their respective teams contest against each other with great enthusiasm. Shri Shiv Das Meena, Chairman CPCB; Shri Kamran Rizvi, (IAS), Additional Secretary, MoHUA & CMD HUDCO and Shri Rajendra Chaudhary, Director (C), Shri. Neelesh Shah, Director (P) and Smt. B.K. Sokhey Director (F) of NBCC were also present to support all Team members

BHEL reaffirms market leadership of being sole Indian supplier of Nuclear Steam Turbines

In an open competitive bidding process, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has emerged as the lowest bidder (~Rs.10,800 Crore) for the fleet mode tender floated by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) for the 6x700 MW Turbine Island Package Projects. Significantly, with this, BHEL has retained its market leadership position of being the sole Indian supplier of Nuclear Steam Turbines. Notably, PHWRs (Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors) are the mainstay of the Indian Nuclear Power Programme and 12 out of 18 operating PHWRs of NPCIL are equipped with BHEL-supplied Steam Turbine Generator sets (10x220 MWe + 2x540 MWe) with the balance from Canada and Ukraine. These sets have continuously been exhibiting excellent performance with Kaiga Unit -1 creating a world record of uinterrupted operation for 962 days.Additionally, BHEL has already supplied 2x700 MWe Steam Turbine Generator sets each for Kakrapar Atomic Power Plant (Unit 3&4) and Rawatbhata Atomic Power Plant (Unit 7&8).

Financial Closure of Term Loan for STPL's 1320 MW Buxar Thermal Power Project inked.

Agreement for Term Loan of Rs 8448.46 Crore for 1320 MW Buxar Thermal Power Project at Chausa in Buxar district of Bihar being executed by SJVN Thermal Pvt. Limited (STPL), a wholly owned subsidiary of SJVN between STPL and the consortium of lending Banks & Financial Institution (FI) in a glittering ceremony at Patna. The Loan agreement was inked between the parties in the august presence of Sh. Nand Lal Sharma, Chairman & Managing Director, SJVN. The ceremony of Financial Closure was also graced by Smt Geeta Kapur, Director (Personnel), Sh. A. K. Singh, Director (Finance), SJVN, Sh Sushil Sharma Director (Electrical) and Sh. Sanjeev Sood, CEO, STPL.Sh. S L Sharma, Chief Finance Officer, signed the agreement on behalf of STPL with Consortium Banks/ FI, which included State Bank of India, Canara Bank and IIFCL. SBI Capital Markets Ltd. was the sole financial advisor and debt arranger to the company for this transaction. Signing of the Loan agreement paves way for funding of the construction activities in addition to equity being infused by the promoter.

CSIR -Aroma Mission phase 2 conducts training & aromatic plant distribution program at Pati ,Champawat

A one-day training-cum-awareness program under CSIR-Aroma Mission on "Cultivation, Processing, Value Addition and Marketing of Aromatic Crops" was organized by CSIR, Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, Jammu (IIIM) under the patronage of Director, CSIR-IIIM, Jammu Dr. D. Srinivasa Reddy on March 20, 2021, at Pati, Champawat, Uttarakhand. The program was conducted in collaboration with APAAR NGO, Pithoragarh, and Farmalogist Essence & Organic LLP, New Delhi. More than 180 farmers and other stakeholders, including 82 women from different villages of Pati and Lohaghat, Champawat, participated in this program. Quality planting material of Clarysage and Rosemary was distributed to the farmers of the area. The Chief Guest of the program, Vimi Joshi, Assistant Project Director, DRDA Champawat, informed participants about different schemes of the Government. She said that knowledge is power, and knowledge gained about aromatic plants today will help empower women and farmers of the region. She lauded the organizers' efforts in promoting aromatic crops in the region under the CSIR-Aroma Mission.Amit Mamgain, Block Development Officer, Pati, Champawat, motivated progressive farmers and asked participants to join CSIR Aroma Mission for the region's socio-economic development. The program was anchored by Manoj Patel of APAAR NGO, Pithoragarh. He welcomed all the guests, participants, media personal, and all associated functionaries involved in the event.

Tiecon Chadigarh holds three day Entrepreneurial Congregation

The day began with a welcome note by TIE president, Mr. Hirdesh Madan highlighting the agenda and deliverables of TIECON 2021 along with a word of thanks for various sponsors who are making this event possible specially the Government of Punjab.This was immediately. followed by Pramod Bhasin - Chairman, Clix Capital and Punjab innovation mission in talk with Mr. Vivek Atray - Ex- IAS, motivational speaker, author, mentor, Pramod Bhasin spoke about his pan India mission and further shared in detail the 'Punjab Innovation Mission' on how Punjab intends to develop a vibrant and innovative ecosystem for entrepreneurship in the state. and the importance of following successful experiences of various countries engaged in startup missions. In his message to the young business professionals he said one should not be afraid of being involved in the launch of startups ,with startup stigma fast wearing off and ease of capital availability it's time to stay there and take it to a successful and logical conclusion. Mr. Rajat Agarwal IAS, CEO- Invest Punjab, delivered a grand keynote address at the beginning of the largest entrepreneurial event of the region with the focus on making a difference in the lives of thousands of business tycoons, young entrepreneurs and students. He listed out various measures being taken by the government of punjab to make startups the integral part of the ecosystem of the business environment of Punjab in the form of financial and logistical support.

HPKVN Implements Navdharna campaign for skill development of specially abled people

Himachal Pradesh Kaushal Vikas Nigam (HPKVN) is implementing a special campaign called as Navdharna for skill development of specially-abled people of the state. The employment oriented training in the tourism and hospitality and retail sectors would be provided to the specially- abled under this programme.Technical Education Minister Ram Lal Markanda informed this while presiding over a workshop organized here today. He said that it was our social responsibility to empower people with disabilities by providing them ample opportunities for skill training. He said HPKVN was giving special impetus in providing skill trainings to the specially-abled. In order to provide employment and self-employment opportunities to them, the Nigam was making all efforts to provide training under Navdharna programme which was announced by the Chief Minister in his 2019-20 budget speech.Dr. Markanda said the HPKVN would be providing training to 300 silent or speech/hearing impaired, locomotor challenged and acid attack victims of the state in the areas of retail and tourism and hospitality under this programme. They would get free training along-with residential facility and those completing the training successfully would be given nationally recognized 'Skill India' certificate. The representatives of renowned industries participated in this workshop and discussions were also held to provide employment opportunities to the specially-abled. The officers of the National Handicapped Financing and Development Corporation (NFHDC) informed about the opportunities available for financial assistance of the specially-abled.Managing Director, HPKVN Rohan Chand Thakur detailed about the training programmes of the Corporation. The representatives of various industries and Self Help Groups also participated in this workshop.

THE HINDU

OPPORTUNITIES

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GENERAL

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Last date for submission of Application : 15.04.2021

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Recruitment of Company Secretary in various Executive Grades
Advertisement No. 02/2021

Coal India Limited (CIL) - A Schedule A, "MAHARATNA" Public Sector Undertaking under Ministry of Coal, Government of India - the single largest coal producing company in the world with approx. 2.62 lakhs employees, invites applications in the prescribed format for recruitment of Company Secretary for CIL & its Subsidiary Companies as under :-

Sl. No.	Name of the Post and Grade	Number of Post	Scale of Pay (₹)
1	General Manager (CS) in E-8 grade	01	1,20,000-2,80,000
2	Ch. Manager (CS) in E-7 grade	03	1,00,000-2,60,000
3	Sr. Manager (CS) in E-6 grade	04	90,000-2,40,000
4	Manager (CS) in E-5 grade	04	80,000-2,20,000
5	Dy. Manager (CS) in E-4 grade	05	70,000-2,00,000
6	Asst. Manager (CS) in E-3 grade	05	60,000-1,80,000

For application form, detailed information on eligibility criteria, upper age limit, process of applying, selection process and important dates etc. please visit CIL's website **www.coalindia.in** under the link **"Career with CIL". Last date of receipt of application is 19th April, 2021.**

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NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY AND JUDICIAL ACADEMY, ASSAM
(ESTABLISHED BY ASSAM ACT NO. XXV OF 2009)

Advertisement No. NLUJAA/ESTT/F/RECRUITMENT/UFS/2021/07 Date:22.03.2021

RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Applications are hereby invited for the following vacant positions of University Faculty Service, NLUJA, Assam from eligible candidates.

Sl. No.	Name of The Post	No. of Post	Reservation
1	Professor of Law	03 (three)	3-UR
2	Associate Professor of Law	03 (three)	3-UR
3	Assistant Professor of Law	01 (one)	1-SC/SC-PWD

Details related to minimum eligibility criteria and other relevant instructions, along with the format for application is available on the University website- **www.nluassam.ac.in**. Duly filled in applications, along with all requisite testimonials, should be sent by email to: **registrar@nluassam.ac.in** and/ or by speed post to:
Registrar, National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam
Hajo Road, Amingaon, Kamrup (R), Guwahati-781031

Application forms must be received latest on or before 26.04.2021.

Sd/- Registrar

Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited
(A Government of India Enterprise)
CIN: U40104MH1987GOI149458

Advt. No.: NPCIL/HRM/2021/02

Recruitment of Technical Officers, Medical Officers, Dy. Chief Fire Officer/A & Station Officer/A

NPCIL, a premier Public Sector Undertaking under the Administrative Control of the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India is engaged in Operation of Nuclear Power Plants in the Country. NPCIL invites online applications from the eligible Indian Citizens for the posts of Technical Officer/D, Medical Officer/D (Specialists), Medical Officer/C [General Duty Medical Officer (GDMO)], Dy. Chief Fire Officer/A & Station Officer/A as follows:

S. No.	Post	Pay & pay level in the Pay Matrix	Maximum age as on 20.04.2021	Number of Vacancies					
				UR	EWS	SC	ST	OBC (NCL)	Total
1.	Technical Officer/ D-Mechanical	₹ 67,700/- (Pay Level-11)	40 Years	10	02	04	04	08	28
2.	Technical Officer/ D-Electrical			04	01	01	01	03	10
3.	Technical Officer/ D-Civil			04	01	02	01	04	12
4.	Medical Officer/D (Specialists)	₹ 67,700/- (Pay Level-11)	40 Years	03	00	01	02	02	08
5.	Medical Officer/C (GDMO)	₹ 56,100/- (Pay Level-10)	35 Years	03	00	00	00	04	07
6.	Dy. Chief Fire Officer/A	₹ 56,100/- (Pay Level-10)	40 Years	01	01	00	00	01	03
7.	Station Officer/A	₹ 47,600/- (Pay Level-8)		01	01	01	00	01	04

Note: Above vacancies are inclusive of backlog vacancies.

The 08 vacancies for MO/D (Specialists) include vacancies for **Physician-02, Paediatrician-01, General Surgeon-03, Dental Surgeon-01 & Radiologist-01.**

For all other details such as eligibility criteria, reservation of vacancies, selection process etc., please refer to the detailed advertisement on **www.npcil.nic.in** & **www.npcilcareers.co.in**. Any further information/corrigendum/addendum would be uploaded **only on NPCIL website** mentioned above.

Receipt of online application will start from 06.04.2021 at 10.00 hrs and will end on 20.04.2021 at 17.00 hrs.

NPCIL strives to have a workforce, which reflects gender balance and women applicants are encouraged to apply.

Nuclear Power – A step towards development

"स्वच्छ रहो, स्वस्थ रहो"
एनपीसीआईएल, भारत सरकार द्वारा चलाए गए स्वच्छ भारत मिशन को प्रोत्साहित करता है।
न्यूक्लियर विद्युत – एक अपरिहार्य विकल्प

Start-up unveils electric scooter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An IIT-Delhi incubated start-up on Tuesday launched an electric scooter called 'Hope', which is suited for cost-effective last-mile delivery and personal commute.

The vehicle, developed by Geliose Mobility, has a top speed of 25 km/hr and does not require a driving licence or registration.

The institute said that the vehicle comes with a portable charger and a portable Li-ion battery that can be charged through a normal socket. Customers have two battery capacity options, with a range of 50 and 75 km in ideal conditions. Users will also have the option to switch between pedalling and throttle mode while driving.

Delay debate on GNCTD Bill: TMC

'Hastening legislation would be gross miscarriage of justice'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has urged Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu to postpone the discussion on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, till all the members are able to attend Parliament.

In a letter to Mr. Naidu, TMC's Parliamentary Party leader for Rajya Sabha, Derek O'Brien, argued that party MPs cannot be present in Parliament because of the upcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal.

Voting for the first phase of polls in the State is scheduled for March 27.

"This is an extremely important piece of legislation that has a significant impact on all of India. Each and every member of Parliament should be given the opportunity to express themselves when the House takes up discussion on the Bill," Mr. O'Brien said in his letter.

Derek O'Brien

The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on Monday and is likely to be taken up in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Mr. O'Brien said holding a debate when many members of the House are away for elections in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry goes against the "spirit of deliberative, responsible governance that the Parliament embodies". He said, "It further lays down a bad precedent regarding passage of important laws."

The MP said it would be a "gross miscarriage of justice" if the Bill is hastened through the Upper House.

"I urge you to personally look into this matter and consider postponing the discussion and passing of this Bill till all members are able to attend Parliament," he wrote.

The Bill gives the Lieutenant-Governor overarching powers above the elected government of Delhi and has been vociferously opposed by the AAP government.

Daily infections in Delhi breach 1K mark for first time this year

Capital reports 1,101 new cases and four more deaths; active cases surge to 4,411

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The surge in COVID-19 cases continued on Tuesday with the city witnessing 1,101 new cases in 24 hours, the highest in more than three months, taking the tally to 6,49,973, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government. This is the first time more than 1,000 new cases have been reported in a day this year.

Four deaths were also reported, taking the total number of deaths to 10,967.

A total of 84,237 tests were done in a day, the bulletin added. Of the total cases, 6,34,595 people have recovered and there are now 4,411 active cases in the city.

On January 16, the number of new COVID-19 cases had dropped to 94, but it slowly increased to 200 on February 24 and has been increasing since then.

Virus spread (Delhi)

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,49,973	10,967
New cases in the past 24 hours	**New deaths**
1,101	4

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Over 33,000 vaccinated

Meanwhile, a total of 33,477 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination on Tuesday and there was one minor Adverse Event Following Immunisation, said a Delhi government spokesperson.

Of the total beneficiaries, 15,639 were people 60 years of age and above, and 3,079 people were between 45 and 59 years of age.

The rest of the people vaccinated were healthcare and front-line workers.

'Recurring infection'

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Tuesday said that COVID-19 is a "recurring infection and when we feel the situation is getting better, there is a sudden surge".

"This is a recurring infection. The minute we feel it is getting better, there is a sudden surge. We need to be aware, but we also need to learn to live with it. Delhi was witnessing 200 cases per day some time back, but again the number has risen to 800-900," Mr. Jain said, while felicitating "corona warriors" from Deen Dayal Upadhay and GTB Hospital at the Delhi Assembly.

"Just like the other diseases, we will have to learn how to protect ourselves. If we continue to follow proper precautions like washing our hands, wearing a mask, a lot of other diseases too can be kept at bay," the Health Minister added.

On March 7, despite the number of daily cases witnessing an upward trend, Mr. Jain had said that COVID-19 was nearing an "endemic" phase in the Capital.

BJP implementing British-era rule in Delhi: AAP

Party vows to make people fully aware of the repercussions of the GNCTD Bill

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

AAP leaders attacked the BJP over the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Amendment (GNCTD) Bill, 2021, which has been passed in the Lok Sabha and said that it is a "disrespect" to the vote of the people of Delhi.

"In the British era too, there was a Parliament and elections were conducted. Even at that time MPs were elected. But the decision-making powers were not in their hands. It was the Viceroy who took all the decisions. The same thing is being brought today. The people of Delhi elected their MLAs, but the governance lies with the L-G. British rule is being implemented again," Health Minister Satyendar Jain said.

'Not indifferent'

He said that people need to be aware of the fact that their vote is being "disrespected" and he is hopeful that they will go against this. "The Central government is under the impression that Delhiites are indifferent since most people don't belong to this city. But we believe that we will make them aware. The Centre can bring in L-G, but we will still work towards the welfare of the people. The work that took us 16 hours, might take 18 now, but we will still work," Mr. Jain said.

AAP Lok Sabha MP Bhagwant Mann also said that the Bill is not just about Delhi, but BJP is trying to intervene through the Governor in States where the BJP is not in power. The Bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday, is yet to be passed by the Rajya Sabha.

An AAP source said that though they have sought support of some other Opposition parties in Rajya Sabha, the chances of them being able to stop the Bill is less. "Many MPs of TMC and other parties who support us are busy with Assembly elections in their own seats. It will be difficult to stop it in RS," the source said.

Raise drinking age in States you rule, AAP dares BJP

Party says ready to set age limit at 30 in Delhi if BJP follows through

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday attacked the BJP and accused it of "hypocrisy" by opposing the Delhi government's decision to reduce the minimum drinking age from 25 years to 21 years.

"I am surprised to see the hypocrisy of the BJP. Within BJP-ruled States, the minimum drinking age has been 21 for many years, including in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh. The BJP has ruled Goa for 15 years, where the minimum drinking age is 18 years," said AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj during a press conference.

He challenged BJP leaders to increase the minimum age to 25 years in BJP-ruled States, and added that the Aam Aadmi Party will make it 30 years in Delhi, if the BJP makes it 25 years.

Mr. Bharadwaj further alleged that the BJP was "misleading" people because "they think that they can't do corruption once the new policy is implemented".

Property tax

The AAP leader further claimed that the BJP-ruled South Delhi Municipal Corporation had brought a proposal to hike the property tax by 34%, which the BJP termed "totally false".

"Allegation of Mr. Bhardwaj is totally false as South body Standing Committee has already rejected the proposal of the Commissioner to raise house tax. It seems in his malafide anxiety to level charges against the civic body, Mr. Bhardwaj does not even crosscheck facts," Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said.

Standard Bid Document for NABARD

SECTION-1

Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, HPPWD, Solan.

(Name of Authority Inviting Bids)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

The Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, HPPWD Solan on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh invites the percentage rate/item bids, in electronic tendering system, for construction of roads under National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development for each of the following works including their maintenance for five years from the eligible and approved contractors registered with HPPWD and HP Jal Shakti Vibhag (Contractors of HP Jal Shakti Vibhag are eligible to participate for the works having amount put to tender above Rs. 100 lacs). Non registered contractors may submit the bids; however successful bidder has to register in appropriate class with appropriate authority in HPPWD.

1.

Sr. No	Division	RIDF	Name of work	Estimated cost (Rs. Lakh)		Total cost (Rs lakh)	Period of completion (Months)	Bid Security (Rs. Lakh). The bid security is two percent of the total cost, rounded to the nearest thousand
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1.	Arki	XXVI	M/T on Khajalaghatti to Karyalu via Dochi Katal road km.0/0 to 3/350	179.99	19.51	199.50	12	3.99
2.	Kasauli	XXVI	M/T on Bharti to Gamberpul via Deothal road km. 0/0 to 6/595	239.28	38.41	277.69	12	5.55
3.	-do-	XXVI	M/T on Mataghat to Gaighat road km. 0/0 to 4/720	372.41	24.87	397.28	12	7.95

2. Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement:-**27.03.2021**
3. Cost of Bids Form :-Rs. 5000 per package/job(non-refundable) only in form of Demand Draft in favour of respective Executive Engineers.
4. **Availability of Bid Document and mode of submission:** The bid document is available online and bid should be submitted online on website wwwhpenders.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidder is required to have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities (CA). *Aspiring bidders who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in NABARD may obtain the same from the website: www. hptenders.gov.in

   Digital signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering. Bidders already possessing the valid digital signature issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tender.

   ** Non-registered bidders may submit bids; however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.*
5. **Submission of Original Documents:** The bidders are required to submit (a) original Demand Draft towards the cost of bid document and (b) original bid security in approved form and (c) original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4B(a) (ii) of ITB with Superintending Engineer ,3rd Circle HPPWD, Solan , on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the Bid, either by registered post or by hand.
6. **Last Date/ Time for receipt of bids through e-tendering:**-Last date /time for receipt of bids through e-tendering of above mentioned works are as follows:-

Sr.No.	Name of work	Last date /time for receipt of bids through e-tendering.
1	M/T on Khajalaghatti to Karyalu via Dochi Katal road km.0/0 to 3/350	**08.04.2021 at 10:30 AM**
2	M/T on Bharti to Gamberpul via Deothal road km. 0/0 to 6/595	**08.04.2021 at 10:30 AM**
3	M/T on Mataghat to Gaighat road km. 0/0 to 4/720	**08.04.2021 at 10:30 AM**

7. The site for the work is available.
8. Only online submission of bids is permitted, therefore; bids must be submitted online on website www.hptenders.gov.in. The technical qualification part of the bids will be opened online at 11:00 A.M Hours on above mentioned date in the office of Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle HPPWD Solan by the authorized officers. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the bids as specified, the bids will be opened online on the next working day at the same time.
9. The bidder is not required to quote his rate for routine maintenance. The rates to be paid for routine maintenance are indicated in the Bill of Quantities. Further, the payment for routine maintenance to the contractor shall be regulated based on his performance of maintenance activities.

   All the required materials like Cement/Steel/Bitumen/Explosive etc shall be arranged by Contractor at his own level.
10. The bids for the work shall remain valid for acceptance for a period not less than seventy five(75) days after the deadline date for bid submission.
11. To qualify for a package of contract made up of this for which bids are invited in the same NIT, the bidder must demonstrate having experience and resources sufficient to meet the aggregate of the qualifying criteria for the individual contracts.
12. Other details can be seen in the bidding documents. The Employer shall not be held liable for any delays due to system failure beyond its control. Even though the system will attempt to notify the bidders of any bid updates, the Employer shall not be liable for any information not received by the bidder. It is the bidders' responsibility to verify the website for the latest information related to the tender.

(Er. Surinder Pal Jagota)
Superintending Engineer,
HPPWD,3rd Circle Solan
Tel 01792-220675, Fax 01792-223802
E-mail hp-sol@nic.in

HP / 6708/20-21 **HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPARK**

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED FEMALE

Aarti

General Public is hereby informed that one female (depicted in the photo) namely Aarti **W/o** Ram Rattan **R/o** H.No. B-113, Gautam Colony, Narela Delhi **Aged**-24 Years has been reported missing since 25.02.2021 at about 10:00 AM from her residence vide **DD No.44A Dated 26.02.2021** registered at Police Station Narela Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

Complexion: Wheatish, **Height:** 4'9", **Face:** Long, **Built:** Thin, **Hair:** Long, Black, **Wearing:** Blue Colour Jacket and Blue Pant and Pink Colour Shoes in her feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing female, may inform SHO, Narela, Delhi at E-mail: **cic@cbi.gov.in** or website : **http://cbi.nic.in**

Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641
FAX No. : 011-24368639
DP/868/ON/2021

Sd/-
SHO, Narela, Delhi
Tel.: 011-27282350, 27280435

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Megha, D/o** Satender Kumar, **R/o** A-413, Shastri Nagar, Delhi, **Age:** 18 years 6 months, **Height:** 5'2", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Hair:** Black, wearing Red colour Pajama, Red colour Top and Chappal in feet, has been missing since 27.06.2020. In this regard a **DD No. 56A, dated 28.06.2020 has been registered at P.S. Sarai Rohilla, Delhi.**

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.

Website : http://cbi.nic.in
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/327/N/2020

SHO
P.S. Sarai Rohilla,
Delhi
Ph. No.: 011-23691106, 23693611

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY **TENDER NOTICE**

Email:- dycmmcon@ner.railnet.gov.in, INTERNET :- www.ireps.gov.in Fax No. 0551-2282448

TENDER NOTICE NO. 06 DATE :-23/03/2021

Invitation of tenders through e-Procurement system

Dy Chief Material Manager/Con, North Eastern Railway, Gorakhpur and on behalf of the President of India, invites tenders through e-Procurement system for the supply of the following Items. Complete description of the item and other condition are available on website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. No.	Tender No. Due Date	Brief Description of Stores	Qty. Required	Earnest Money (Rs.)
01	17215006 Dt. 19.04.2021	PVC insulated armoured under ground unscreened railway signalling cable (12Cx1.5 Sq. mm)	403.00 Kms.	1327550.00
02	17215005 Dt. 21.04.2021	PVC insulated armoured under ground unscreened railway signalling cable (19Cx1.5 Sq. mm)	159.00 Kms.	677590.00
03	17205013 Dt. 21.04.2021	PVC insulated armoured under ground unscreened railway signalling cable (6Cx1.5 Sq. mm)	204.00 Kms.	389670.00
04	17195214 Dt. 23.04.2021	PVC insulated armoured under ground unscreened railway signalling cable (24Cx1.5 Sq. mm)	152.00 Kms.	876350.00

1. Above tenders are available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in The firm desires in participating against e/tender are advised to electronically regd. themselves on the above website for which they would require to obtain class-III digital certificate (if already not obtained) from certifying agencies authorized under govt. of India IT Act,2000. Manual offers will not be accepted.
2. Advertised tender of Dy. Chief Material Manager/Con. NER, Gorakhpur, are being opened through EPS (E-Procurement System) only. Firms desiring to participate in Dy. Chief Material Manager Con, NER/GKP should obtain necessary digital certificate and get themselves registered with CRIS/ New Delhi. Necessary details in this regard can be obtained from the website https://www.ireps.gov.in .
3. In case of difference between English and Hindi version of the tender notice the English version shall prevail.
4. Head of allocation towards cost of Earnest money & S D money is 00844556.
5. Above Items are reserved to be procured from RDSO approved sources only.

CPRO/S-68 **Dy Chief Material Manager/Con, N.E. Railway Gorakhpur**

About any passenger amenity complain SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955

"Never travel on roof and foot boards"

Cong. claims new excise policy will ruin families

Lamba seeks stance of women MLAs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress continued its criticism of the new excise policy of the Kejriwal government with former MLA and Congress leader Alka Lamba saying that the policy intended to boost the revenue collection by an additional ₹2,000 crore. She said it will not only ruin the lives of the youth but also many families as well.

Ms. Lamba said it was ironic and shocking that Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia announced the new excise policy to lower the minimum drinking age from 25 to 21, knowing that at this age, most youngsters would be pursuing their education and are dependent on their families.

Ms. Lamba asked the eight women AAP MLAs whether they support the policy as the ill-effects would be felt by women.

The Delhi Congress said that it will hold a demonstration on March 24 outside the residence of the Chief Minister to protest the new excise policy.

BJP says AAP govt. pushing youth towards alcoholism

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday accused the Delhi government of being the first in the country seeking to push the youth towards alcoholism to increase its own revenue.

Addressing a protest against the new excise policy proposed by the Delhi government here near Shahdara bus terminal, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said that on one hand the BJP is organising programmes on martyrdom day to inculcate patriotism in the youth while the Delhi government is "making them move towards liquor consumption."

Angry party workers also burnt an effigy of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal where party vice president Virender Sachdeva, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, MLA Shri Jitender Mahajan, district president Master Vinod were present.

"The new policy will not only lead to spurious liquor and promote crime but will also spoil youngsters as the legal age for drinking has been lowered from 25 to 21 years," Mr. Gupta alleged.

"It is rather unfortunate that the Kejriwal government is giving more weightage to extra revenue at the cost of ruining youngsters' lives. The policy is arbitrary and unjust as no government has the right to play with future of the youngsters," Mr. Bidhuri alleged.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, (U.P.)
Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible firms/contractors for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: **www.noidaauthorityonline.com** & **https://etender.up.nic.in**. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

1. 70/SM(Jal)-II/ET/20-21, M/o Sewerage (Repairing of sewer line due to damage in underpass sector-71) Noida., Cost - Rs. 45.81 Lacs.

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 05.04.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 06.04.2021 at 11.00 AM.

2. 85/SM(Jal)-II/ET/20-21, M/o Sewerage (Annual Rep. and Rewinding of Submersible motor at SPS-22 and SPS-20) Noida. (For Two Years). Cost - Rs. 85.49 Lacs.
3. 86/SM(Jal)-II/ET/20-21, M/o W/s (Rewinding of V.T. Motor, TPMO, Fuse Set and other electrical work at Water Supply Network Sector-20, 21, 25, 26) Noida. (For two years), Cost- Rs. 45.58 Lacs.

The above tenders can be uploaded by date **08.04.2021** upto **5.00 PM.** Pre-qualification shall be opened / downloaded on date **09.04.2021 at 11.00 AM.**

Senior Manager (Jal)-II
Noida

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

JHARKHAND BIJLI VITRAN NIGAM LIMITED
CIN No. U40108JH2013SGC001702
Regd. Office : Engineering Building, H.E.C., Dhurwa, Ranchi-834004,
Telephone :-0651-2400799 & Fax : 0651-2400799 / https://www.jbvnl.co.in

3rd Extension Notice

Jharkahd Bijli Vitran Nigam Limited, Hq. Office at Dhurwa, Ranchi – 834004, Jharkhand invites E-tender for bid from eligible Bidders for Supply, Installation, Operations and FMS of AMI System in Electric Supply Circle of Jamsedpur & Dhanbad for 3 Lakh Consumers (Approx.) **NIT No. – 87/PR/ JBVNL/2020-21**

.Calendar of Events :

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Details
1	**Name of Work**	Supply, Installation, Operations and FMS of AMI System in Electric Supply Circle of Jamshedpur & Dhanbad for 3 Lakh Consumers (Approx.)
2	**Last Date / Time for receipt of bids**	05-04-2021 till 16:00 hrs
3	**Date and Time for Opening of Technical bid**	06-04-2021 at 17:00 hrs

Note :

1. The tender documents with detailed conditions can be obtained through web site http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in and should upload all relevant documents as mentioned in the tender documents only through online e-tender portal/website http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in

स्वहित एवं राष्ट्रहित में ऊर्जा बचायें। कृपया अपनी शिकायतों को टॉल फ्री नं० 1800 345 6570 पर दर्ज करायें।

PR No. 239356

Sd/-
General Manager (IT)

PR.NO.244479 Jharkhand Bijlee Vitran Nigam Ltd(20-21):D

'No mandi can be better than Parliament'

BKU leader Rakesh Tikait says farmers to observe bandh on March 26 across India to protest new laws

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Tuesday said the farmers afflicted by the new laws would march to Delhi once again and sell their crops outside the Parliament.

"On Republic Day, 3.5 lakh tractors had entered Delhi and we will do this again," he said.

BKU spokesperson Rakesh Tikait offering tributes to Shaheed Bhagat Singh at a kisan mahapanchayat in Jaipur on Tuesday. • PTI

'Laying siege'

Addressing a Kisan Mahapanchayat at Vidyadhar Nagar Stadium here, Mr. Tikait said since the government had told the farmers that they could sell their crops anywhere under the new farm laws, "we will prove it to them by selling our produce outside the State Assemblies, Collectors' offices and the Parliament."

"No mandi can be better than the Parliament," Mr. Tikait said in the presence of Swaraj Abhiyan's Yogendra Yadav and Bhim Army's Chandrashekhar Azad, while calling upon the farmers to lay siege to Delhi from all directions.

He said the farmers would observe a day's bandh on March 26 all over the country to protest against the new laws.

The BKU leader said while the government was trying to divide the country on the lines of caste, creed and religion, the farmers would defeat its designs and show unity to get their rights. The cultivators were faced with a situation where big companies had already built their warehouses and the laws were subsequently being enacted to protect their interests, he added.

The rally, organised under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, received support from a large number of organisations, including CPI, CPI(M), Rajasthan Jat Mahasabha, Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind.

After the Mahapanchayats in several districts of Rajasthan, this was the first major event of Samyukta Kisan Morcha in the State Capital.

Bad weather

The sudden rain and strong winds in the city uprooted the tents at the rally and one person was injured.

The thin attendance at the rally, attributed to bad weather conditions, left the organisers disappointed.

The farmer leaders paid homage to freedom fighter Bhagat Singh on his death anniversary at the stage in the rally.

An announcement was made on the occasion for appointment of Jat Mahasabha president Raja Ram Meel as BKU's State unit president and K.C. Ghumaria as general secretary.

12 women killed as bus, autorickshaw collide in M.P.

Bus driver was reportedly trying to avoid hitting a milkman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
GWALIOR

Twelve women and a man were killed after the autorickshaw in which they were travelling collided with a speeding bus in Old Chawni area of Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday morning.

The accident took place at 5 a.m. on the Gwalior-Morena road when the bus driver apparently tried to avoid hitting a person on the road, said State Transport Minister Govind Singh Rajput while announcing an inquiry.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident in a tweet. "I am deeply pained by the death of 13 persons in an accident in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior. I express my condolences to the kin of those killed and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," Mr. Modi tweeted.

The women, who worked as cooks at an anganwadi kendra in Stone Park area in Old Chawni Ganga Malanpur locality, were returning home after work, Gwalior Collector Kaushlendra Vikram Singh said.

The victims were residents of Gole ka Mandir and Jaderua areas in Gwalior. They were supposed to travel in two autorickshaws, but one of them was out of order, so they crammed into one vehicle, Mr. Singh said.

Bus passengers unhurt

While eight women and the autorickshaw driver died on the spot, the others succumbed to injuries in a hospital, District Superintendent of Police Amit Sanghi said.

Passengers in the bus escaped unhurt, a senior official said, adding that the driver fled the spot leaving behind the vehicle.

The Prime Minister approved an ex gratia of ₹2 lakh each for the kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 for those injured seriously from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, the PMO said.

Expressing grief, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also announced an ex gratia of ₹4 lakh for the kin of the deceased.

"It appears that the accident took place as the bus driver, while trying to save a milkman, hit the autorickshaw," Mr. Rajput said. He added that the bus had a valid fitness certificate, insurance certificate and its permit was valid till 2026.

Transport Commissioner Mukesh Jain, who reached the spot to conduct an inquiry, clarified that the Gwalior RTO had not been suspended as the probe was going on. "Till we get the inquiry report, no action will be taken against any official," he said.

Rajya Sabha member and BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia and State Congress president Kamal Nath also condoled the deaths.

Security ring

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan stands inside a circle during the launch of 'My Protection-My Mask' campaign in Bhopal on Tuesday. • A.M. FARUQUI

Police lathi-charge RJD workers

Several party workers, policemen injured during the scuffle in Patna

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

Several policemen, RJD workers and media personnel were injured when the police resorted to baton charge on the protesting Rashtriya Janata Dal leaders and supporters in Patna in the course of their proposed Vidhan Sabha march.

The RJD leaders and workers were protesting against the deteriorating law and order situation in the State, corruption, unemployment and price hike of essential commodities.

'Where are jobs?'

"The NDA in its manifesto had promised to provide 19 lakh jobs in Bihar. What happened to that promise? Corruption is at an all-time high in the State these days, and law and order has nosedived at an alarming level," alleged RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav.

The RJD had, earlier, called a Vidhan Sabha march on March 23 to protest against these issues.

Policemen beating RJD workers to prevent them from marching towards the Vidhan Sabha in Patna on Tuesday. • PTI

The Assembly was adjourned till 2 p.m. when the Opposition members created pandemonium inside the House.

The RJD leaders, workers and supporters, led by Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav, his elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav and others senior party leaders, began their protest march from Gandhi Maidan in Patna.

Heavy police deployment was done at the Dak Bungalow intersection of the city with barricades in place to stop the RJD workers from moving towards the Assembly.

However, as the RJD leaders and workers kept moving towards the Vidhan Sabha to gheroa it, the police stopped them at the Dak Bungalow thoroughfare where a scuffle broke out between them. Later, the police resorted to baton charge against them.

The police rained batons on fleeing RJD workers and supporters. All shops and business establishments were shut during the march.

Vehicles damaged

Several policemen and RJD workers and supporters got injured in the scuffle.

A few vehicles were damaged in stone pelting from both sides.

Some media persons too got injuries in the scuffle.

"This is the real character of the RJD. They believe in violence and they use it to remind people about what the RJD stands for," alleged JD(U) leader Ajay Alok.

Later, the RJD leaders and workers were taken in buses by the policemen to other places to restore traffic movement at the city's main thoroughfare.

'Work progress under Bihar CM's scheme unsatisfactory'

Comptroller and Auditor General report states only 9% to 41% work completed at State level

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India report tabled in the Bihar Assembly on Tuesday underlined that the work done under Mukhya Mantri Nishchaya Yojna has not been "satisfactory".

The CAG report for the year that ended on March 31, 2018-19, tabled on the State Assembly floor stated that the "progress of works under Mukhya Mantri Nischaya Yojna was not satisfactory as only 15% and 24% was completed in test checked in Gram Panchayats and Municipalities, respectively".

The report also stated "at State-level only 9% to 41% work completed".

The Mukhya Mantri Nishchaya Yojna is considered as CM Nitish Kumar's ambitious programme.

Medical sectors

The report also highlighted shortfalls and deficiencies in medical sector in Bihar. "Against construction of 12 medical colleges, including a dental college, taken during 2006-07 to 2016-17, only two colleges became functional till 2018. Construction of only two nursing institutes could be completed till 2018 against 61 planned. The Bihar government did not take effective efforts to increase seats of existing medical colleges," said the report.

It has also underlined "shortage of teaching and non-teaching staffs, significant deficiencies in infrastructure and shortage of medical equipment" in medical colleges in the State.

"Only 75% amount was spent under the plan head during 2013-18, which is attributable to poor progress of construction works taken up under different schemes of State government," it added.

The CAG report also said: "Works valued at ₹424.67 crore were started without obtaining Technical Sanction in 13 packages and an excess payment of ₹3.57 crore was made on road marking work under three packages in the Road division. Also, an excess payment of ₹99.05 lakh was made on PM work under Road Division, Molinari and Sitamarhi."

Excess payment

"Irregular sanction of lead by road in place of rail, led to excess payment of ₹12.04 crore," it added.

The report further highlighted "additional burden on State Exchequer by action of Bihar Renewable Energy Development Agency to execute agreement with the agency without taking Performance Guarantee and not taking any legal action to recover PG led to additional financial burden of ₹5.93 crore on State Exchequer due to re-tendering".

It also underlined "misappropriation of municipal revenue and fraudulent payment" in the department.

While making reference of "incomplete projects", the CAG report said: "A total 68 projects were due for completion during the period 2011-12 to 2018-19. Since the details of all 68 projects with an estimated cost of ₹790.99 crore were not furnished by the departments, their revised cost was not exhibited in the Finance Accounts and was thus not ascertainable".

NIA files chargesheet against two separatist leaders, their associates

They had announced 'Manipur govt.-in-exile', 'secession'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency on Tuesday filed a chargesheet against two separatist leaders from Manipur, who had in 2019 announced the launch of the 'Manipur government-in-exile' and declared the State's independence from India, officials said.

Besides Yamben Biren and Narengbam Samarjit Singh, the agency filed the chargesheet against their associates Narengbam Biswajit Singh, Elangbam Brojendro Singh and Akoijam Deepa Anand, they said.

In 2019 at a press conference in London, Yamben Biren, claiming to be the 'Chief Minister of Manipur State Council' and Narengbam Samarjit Singh, claiming to be the 'Minister of External Affairs and Defence of Manipur State Council', had said they were speaking on behalf of the "Maharaja of Manipur" to formally launch the government-in-exile – 'The Manipur State Council'.

The officials said the five persons have been charged under the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The chargesheet was filed before a special NIA court in Imphal in Manipur on Tuesday.

"The case, filed at the Lamphel police station in Imphal West on October 30, 2019, pertains to the declaration of independence of Manipur from India and formation of 'The Manipur State Council' at London by the self-styled external affairs and defence minister of so-called 'Manipur State Council' ," a NIA official said.

Odisha to regularise land occupied by slum dwellers

Move by Naveen govt. comes ahead of civic body polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
BHUBANESWAR

With an eye on civic body polls, the Naveen Patnaik government has decided to regularise the occupation of slum dwellers if they are in possession of land less than 30 square metres.

The Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act, 2017, has been enacted with a view to assign land rights to identified slum dwellers for council area, not exceeding 45 sq.m. and where the slum is situated within the Notified Area Council area, not exceeding 60 sq.m. shall be settled in favour of the slum dwellers.

"If a slum dweller is in possession of land less than 30 sq.m., land shall be settled as the extent of occupation," the Cabinet decided.

As per the norms of housing for all policy, 21 sq.m. of carpet area is required to construct an affordable housing unit.

"Considering the provisions of Housing Policy, it would be essential that where a slum dweller is in occupation of land which is less than 30 sq.m., such slum dweller shall be settled with up to 30 sq.m. of land, subject to availability of land," according to the Cabinet.

The civic body polls in Odisha are long overdue as tenure of 65 local bodies ended almost two years ago. The notification for preparation of the electoral rolls will be done by the SEC only after the State government completes the delimitation process and determines reservation of seats.

BJD govt. plans 15% quota for govt. school students

Reservation in medical, technical courses aimed at addressing inequity among student groups

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

The Naveen Patnaik Government on Tuesday moved to reserve 15% of seats in medical and technical education courses for students passing out from government high schools.

A resolution in this regard was tabled in the Assembly for acceptance of the House. The State government said the reservation was aimed at addressing inequity prevailing in students groups.

"After introduction of common entrance exam like the National cum Eligibility Entrance Test and Joint Entrance Examination, the number of students from government schools and colleges of our State in these courses is getting reduced considerably. This is not due to lack of merit, rather the students are unable to fare better in these tests due to lack proper coaching facilities," the resolution says.

It says such common entrance tests require specialised training which is available only in coaching centres which are mostly urban-based and require considerable finances.

Holding that students studying in government schools and colleges lack both physical and economic access to coaching centres, the State Cabinet had resolved to reserve adequate number of seats for students of government high schools in medical and engineering colleges of the State.

Naveen Patnaik. • FILE PHOTO

Subsequently, a high powered committee headed by Justice Dr. A.K. Mishra, retired judge of the Orissa High Court along with other members, was constituted for making necessary recommendation in this regard.

As per the observation of the committee, about 86% of students of Odisha are in government schools and they get 23% seats in the State medical colleges and 21% seats in engineering colleges. However, 12% of students studying in private schools get almost 60% seats in both medical and engineering colleges.

"This clearly shows that there inequity arising from physical and economic access to coaching institutions which play a major role in the national entrance examinations. This inequity affects a majority of students," the resolution says.

The State government will issue necessary notification by exercising power under Section 9 of the Odisha Professional Educational Institute (Regulation and Admission and Fixation of Fees) Act, 2007, to implement the reservation.

Mumbai muckraking

Impartial probe of allegations of extortion against Maharashtra Minister is a must

Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh's allegations against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh are sensational, and threatening for the State government. The nexus between crime, politics, policing and business is an old story. In that sense, Mr. Singh's charge that the Minister was forcing police officers to extort money from businesses is not surprising; it is nevertheless an extremely serious one that needs serious investigation. However, Mr. Singh's credibility is hardly inspiring, and he raised the allegation only after he was removed as Commissioner. The circumstances leading to his removal were inglorious. Sachin Vaze, an officer arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in connection with the discovery of explosives near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house, was perceived to be close to Mr. Singh. The Minister sought to put Mr. Singh on the mat over the case, who made a retaliatory move by accusing the former of trying to use Mr. Vaze as a henchman. Mr. Singh approaching the Supreme Court for a CBI inquiry against Mr. Deshmukh is intriguing and self-implicating. As Commissioner he could have – and should have – acted upon the allegations that he is now raising.

The muckraking by Mr. Singh cannot be seen disconnected from the ceaseless political manoeuvering in the State. The formation of the unlikely coalition of the Shiv Sena, Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in 2019 was a setback to the storied managerial skills of the BJP. Speculation of an impending collapse have loomed over the Maha Vikas Aghadi government since its formation. The BJP, with the active help of Central agencies, has been trying to unsettle the State government. In the tug of war, Mr. Singh has been an active instrument of the MVA, and the Shiv Sena sprung up to his defence immediately after he was removed. Now the leaders of all three parties have termed his allegations as a conspiracy to topple the State government. After the initial panic, the parties have closed ranks behind the embattled Minister. The lure of power is universal, but in Maharashtra, which is home to India's economic capital Mumbai, it is even more intense. The ideological mismatch of the alliance partners is evident, but the State government has matched up to the BJP's challenge several times in political combat. All three parties are united by a strong survival instinct in the face of the BJP onslaught. The BJP's impatience to reclaim power in Maharashtra is more than usual considering the bruised egos involved. The chances of a politically motivated investigation are high, given the context. Only an independent, transparent investigation can separate the wheat from the chaff in this sordid tale. Unfortunately, a probe by either the State police or a central agency is not a reassuring option.

Corrective voice

The SC did well to lay down guidelines for the judiciary in dealing with cases of sexual crime

While recognising society's deep-rooted patriarchy and initiating a course correction in the way the judiciary itself views gender rights, the Supreme Court went back to Henrik Ibsen, a playwright known for his feisty women characters who break free of traditions of familial confines and notions of social propriety. Setting aside an absurd *rakhi*-for-bail order of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to a sexual offender, the Court issued a set of guidelines on March 18 to be followed by the judiciary while dealing with sexual crimes against women. The two-member Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and S. Ravindra Bhat used a quote from Ibsen to say that a woman 'cannot be herself' in an 'exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men', and laid it down as a guiding force for all future judicial proclamations. The judiciary's corrective voice is a welcome step in the aftermath of CJI S.A. Bobde's reported remarks during a virtual hearing, when he asked an alleged rapist's lawyer to find out whether his client would marry the victim. He later said he had been misquoted. The Khanwilkar-Bhat Bench asked all courts to refrain from imposing marriage or mandate any compromise between a sex offender and his victim. Powerful men seem to be reiterating misogyny besides carelessly linking sexual crimes to women being alone at night or wearing clothes of their choice.

Leaning on the 'Bangkok General Guidance for Judges on Applying a Gender Perspective in Southeast Asia', the Bench listed a host of avoidable stereotypes: women are physically weak; men are the head of the household and must make all the decisions related to family; women should be submissive and obedient. Women are battling society's ingrained prejudices, and the judgment acknowledges this bitter reality, saying gender violence is most often shrouded in a culture of silence. Pointing to the entrenched unequal power equations between men and women, including cultural and social norms, financial dependence, and poverty, it said data may not reflect the actual incidence of violence against women. It is not the first time the Supreme Court is clamping down against gender stereotyping. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud (*Secr., Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya*) had argued against treating women in the Army any differently from their men counterparts for they worked as "equal citizens" in a common mission, and in *Anuj Garg*, the Court had called out the "notion of romantic paternalism" as an attempt to put women "in a cage". To break the silence on bias against women, everyone must take responsibility, especially institutions and those in important positions. The Court's reiteration on where it needs to stand on women's rights is a move in the right direction because the fight for gender equality is far from over.

The absent programme at the Kerala hustings

In the rain of promises in the political manifestos there is no evidence of the wherewithal

PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN

The two political fronts of Kerala, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), have now presented their manifestos to the electorate. They are joined by distributivism, competing with one another in offering welfare payments. Almost no section has been left out – the old, the youth, the housewife.

First off the mark with its manifesto was the ruling LDF. Among its 900 promises reported in the Malayalam language press was the gradual enhancement of the current monthly pension of ₹1,500 to ₹2,500 by the time its term ends. Not to be outdone, the UDF has in its manifesto promised a pension of ₹3,000 and a monthly payout of ₹6,000 per household to Below Poverty Line families. These are only a part of the rain of promises.

Kerala Model is unsustainable

The manifestos have been received with scepticism by the public, for they could not but have wondered how the fresh expenditures will be funded. Kerala today has one of the highest levels of public debt per capita among India's States. Without fresh resource mobilisation – of which intent there is no indication in either party's manifesto –enhanced public expenditure assures higher levels of public debt in the future. The economics profession globally agreed that during the novel coronavirus pandemic the level of public debt ought not to hold back necessary public expenditure to aid relief and recovery. However, in the case of Kerala, we are talking of the structural feature of expenditures being elevated in relation to revenue.

It is in this sense that the so-called 'Kerala Model', in which the State focuses on welfare, has been identified as unsustainable by economist K.K. George several decades ago. The State's political parties have not addressed this issue and conduct themselves as if this is not important. Inter-generational debt shifting, i.e., leaving debt incurred by us to be paid by future generations, is not a trivial issue. It is justified when the borrowing creates capital assets that generate revenues into the future, but when the borrowing is undertaken to finance our own consumption, leaving behind nothing but the debt for them is unconscionable. Actually, even if physical assets are created, they should generate adequate revenue. A blanket refusal to turn in a surplus by charging for public services is, therefore, problematic.

It is this consideration that leaves the public particularly sceptical of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) initiative. Perhaps the Kerala government has done due diligence that demonstrates its financial viability but it has an obligation to lay the facts of the business model, in particular the forecast stream of revenues, on the table.

A different welfarism here

Individual well-being enabled by public action is a perfectly legitimate aspiration in a democracy. However, what distinguishes the decades' long practice in Kerala is that it is a form of welfarism far from what is generally understood when we speak of a welfare state. Though originally imagined by the U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression, it was in western Europe that the welfare state achieved fruition. Its distinguishing feature is the provision of health and education by the state. There are pensions too. So, it is not as if the provisions in Kerala are improper in any way.

PTI

What distinguishes a genuine welfare state from the Kerala Model is that in a genuine welfare state, benefits are financed by taxes. There were two considerations underlying this design in the original. The first was the crucial issue of financial viability. The second was to give citizens a sense of ownership of the programmes, signifying that the welfare state is not some sort of munificence extended to them by the political class but something they had contributed to themselves. Thus, the British institution of the National Health Service, the envy of richer countries which not even Margaret Thatcher dared dismantle, has eventually been paid for by that country's workers. The tax to national income ratio in the United Kingdom is among the highest in the world, and has remained consistently over 40%. Kerala's is not just much lower but has often been lower than in the other southern States.

Point of coverage

Before moving on, it is worth noting that in Kerala, there is also the question of coverage. The State has one of the highest percentages of children in private schools and out-of-pocket expenditure on health in India. Whether this is due to inadequate provision or the poor quality of service in the public sector is to be ascertained, but at least as far as schooling is concerned, it is difficult to believe that the government cannot provide schooling of the highest quality. The feature is more likely related to inflexible and shoddy governance.

The issue of funding is not irrelevant either. For political parties, the temptation to be seen to be handing out welfare payments is too great to resist, which, in the absence of a will to mobilise resources, can only mean that there will be less for health and education. The meagre resources mobilised end up being spread thin, across innumerable government schemes.

On employment generation

It is difficult to imagine that Kerala will be able to permanently fund its welfare schemes through borrowing. At least, that would only be possible at ever rising interest rates, leading to a higher fiscal burden, if not actually a debt trap. At that stage, the welfare schemes would have to end, or a Herculean effort to raise revenues would have to be initiated. In other words, there is no alternative to funding welfare schemes via higher taxation or some other source of public funding (such as oil revenues in Saudi Arabia). Funding can also be through contributions made by workers, as in the case of Europe's welfare states. However, this will be possible only if everyone is employed for at least some stage of their lives.

For this, economic policy must ensure that levels of employment remain high. There is little awareness of this in Kerala at the level of either state or civil society. Seen from the manifestos in this forthcoming Assembly election, the political parties have no programme for employment generation.

To place the enormity of the challenge in perspective, on the occasion of the presentation of the last Budget, the government stated in the Legislative Assembly that the unemployment rate for youth in Kerala is 36%. This is much higher than the national average.

Broaden the tax net

While it is clear that public resource mobilisation in Kerala falls short of its welfarist ambition, it is not widely known that even this reluctant mobilisation is skewed in its impact. Jose Sebastian, an independent observer of the State's public finances, has pointed out that the State's taxes largely derive from four sources: levies on liquor, lotteries, petrol and motor vehicles, respectively. These are items of mass consumption, implying that it is the working class that contributes most to resource mobilisation.

This implies, that as the revenue goes to the provision of public services, it is the working class that financially supports the welfarist economic policy stance of the political class, with the middle class benefiting disproportionately. In Kerala, the tax net needs to be broadened from the point of view of both equity and buoyancy. This could start with a focus on the conspicuous consumption underlying the rampant construction of often unused luxury houses in the State. Steeply progressive taxation of property stands out by its absence. It was once understood to be the hallmark of socialism.

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The surge of geopolitics in South Asia's power trade

India's new trade rules are political and an irritant; instead, New Delhi should be planning a stable institutional model

ADITYA VALIATHAN PILLAI

India has released new rules governing the trade of electricity across its borders (https://bit.ly/3lG5o1b). They define the contours of the South Asian electricity market, placing clear limits on who can buy from and sell into India. This has ramifications for the electricity markets of Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal, which, to varying degrees, have aligned their energy futures with the Indian market. The new rules show that India's approach is unmistakeably political. It attempts to balance China's growing influence in the region with developmental aims, both its own and the region's.

Rules on ownership

Of central importance is the ownership of power plants wishing to sell to India. In masterful legalese, the rules strongly discourage the participation of plants owned by a company situated in "a third country with whom India shares a land border" and "does not have a bilateral agreement on power sector cooperation with India". Chinese companies hoping to establish plants in Nepal, Bhutan, or Bangladesh will presumably have a hard time making good on their investments with the Indian market cut off. The rules place the same security restrictions on tripartite trade, say from Bhutan to Bangladesh through Indian territory. To make things even more airtight, the rules establish elaborate surveillance procedures to detect changes in the ownership patterns of entities trading with India.

With this, it seems South Asia's electricity politics has hit a holding pattern after several years of unpredictability. In the months after the Narendra Modi government came to power in 2014, India used the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to make historical moves towards liberalising electricity trade. China soon began to make its presence felt in the region, and India responded by walking back its free-market impulses.

It imposed stringent restrictions that dissuaded everyone other than Indian and government entities from participating. That threatened to undermine private sector participation and promising joint ventures across the region. Nepal and Bhutan protested for years, leading to new guidelines in 2018 that tried to find a middle ground; these rules formalise that balancing act. They allow private sector participation but exclude Chinese investments.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

India-centricity no advantage

The institutional structure that has emerged through this churn over the last decade is India-centric. The Government of India, through ministries, regulators, planning bodies and utilities, determines the rules of the road. India's geographic centrality combines with its economic heft to give it a natural advantage in determining the shape of the market; all electrons must pass through it and most electrons will be bought by it. The prospect of an independent regional body governing trade, championed by theorists, is thus unlikely to begin with. It is nearly impossible to fathom in the context of an ailing South Asian project characterised by low levels of trust. India will thus enjoy pre-eminent rule-setting powers, but continually attract the ire of its smaller neighbours who feel their economic growth is being stunted by decisions in Delhi.

Mega solar project

These rules provoke some larger questions that must be tackled soon. India's ambition of anchoring a global super-grid called One Sun One World One Grid, or OSOWOG (https://bit.ly/3f4lcDj) needs an institutional vision. It aims to begin with connections to West Asia and Southeast Asia and then spread to Africa and beyond. The South Asian lesson, contained in these latest rules, is that political realities will constantly collide with, and damage, expansive visions of borderless trade. Impartial institutions for planning, investments and conflict resolution are crucial to multi-country power pools.

Managing the needs of three relatively small neighbouring economies in South Asia has consumed large amounts of time and political capital for the better part of a decade. Papering over the cracks of a power pool of a dozen countries or more will be much harder. An *ad hoc* design also makes the Indian project less attractive to countries looking to sign up to a power trading project.

The logic underpinning OSOWOG is sound. Renewable energy transitions benefit from grids that cover vast areas and diverse geographic conditions. Multi-country grids allow for the unpredictable outputs from renewable energy plants to be balanced across countries, thus avoiding expensive country-specific balancing technologies such as hydropower and gas plants.

Countering China

It is quite likely, though, that India's plans will be one among many in a soon-to-be competitive space. China, for example, has its own power pool ambitions. An attractive institutional model can lock countries into the pool by setting standards that investors and utilities plan towards and profit by. Once locked in, countries are thus unlikely to defect to other pools. The likely first battle will be in Southeast Asia, where China presently holds sway. A considered, stable institutional model will likely surpass anything China has to offer. It is worth considering releasing the vice-like grip on South Asia, aimed at countering China, by creating a rule-based regional institution that can counter Chinese offerings in other theatres.

Aditya Valiathan Pillai is an Associate Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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Vaccine schedule

The Centre's decision to delay the time period between two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, Covishield, based on scientific evidence (Page 1, "Increase interval between two doses of Covishield, says Centre", March 23) would make it the frontrunner in India's vaccination programme. The increased time gap between the two jabs also would be useful to increase the number of people getting vaccinated. The agreement to produce the Russian origin Sputnik V vaccine would add to the vaccine arsenal. Indigenous studies on how long protection lasts and the finer details of how the arms of the immune system respond to these vaccines would help us sharpen the attack and, modulate the vaccine structure.

DR. BIJU C. MATHEW,
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Initially, when the vaccines were introduced in India, the notification was that two doses were mandatory with a time lag of a little short of a month between the doses. But with the new guidelines, where does this leave those who have had both doses by following the first schedule? There are media reports of some doctors having tested positive even after having been administered the mandatory two doses. Are these a stray occurrence or is there more to this? There are so many ambiguities regarding the vaccine and the Health Ministry must clear the air with a comprehensive and updated set of guidelines that could enable the layman to take an informed decision.

C.V. ARAVIND,
Bengaluru

■ There is no unanimity about the efficacy and the duration of immunity post vaccination of the two available vaccines as well as the other vaccines to be certified for future use. Is there a guarantee that the immunity attained after being inoculated with either Covishield or Covaxin will extend over one's life? Or is it necessary to get another dose after a year or two? While the immunity based on use is under evaluation, it is necessary to give the figures based on theoretical valuation and three phase experiments, for each of the vaccines in use and those to be used in future, for the public to have a fair idea about the immunity and the possible precautions they should observe post vaccination.

V. PURNACHANDRA RAO,
Chennai

Maharashtra politics

The political mudslinging in Maharashtra following the security scare at the residence of a leading industrial tycoon and the arrest of a police officer does not augur well for the Maharashtra government. The alleged demand made by the Minister to extort money from businesses is a matter of great concern. The government must conduct an impartial probe and bring to task those involved in corrupt practices. At the same time, it is equally important for the coalition to be on guard against those trying to destabilise the government and grab power. It is incumbent upon the political leaders to give direction to citizens in this time of uncertainty caused by the pandemic.

IVIN TOMY,
Kalady, Kerala

Peace and progress

The Ministry of External Affairs may be silent on reports of the role of the United Arab Emirates in a India-Pakistan détente (Inside pages, March 23), but there is no doubt that peace and tranquillity between the two nuclear-armed and dagger-drawn South Asian neighbours are not only imperative but mandatory for uplifting the lives of millions of vulnerable masses. Cross-border trade must be resumed, enabling one big trade bloc, from Afghanistan to Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which could then be connected to the Central Asian countries. This will bring prosperity to the entire region. Saner heads need to think of the big picture and deliver something tangible to the people of South Asia.

SANTHOSH VERANANI,
Puducherry

Curb the inducements

The model code of conduct by the Election Commission of India says: "During consultations, while some political parties supported the issuance of such guidelines, others were of the view that it is their right and duty towards voters to make such offers and promises in manifestos in a healthy democratic polity. While the Commission agrees in principle with the point of view that framing of manifestos is the right of the political parties, it cannot overlook the undesirable impact of some of the promises and offers on the conduct of free and fair elections and maintaining level playing field for all political parties and candidates." Thus, the scope of the word 'Bribery' is clear. Now, in Tamil Nadu, several political parties have, in their election notifications offered cash, gifts and other types of gifts in return for the votes. Thus, it is not clear why the Election Commission of India has not raised questions or taken any action so far.

A. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

An extraordinary legislative misadventure

Parliament has sidestepped the law laid down by bringing in thoughtless amendments to the NCT Bill

K.V. VISWANATHAN

"At the bottom of all tributes paid to democracy is the little man [and woman], walking into a little booth, with a little pencil, making a little cross on a little bit of paper [now EVMs] – no amount of rhetoric or voluminous discussion can possibly diminish the overwhelming importance of the point." These were the memorable words of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, which the Indian Supreme Court endorsed. The court added that "the little large Indian shall not be hijacked from the course of free and fair elections by mob muscle methods, or subtle perversion of discretion by men dressed in little brief authority".

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses a rally against the Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on March 17. • PTI

Contents of the Bill

If the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which has been passed by the Lok Sabha, is enacted, the little large Indians of the national capital may as well keep off the polling booths, for their vote will be rendered meaningless. The popular government they have elected will not be able to act on matters which the Constitution vests in it the competence to do. This Bill is an extraordinary legislative misadventure. It states the opposite of what the apex court said when it interpreted Article 239AA of the Constitution. Strangely, however, the Bill proclaims that it seeks to give effect to the interpretation.

First, the Bill says the expression "Government" referred to in any law to be made by the Legislative Assembly in Delhi shall mean the "Lieutenant Governor". Second, it vests in the Lieutenant Governor the power to refuse assent and reserve a Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly for the consideration of the President, if, in his opinion, the Bill incidentally covers any of the matters which fall outside the purview of the Assembly's powers. Third, and most drastically, the Bill says before taking any executive action, the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor shall be obtained on such matters as may be specified.

The Supreme Court has the last word on the interpretation of the Constitution. That constitutional provision (Article 239AA) remains unamended. Any legislation which speaks to the contrary would be plainly illegal. The basis of the judgment remaining the same, the attempt in the Bill is to legislatively overrule a judgment. That would be an exercise of judicial power, which Parliament does not possess. All that the Bill does is to regurgitate the rebuffed arguments of the Central government by the court. The court stated in *Govt. of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India* (2018): "The respondents... highlight that by the constitutional amendment, introduction of the 1991 Act and the Rules of Business, the Lieutenant Governor functions as the administrator in the truest sense... They would submit that though Delhi has been conferred a special status, yet that does not bring any new incarnation. The submission, as we perceive, destroys the fundamental marrows of the conception, namely special status. It, in fact, adorns the Lieutenant Governor with certain attributes and seeks to convey that NCT of Delhi remains where it was."

The court was loath to centralise the power in the Lieutenant Governor and went only thus far to say that the Council of Ministers should keep the Lieutenant Governor informed of its decisions. This would enable any decision on which there was a difference of opinion between the Lieutenant Governor and the government to be referred to the President. It said the power to refer to the President was an exception; that the Lieutenant Governor need not in a mechanical manner refer every decision; and most important, he will be guided by the concept of constitutional morality and the question of prior concurrence was out of question, since that would set at nought the ideals of representative governance and democracy.

The idea was twofold. The earlier judgment in *Samsher Singh v. State of Punjab* (1974) had ruled against the deification of any individual like the Lieutenant Governor, for it had warned that elections would then become but "Dead Sea fruits". Second, the voice of the citizen could not go unrecognised. "This is only possible if the agency enacting and enforcing the law comprises of the elected representatives chosen by the free will of the citizens," thundered the court in *Govt. of NCT of Delhi v. Union of India*. The elected representatives and the Council of Ministers, being accountable to the voters of Delhi, must have the appropriate powers so that they can perform their functions effectively and efficiently, the court emphasised. Any other interpretation, felt the court, would nullify the concepts of pragmatic federalism and collaborative federalism.

Administrative chaos

Sidestepping the law laid down, and in a manner as to herald administrative chaos, by these thoughtless amendments, the Lieutenant Governor has been made synonymous with the Government. The government, a product of the beautiful democratic process, is replaced by one individual, a nominee of the Central government, who will occupy office at its pleasure. Not stopping there, the Bill vests in that individual enormous powers to refer all and sundry matters to the President. Now it is so well settled in constitutional law that what is to be seen is the pith and substance and not incidental aspects, while testing the competence of a legislature. That is why the referral power was to be an exceptional power and a confrontational attitude was to be abhorred. The further mandate in the Bill that before taking any executive action, the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor needs to be taken is in the teeth of the court's interpretation, which only wanted the Lieutenant Governor to be kept informed.

The majestic institutions that adorn Lutyens' Delhi and the embassies of foreign nations that punctuate it symbolically convey a lot. Delhi cannot afford administrative breakdowns. To the outside world, Delhi is India's face. It will reflect very poorly on the Central government if administration comes to a standstill in the capital. In any case, the little large Indian voter in Delhi cannot be hoodwinked. The Prime Minister should step in and immediately abort the Bill in order to uphold the principles of participative democracy, cooperative federalism, collective responsibility to the House and, above all, constitutional morality, which we deeply cherish.

K.V. Viswanathan is a Senior Advocate, Supreme Court, who also advises the Delhi government

The case that time forgot

The implementation of an integrated digital platform for the criminal justice system would ensure speedy justice

LEAH VERGHESE

Vishnu Tiwari, 43, was recently acquitted by the Allahabad High Court in a rape case after spending 20 years in prison. His story is illustrative of the tragic consequences that can follow from cases falling through the cracks of a bloated legal system.

In 2003, Mr. Tiwari was sentenced to life imprisonment for rape under the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. His appeal before the Allahabad High Court was pending for 16 years as a defective matter. These defects are usually in the nature of missing documents or documents in the wrong format and are remedied by the lawyer, and the case gets listed. Mr. Tiwari's lawyer had no interest in pursuing the case, and the appeal stayed defective. During his incarceration, his parents and two brothers died. The High Court pointed out in its judgment that the State government did not consider commuting his life sentence after 14 years. Shweta Singh Rana, a legal aid lawyer, was handed the case in 2019 when the jail authorities requested the High Court to provide a lawyer to Mr. Tiwari. The process of getting the 'paperbook', a compilation of the lower court's records, took nearly two years. The fact that Mr. Tiwari is now a free man and his case was heard by the High Court is a consequence of fortuitous circumstances and the presence of a few good individuals in the system. A sincere lawyer and vigilant family members, luxuries that only prisoners with economic means have access to, have become essential to secure justice.

A poorly designed system

An effective justice system should not depend on a few individuals' goodness and should be robust enough to ensure justice for everyone, irrespective of the individual in charge. Many of the hiccups in Mr. Tiwari's case do not reflect deliberate malice but result from poor design and the absence of an integrated digital platform for the criminal justice system. This poor design can have enervating effects on individual freedom. While digitisation has transformed the delivery of certain public services like passports, the criminal justice system is still beset with archaic procedures and paper-based processes. Although the eCourts project has made significant progress in digitising the works of courts, there remain substantial lacunae. These are especially glaring in the criminal justice system.

Sharing information seamlessly

Criminal cases involve various institutions such as the police, prosecutors, legal services authorities and forensic labs. Coordination and communication between these institutions are far from seamless. A criminal case's smooth movement involves several 'rubbing points' where progress depends on one institution securing information from another. For example, the prosecutor needs to get the FIR from the police; the police have to submit the FIR and chargesheet to the court; the forensic labs need to submit reports to the prosecutors and the courts; etc. Allowing these various elements of the system to 'talk' to each other through a digital platform that standardises the format and content of data across all the systems will allow for seamless communication and will help avoid duplication of data entry and analyses. If such a platform can track cases from when an FIR is filed till the stage of appeal, it is unlikely that a case would fall through the cracks as Mr. Tiwari's did.

Such a system would have alerted the registry that defects in a particular appeal had been left unrectified for an extended period and would have alerted the accused person in prison that his lawyer was not pursuing his case diligently. Simultaneously, the legal services authority would have been informed of the case so that the lawyer could have been replaced. The digital platform would have been able to monitor the quality of representation of the lawyer provided by the legal services authority. Once the prisoner had served 14 years of his sentence, the system would have alerted the State government that he was eligible for commutation of his sentence. The documents from the lower court would have been transmitted electronically to the accused person's lawyer and the High Court eliminating the endless wait for the 'paperbook'.

Although the Interoperable Criminal Justice System is on the anvil to integrate the information systems of the various institutions in the criminal justice system, it is far from being fully implemented. A critical factor holding back implementation is that these institutions have already created their own information systems that work in silos and are not interoperable. Priority must be given to speeding up the implementation of such a system that provides transparent, real-time access to criminal justice information to all stakeholders, including accused persons.

Leah Verghese is a lawyer working at DAKSH, Bengaluru

Recalibrating India-Taiwan ties

Helping Taiwan navigate the regulatory and cultural landscape in India will strengthen relations

RAJEEV RANJAN CHATURVEDY & KINGSHUK SAHA

India and Taiwan are celebrating 25 years of their partnership. However, the growing relationship has been a low-key affair as India has been hesitant to acknowledge the improving ties in public. Though mutual efforts between Delhi and Taipei have enabled a range of bilateral agreements covering agriculture, investment, customs cooperation, civil aviation, industrial cooperation and other areas, the time has come to recalibrate India-Taiwan relations.

Cultivating political framework

Creating a political framework is a prerequisite to doing this. Both partners have increasingly deepened mutual respect underpinned by openness, with democracy and diversity as the key principles for collective growth. The shared faith in freedom, human rights, justice, and rule of law continues to embolden their partnership. To make this relationship more meaningful, both sides can create a group of empowered persons or a task force to chart out a road map in a given time frame. Political will is the key.

India's has been in the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. Likewise, Taiwan's handling of the pandemic and its support to many other countries underlines the need to deepen healthcare cooperation. India and Taiwan already collaborate in the area of traditional medicine. The time is ripe to expand cooperation in the field of healthcare.

Maintaining air quality has become a mammoth challenge for the Indian government and stubble burning is an important reason for severe air pollution. Taiwan could be a valuable partner in dealing with this challenge through its bio-friendly technologies. Such methods are applied to convert agricultural waste into value-added and environmentally beneficial renewable energy or biochemicals. This will be a win-win situation as it will help in dealing with air pollution and also enhance farmers' income. Further, New Delhi and Taipei can also undertake joint research and development initiatives in the field of organic farming.

India and Taiwan need to deepen people-to-people connect. Cultural exchange is the cornerstone of any civilisational exchange. It not only helps one appreciate another culture but also helps in overcoming prejudices and cultural misunderstanding. Tourism is the key tool in this exchange. However, Taiwanese tourists in India are a very small number. The Buddhist pilgrimage tour needs better connectivity and visibility, in addition to showcasing incredible India's diversity. This will accelerate the flow of Taiwanese tourists. With the Taiwan Tourism Bureau partnering with Mumbai Metro, Taiwan is trying to raise awareness about the country and increase the inflow of Indian tourists.

Deepening economic ties

Trade relations have grown. India's huge market provides Taiwan with investment opportunities. Taiwan's reputation as the world leader in semiconductor and electronics complements India's leadership in ITES (Information Technology-Enabled Services). This convergence of interests will help create new opportunities. India's recent strides in the ease of business ranking not only provide Taiwan with lucrative business opportunities but also help it mitigate its over-dependence on one country for investment opportunities.

The signing of a bilateral trade agreement in 2018 was an important milestone. There are around 200 Taiwanese companies in the field of electronics, construction, petrochemicals, machine, Information and Communications Technology and auto parts operating in India. Despite the huge potential, Taiwan investments have been paltry in India. Taiwanese firms find the regulatory and labour regime daunting with stray incidents such as the incident in the Wistron plant last year creating confusion and mistrust.

Policymakers need to coordinate better with the business community to help them navigate the regulatory and cultural landscape for better ties.

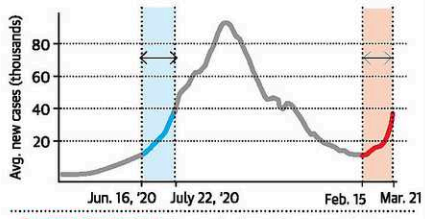
Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy is an Adjunct Senior Associate Fellow, Asian Confluence; and Kingshuk Saha is a Bengaluru-based researcher

DATA POINT

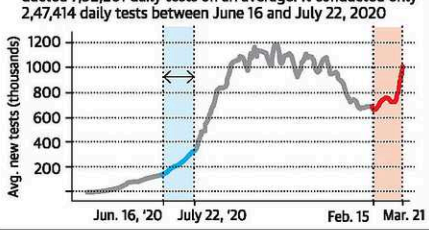
How quick is the second wave?

The second wave of cases in India and especially Maharashtra appears to be quicker than the first wave. **However, the sharper spike can be attributed to the higher testing levels in the second wave compared to the first.** In the graphs, days taken for a select number of cases in the second wave are compared with the days taken for a similar number of cases in the first wave. The number of COVID-19 tests conducted during the two time periods was also analysed. By **Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Sumant Sen and Naresh Singaravelu**

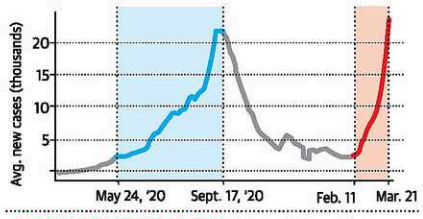
1. CASES IN INDIA | The graph shows the seven-day average number of cases in India. During the second wave, cases increased from 11,107 (Feb. 15, 2021) to 37,223 (March 21, 2021) in just 35 days. A similar increase during the first wave took 37 days (June 16, 2020 to July 22, 2020)



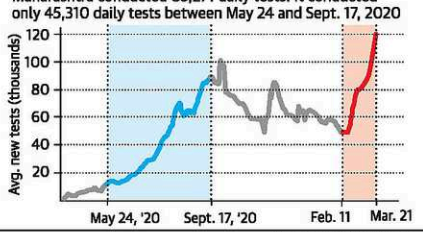
2. TESTS IN INDIA | The graph shows the seven-day avg. number of daily tests conducted in India. During the second wave, between Feb. 15, 2021 and Mar. 21, 2021, India conducted 7,92,261 daily tests on an average. It conducted only 2,47,414 daily tests between June 16 and July 22, 2020



3. CASES IN MAHARASHTRA | The graph shows the seven-day average number of cases in Maharashtra. During the second wave, cases increased from 2,415 (Feb. 11, 2021) to 23,610 (Mar. 21, 2021) in over 39 days. A similar increase during the first wave took 117 days (May 24 to Sept. 17, 2020)



4. TESTS IN MAHARASHTRA | The graph shows the seven-day avg. no. of daily tests conducted in Maharashtra. During the second wave, between Feb. 11 and Mar. 21, 2021, Maharashtra conducted 83,271 daily tests. It conducted only 45,310 daily tests between May 24 and Sept. 17, 2020



Source: covid19india.org

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 24, 1971

Promising steps to remove poverty

The President, Mr. V.V. Giri, stressed to-day [New Delhi, March 23] in his address to Parliament that the present Government had been returned to office on the clear pledge that the central objective of its policy must be the abolition of poverty. Mr. Giri said the people had asserted their sovereignty through the ballot box and given the Government a massive mandate for peaceful change which must swiftly and visibly alter the picture of poverty and alienation in our land. The President who was inaugurating a three-week interim budget session of Parliament gave the assurance that the Government will soon frame specific policies and programmes arising out of this mandate which will include a mid-term appraisal of the Fourth Plan. The President's annual address to Parliament which is in the nature of a policy statement by the Government, has come to acquire special significance this time in view of the high expectations aroused by the ruling party's election promises to usher in a more equitable social system.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 24, 1921

Privilege.

We understand that Lord Willingdon has been assiduous in his attendance for sometime and in watching the way in which Mr. Kesava Pillai, the Deputy President, voted in the Council. Mr. Pillai, it would appear, voted sometimes against Government and sometimes remained neutral. The Governor seems to have noticed this and asked Mr. Pillai, whether he, as Deputy President, could vote against the Government. Mr. Pillai's reply was the only proper and commendable one. It is reported to have been that he, as a people's representative, must be left free to vote as he pleased and that, to retain his free vote, he was if necessary prepared to resign the post of Deputy President. There is a general rumour in the Council lobby that the situation has so developed that Mr. Pillai might be forced to resign. The immediate cause that gave rise to the issue was, presumably, Mr. Pillai's giving notice of a motion to reduce a certain item of expenditure and remaining neutral instead of voting for Government in respect of the Russelkonda Saw mills scheme. Whatever that be, Lord Willingdon's action in calling upon the Deputy-President, who as a non-official bound to support the interests of his constituency is entitled to freedom of voting, is absolutely unconstitutional and utterly indefensible.

FROM PAGE ONE

All over 45 to get vaccines from April 1

Meanwhile, with India currently seeing a surge in COVID cases former national president of the Indian Medical Association Ravi Wankhedkar said there is an urgent need to rework the vaccination strategy and encourage "vaccination on demand" to eligible people, high risk people, frontline workers in all fields and those interacting with large numbers everyday and exposed to risk of infection.

"Fortunately India is having more than adequate vaccine production capacity and we should involve the private health sector in a greater way to increase reach of vaccination and decrease vaccine hesitancy. Instead of generalised lockdowns, speedy massive vaccination along with effective disease surveillance should be urgently implemented," Mr. Wankhedkar said.

Test, track and treat, MHA advises States

MHA said the proportion of RT-PCR tests among the total number of tests to detect COVID-19 should be up to 70%. It said the main focus of the guidelines is to consolidate the substantial gains achieved in containing the spread of COVID-19, which was visible in the sustained decline in the number of active cases, continuously for about five months.

"Keeping in view a fresh surge in COVID-19 cases, which is being witnessed in some parts of the country, the guidelines mandate the State/ UT governments to strictly enforce the test-track-treat protocol," it said.

The Ministry directed that the new positive cases detected due to intensive testing should be isolated and quarantined at the earliest.

The Ministry said States may also consider administrative actions including imposition of fines to enforce "wearing of face masks, hand hygiene and social distancing".

MHA said all activities have been permitted outside containment zones and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been prescribed for various activities which include movement by passenger trains, air travel, metro trains, schools, educational institutions, hotels and restaurants, shopping malls, multiplexes and entertainment parks, yoga centres and gymnasiums, exhibitions, assemblies and congregations.

Refund penal interest on EMIs, SC tells lenders

"By and large, everybody has suffered due to lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. Even the Government suffered due to non-recovery of GST... Merely, since the reliefs announced by the Union of India/RBI may not suit the desires of the borrowers, the reliefs/policy decisions related to COVID-19 cannot be said to be arbitrary or violative of Article 14 of the Constitution," the court said.

The apex court further refused the insistent pleas of the borrowers for a total waiver of interest for EMIs falling within the moratorium period. It also declined to extend the moratorium till December 2020 or, as some of the petitioners sought, another six months from August 31, 2020.

The court said a total waiver of interest on loan EMIs would hit the banks and depositors hard.

"To grant such a relief of total waiver of interest during the moratorium period would have a far-reaching financial implication in the economy of the country. Banks and lenders have to pay the interest to the depositors. Their liability to pay the interest on the deposits continued even during the moratorium period... Continuing to pay interest to depositors is not only one of the most essential banking activities but it shall be a huge responsibility owed by the banks to crores and crores of small depositors, pensioners, etc, who survive on the interest from their deposits," Justice Shah reasoned. Besides, the court said numerous welfare funds schemes survive on the interest generated from bank deposits.

Five policemen killed as Naxals blow up bus

Earlier, while confirming the incident, the State's Director General of Police D.M. Awasthi had said over 20 security personnel were on board the bus.

This is the second major Naxal attack on DRG personnel – the frontline anti-naxal force of the State police – in the span of one year.

India abstains from resolution on Sri Lanka

Ahead of the vote, both the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which sought the exact opposite outcomes on the resolution, had expressed hopes of obtaining India's support.

On Tuesday, both sides appeared sympathetic to India's abstention that effectively amounts to support for neither party. However, in an indication that Sri Lanka had construed abstentions as support, Mr. Gunawardena in a tweet thanked the 14 countries, including India, Japan and Nepal, that abstained from voting.

'Solid support'

He also extending a "warm thank you" for the "solid support" shown by the 11 countries, including China, Pakistan, Russia and Bangladesh, that voted against the resolution, and in support of the Sri Lankan government.

On the other hand, welcoming the Council's adoption of the resolution, the TNA said India must have decided to abstain after "careful consideration" of various factors.

"We are, however, greatly encouraged by India's statement ahead of the vote," TNA spokesman and Jaffna legislator M.A. Sumanthiran said, pointing to India's reference to "two fundamental considerations" – of supporting the Tamils for equality, justice, dignity and peace, and ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka resolution was the first to be voted on using the extraordinary e-voting procedures established for the UNHRC 46th Session, which has been held virtually.

Karnataka to get 16.5 lakh vaccine doses soon

Infections in south stay steady, with about 2,000 cases added in Kerala, Karnataka; Telangana, A.P. incidence at over 400

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA

The incidence of COVID-19 infection on Tuesday showed a high for the present year in Andhra Pradesh at 492 cases, besides 1,985 cases in Kerala, 2,010 in Karnataka and 412 in Telangana, the latter as of Monday. Kerala added 10 deaths from the virus from the past few days' fatalities.

Karnataka Health Minister K. Sudhakar denied any vaccine shortage and said the State would get four lakh doses from the Centre by a special flight on Wednesday, and 12.5 lakh by next week.

In a single cluster, 163 students of a private college hostel tested positive in Kateru, Rajamahendravaram Rural of Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district. District Medical and Health Officer K.V.S. Gowreeswara Rao said about 800 boarders had been tested.

Andhra Pradesh reported two more virus deaths. The toll rose to 7,193 and the death rate was 0.80%. There were 2,616 active cases.

Kerala reported 1,985 new cases from 57,425 samples. The TPR, steady below 4% for the past few days, was 3.46% on Tuesday.

The addition of 10 new deaths on Tuesday took the overall toll to 4,517 deaths. Kozhikode reported three deaths, Thrissur, Malappuram and Kannur two each, and Kasaragod, one death.

Of the new cases on Tuesday, 1,763 were locally acquired infections.

Over 400 cases were recorded in Telangana, with 412 people testing positive on Monday. A total of 68,171 samples were tested and three more patients died.

Meanwhile, Telangana Education Minister P. Sabita Indra Reddy announced in the Assembly on Tuesday that all educational institutions in the State, except medical colleges, would be closed from Wednesday. She said all the hostels of schools, residential schools and colleges in both the government and private sector would also be closed.

Karnataka's Health Department said it had 10.74 lakh doses. So far, the State received 38.85 lakh doses and vaccinated 28,11,974 people till March 23. Karnataka reported 2,010 new cases on Tuesday, 1,280 from Bengaluru Urban alone. With this, the total number of cases rose to 9,73,657. With five deaths the toll rose to 12,449. This is apart from 19 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

Also, 98,733 tests were conducted, including 91,103 RT-PCR tests. With this, the total number of tests rose to 2,05,66,120.

On a day when 1,437 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Tamil Nadu, Chennai's daily count exceeded 500 after a span of four months. A total of 532 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the city.

The last time Chennai reported more than 500 cases was on November 15, 2020, (502 cases) after which the cases started to decline steadily. However, fresh coronavirus infections have been on the rise in the past two weeks across the State.

The State recorded nine more deaths, taking the toll to 12,618. There were four deaths in Chennai, two each in Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur and one in Nagapattinam.

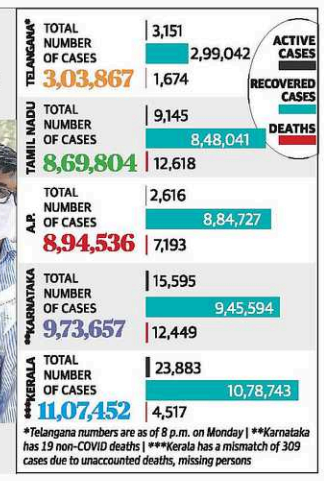
(With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai bureaus)

COVID-19

Precautionary steps

The authorities are taking measures to contain the second wave of COVID-19. The graph shows the spread of the pandemic in the southern States

Safety first: Students wearing face masks attending college in Vijayawada on Tuesday. ▪ V. RAJU



**Telangana numbers are as of 8 p.m. on Monday | **Karnataka has 19 non-COVID deaths | ***Kerala has a mismatch of 309 cases due to unaccounted deaths, missing persons*

Speaker funded college in Sharjah: Swapna

ED makes public the deposition of prime accused in the gold smuggling case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The registration of a criminal case against unnamed officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has further intensified its face-off with the Left Democratic Front government with the investigation agency now making public a deposition of Swapna Suresh, prime accused in the diplomatic channel gold smuggling case, regarding the investment of Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan in a college in Sharjah.

The statement has been attached to a petition challenging the registration of a criminal case against unnamed ED officials in Kochi for forcing Swapna to make statements against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

P. Sreeramakrishnan

The statement was given by Swapna before the Deputy Director of Enforcement at the women's prison at Attakulangara in Thiruvananthapuram on December 15.

Request to Sharjah ruler

Swapna had reportedly deposed that the Speaker wanted to start a branch of Middle East College in Sharjah and he had requested the ruler of Sharjah to provide land. He also told her that he had made an investment in the college.

Swapna had stated that Lafeer, a Non-Resident Indian from Ponnani district, was the owner of the college and that she was introduced to Mr. Lafeer and Kiran, a native of Thiruvananthapuram and Dean of the college, by the Speaker and M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister.

Mr. Sreeramakrishnan, Mr. Sivasankar, Mr. Kiran, and Mr. Lafeer wanted her to relocate to Sharjah and head their business development wing in West Asia.

The group was "dedicatedly working for the project," she reportedly told the ED.

"As instructed by Mr. Sivasankar, I visited Oman in April 2018 to the premises and to meet Khalid, an Omani national who was also one of the directors of the college in Oman, to discuss the way forward and how to take the process further," Swapna had stated.

When the ED asked her how did she know that the Speaker had requested the ruler of Sharjah to provide land for the college in Sharjah, Swapna replied that during the visit of the ruler to Thiruvananthapuram, the Speaker had "requested an opportunity to meet him."

KERALA

Don't use public funds for campaigning: Madras HC

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Tuesday said the Election Commission of India can put guidelines in place to ensure that public funds are not brazenly used by Ministers for campaigning purposes. It observed that the EC had sufficient authority to put in place checks and balances allowing Ministers and the like to enjoy their official status while preventing them from spending government funds for campaigning or election purposes.

Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said that in an ideal world, there should be a level-playing field so that government functionaries don't use the perks and benefits of their office while campaigning for elections.

"Such standards were met by many a politician once upon a time, but are out of fashion these days," the judges said, while disposing of a public interest litigation petition.

The Ahimsa Socialist Party, represented by its president, T. Ramesh, had filed the PIL petition seeking a direction to the EC to consider the representations made to it to prohibit Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and all others holding public office from campaigning on behalf of their party's candidates.

TAMIL NADU

Carnatic vocalist, teacher Lalitha passes away

She is one of the Hyderabad Sisters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Eminent Carnatic vocalist and guru Lalitha passed away on Tuesday due to cardiac arrest. She was 70.

Ms. Lalitha, along with her sister Haripriya, was an indomitable force on the classical music scene. The duo, known as Hyderabad Sisters, was known to draw houseful audiences to their concerts.

Born and brought up in Hyderabad, Ms. Lalitha, along with her sister Ms. Haripriya, trained under the late T.G. Padmanabhan of the Alathur *bani*, and was an A-grade artiste of the All India Radio. Both sisters have performed in all the leading sabhas of the country and abroad.

Lalitha

For years, Barkatpura, where Ms. Lalitha lived and trained many students, was a destination for aspiring classical musicians. She was a faculty member at the Government Music College in Hyderabad.

Known for their 'manodharma' – the extempore rendition of ragas and sticking to pure traditional style – the sisters often enlightened the audience by presenting rare ragas and kritis.

Quota percentage should be left to the States, T.N. tells SC

It says the Indira Sawhney judgment requires a relook

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu told a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Tuesday that the percentage of reservation should be left to the "subjective satisfaction" of individual States.

The State urged the five-judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan to recognise a State's complete discretion to identify its socially and educationally backward classes and fix the percentage of reservation for them in State government jobs and educational admissions.

Another southern State, Karnataka, also came in support of its right to specify a particular community as 'socially and educationally backward' for inclusion in the State List for grant of reservation benefits.

Tamil Nadu and Karnataka agreed with Maharashtra that the 50% ceiling limit on reservation introduced in the Indira Sawhney judgment by a nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court was not "cast in stone".

Senior advocate Shekhar Naphade and advocate Yogesh Kanna, for Tamil Nadu, contended that the Indira Sawhney judgment required a re-look. The ground situation had changed a lot since that judgment in 1992. Mr. Naphade and Mr. Kanna asked the five-judge Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan to refer to an 11-judge Bench.

The Bench, which is examining the Maratha quota law, is also looking into larger questions of law like whether the Constitution (One Hundred Second Amendment) Act of 2018, which introduces the National Commission for Backward Classes, interferes with the authority of State Legislatures to provide benefit to the social and educationally backward communities in their own jurisdiction.

The Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act of 2018, which provides 12% to 13% quota benefits for the Maratha community, takes the reservation percentage in the State across the 50% mark.

Stalemate continues in Karnataka Assembly

Congress refuses to withdraw protest till its demand for High Court-monitored probe is accepted

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Stalemate continued in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, with the Opposition Congress refusing to withdraw its protest seeking filing of a rape case against former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi and a Karnataka High Court Chief Justice-monitored probe into the CD scandal in which he is accused of sexually exploiting a woman promising her a government job.

The government remained adamant and refused to give in to the protesting members' demand.

Soon after the House paid tributes to former Minister B.D. Basavaraju, Congress members rushed to the well of the House and resumed their dharna. They displayed CDs in a symbolic gesture and shouted slogans.

Congress MLAs protesting over the CD scandal during the Karnataka Legislative Assembly session on Tuesday.

Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah, who spearheaded the protest, declared that they would not co-operate with the government as it had not agreed to their demand.

Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri adjourned the House for some time as the protesters did not listen to his repeated appeals to withdraw the stir. He held a meeting with members of both ruling and the Opposition parties at his chambers to broker peace.

Congress modifies stand

After the meeting, the Congress modified its stand slightly on the probe. When the House resumed, Mr. Siddaramaiah said: "We are not asking for a judicial probe. Let the Special Investigation Team (SIT) continue, but the probe should be supervised by a High Court Chief Justice."

The Congress continued with their protest after the House re-assembled post-lunch.

The Speaker told the protesting members not to stall the House proceedings for settling scores with the government. "If you have any differences with the government, you can use any forum outside the House. But please do not prevent the House from conducting its business," he said.

As there was no sign of the protesters withdrawing the dharna, the Speaker took up adoption of two Bills as well as a resolution, before adjourning the House for the day.

There are indications that the Congress will continue its protest on Wednesday, as Mr. Siddaramaiah has said the party wants to take the issue to its logical end.

KARNATAKA

IN BRIEF

Sunny Leone case: Kerala HC adjourns hearing

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Tuesday adjourned to March 31 the hearing on an anticipatory bail petition filed by Bollywood actor Sunny Leone and her husband Daniel Weber in a cheating case registered by the Crime Branch against them in connection with a show that failed to take off.

Amit Shah on a whirlwind tour in Kerala today

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister for Home Affairs Amit Shah is in Kerala on a one-day whirlwind tour on Wednesday to boost the NDA's electoral fortunes. Mr. Shah has campaign stops scheduled in Thripunithara in Ernakulam, Kanjirapally in Kottayam, Puttingal in Kollam, and Malampuzha in Palakkad.

Bishops' council protests against attack on nuns

KOCHI

The Kerala Catholic Bishops Council (KCBC) has expressed its protest against the attack on a group of young women belonging to the Sacred Heart Congregation last Friday at Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. A statement issued by the bishops here said that the group of religious persons were taken into custody "without any reason".

VACB recommends case against K.M. Shaji

KOZHIKODE

A special unit of the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) has proposed that a case be taken against Indian Union Muslim League legislator K.M. Shaji for allegedly amassing wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income. It said he had amassed an extra income of ₹1.4 crore in nine years.

BJP promises 'corrected' NRC in Assam

Party avoids Citizenship Act in manifesto, lists 10 'commitments'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The BJP has pledged to release a "corrected" version of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) but avoided any reference to the implementation of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

Assam was the first State to oppose the CAA as protesters said it violated the spirit of the 1985 Assam Accord that prescribed the midnight of March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date for detecting and deporting illegal immigrants. The CAA seeks to fast-track the citizenship of non-Muslims who fled religious persecution in three neighbouring countries and took refuge before December 31, 2014.

Clause 6 of the Assam Accord guarantees Constitutional safeguards for the indigenous communities.

Releasing the BJP manifesto containing "10 commitments" in Guwahati on Tuesday, party president J.P. Nadda said the objective of publishing a "corrected" version was to enlist genuine Indian citizens while identifying illegal migrants and residents who could not substantiate citizenship claims.

"We will work towards protecting the rights of the Assamese people with a corrected NRC, which means taking into account the mandate given by the Supreme Court. We will protect the genuine Indian citizens and detect the infiltrators so that Assam can stay Assam," he said.

The final draft of the NRC was published on August 31, 2019. The document left out 19.06 lakh of 3.30 crore applicants.

Unhappy with the outcome, the BJP has been demanding a re-verification of the NRC. It has promised to get it done if its alliance government is voted back to power.

Poll planning: BJP chief J.P. Nadda with Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal and others in Guwahati on Tuesday. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

'Flood-free Assam'

Among the other commitments are ensuring a flood-free Assam through dredging of rivers and building large reservoirs for excess rainwater, strengthening *namghars* (community prayer halls) and creating a taskforce to recover lands of *satras* (Vaishnav monasteries) and places of worship of tribal people from illegal encroachment. It also said it would bring in appropriate laws to tackle and end the menace of "land jehad" as well as "love jehad".

Though the manifesto did not mention the CAA, Mr. Nadda said the party's stand on it was unchanged.

"Parliament passed the CAA. It will be implemented when it needs to be," he said, insisting that implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord was under process.

Daily wage of tea workers increased

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Indian Tea Association has enhanced the daily wage of tea plantation workers in Assam to ₹193 with effect from February 22.

The decision on an interim hike of ₹26 came a day after Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma warned the tea gardens to either add ₹50 to the existing ₹167 or be prepared to pay ₹350 per day. This has come as a relief to the BJP, which was perceived to be under pressure across the tea belt after the Gauhati High Court stayed the State government's order on February 23 to hike the daily wage by ₹50.

The ITA and 17 companies had challenged the government's order in court.

West Bengal election: BJP announces 13 candidates

Party fields former CEA Ashok Lahiri from Balurghat seat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The BJP on Tuesday announced the names of 13 candidates, including economist Ashok Lahiri and Lt. Gen. Subrata Saha (retd.), for the West Bengal Assembly poll.

Mr. Lahiri's name was initially announced for the Alipurduar constituency, but the party later replaced him with Suman Kanjilal, a local leader, after protests erupted over his candidature. Mr. Lahiri, who is a member of the 15th Finance Commision and a former Chief Economic Adviser, will contest from Balurghat, a relatively safe seat. Lt. Gen. Saha (retd.) will contest from the Rashbehari seat in south Kolkata.

The party also replaced its candidates for the Chowringhee and Kashipur-Belgachia seats. The ones announced earlier refused to contest, leading to embarrassment for the party. The fresh candidates are Shivaji Singha Roy in Belgachia and Debrabrata Majhi in Chowringhee.

Sending a message: Union Home Minister Amit Shah at a rally in Gosaba, South 24 Parganas district, on Tuesday. • PTI

The list includes candidates from the three hill constituencies of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. Darjeeling sitting MLA and Gorkha National Liberation Front leader Neraj Zimba is the party's candidate for the seat again. At Kalimpong, the BJP has nominated Subha Pradhan, and at Kurseong, it is Bishnu Prasad Sharma.

In Bagdha, the BJP has named former Trinamool MLA Biswajit Das as its candidate, while Subrata Thakur, a prominent Matua leader, will contest from Gaighata.

Foreigners can apply under CAA after rules are notified: Centre

House panels have granted time to frame rules, says Minister

VIJAITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Tuesday told the Lok Sabha that "foreigners" covered under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, "may submit applications for grant of Indian citizenship after appropriate rules are notified by the Central government".

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in a written reply in the Lower House that the CAA was notified on December 12, 2019, and came into force from January 10, 2020.

"The foreigners covered under this Amendment Act may submit applications for grant of Indian citizenship after appropriate rules are notified by the Central government. The Committees on Subordinate Legislation, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have granted time up to April 9, 2021, and July 9, 2021, respectively to frame these rules," the reply said.

Without the rules being notified, the Act remains ineffective.

The CAA is one of the major issues in poll-bound West Bengal and Assam. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had earlier said the CAA rules would be framed after the COVID-19 vaccination drive was concluded.

The election manifesto of the BJP in West Bengal said it would be implemented in the first State Cabinet meeting if the party came to power.

The CAA provides citizenship on the basis of religion to six undocumented non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.

Foreigners Tribunal

In a separate reply, the Minister said the final National Register of Indian Citizens (NRC) in Assam had not been issued.

To a question by Congress member Abdul Khaleque in the Lok Sabha about the number of appeals made to the Foreigners Tribunal within the stipulated 120 days by those who were excluded from the final NRC list, the Minister said, "...the final National Register of Indian Citizens in Assam has not been issued. Consequently, a certified copy of the rejection order has not been issued to the persons excluded. Hence, the number of appeals made to the Foreigners Tribunal by those excluded from the final NRC list is 'Nil' as on date."

Over 1.4 lakh cases

In another reply, the Minister said Foreigners Tribunals were functioning only in Assam at present.

"As per the information made available by the State government, the number of cases pending in these tribunals as on 31.12.2020 are 1,40,050."

'No panchayat system in Assam tribal areas'

Union Home Ministry informs LS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that "presently, there is no proposal to implement panchayat system in Sixth Schedule areas of Assam".

The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution protects tribal populations and provides autonomy to the communities through creation of autonomous development councils that can frame laws on land, public health, agriculture and others. As of now, 10 autonomous councils exist in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said the specified tribal areas are the North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong and the Bodoland Territorial Area in Assam, Khasi Hills, Jaintiya Hills and Garo Hills in Meghalaya, Tribal Areas in Tripura, and Chakma, Mara and Lai districts in Mizoram.

Mr. Reddy said, "There is no panchayat system in Sixth Schedule areas of Assam. Presently, there is no proposal to implement panchayat system there."

On January 23, 2019, the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved amendments to increase the financial and executive powers of the autonomous councils.

The Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019, was subsequently introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 6, 2019, that provides for elected village municipal councils. The Bill that is still active proposes that the State Election Commissions would hold elections to the autonomous councils, village and municipal councils. The Bill was introduced in the Upper House so that the legislation remains active even as the House was adjourned sine die before the 2019 general election.

Mr. Reddy replied that no such list of schemes run by the Central and State governments in these areas is maintained by the MHA.

Mamata cries foul over force deployment

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that forces from BJP-ruled States were being sent to West Bengal to influence voting.

"Why are you sending police from Uttar Pradesh to influence votes?" Ms. Banerjee said at a public meeting in Purulia. More than 300 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces have reached the State for the Assembly election.

Ms. Banerjee said the borders with Jharkhand should be sealed. "People are coming from Jharkhand to influence votes. You should keep up the vigil and if you see any outsider please resist them, inform the police."

She targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for closing public service undertakings. "BJP government is closing all central concerns. Only BJP and Modi's 'factory of lies' alone will remain."

Will spend ₹2 lakh cr. to develop Sunderbans: Shah

BJP will put an end to infiltration, he says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday promised to make the Sunderbans the most advanced region of West Bengal.

Mr. Shah addressed a meeting in Gosaba, one of the most backward regions of the State which was devastated by Cyclone Amphan on May 20, 2020.

"If voted to power in Bengal, we will spend ₹2 lakh crore on Sunderbans region," Mr. Shah said, adding that the BJP manifesto has promised ₹6,000 per annum to every fisherman. The party has promised to allocate ₹6,500 crore over five years for the complete development of areas devastated by cyclones Aila, Bulbul and Amphan.

'Not even a bird'

Mr. Shah said the BJP would put an end to infiltration in the State.

"Not only people we will ensure that not even a bird is able to cross the borders." He accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of promoting her nephew and MP Abhishek Banerjee.

"Do you want *Goonda Raj* in West Bengal,... Mamata*didi* is trying to make her nephew Chief Minister, while Modi*ji* is tirelessly working for the development of the State," the Home Minister said.

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R.O. No:1614-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2020-21 Date : 23-03-2021

India stronger despite pandemic: PM

Good show in panchayat polls reason for being firm on farm laws, he tells BJP MPs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday told BJP MPs that despite very challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cyclones, earthquakes and tensions at the India-China border, the country had emerged stronger, with the world also acknowledging this fact. He was addressing a meeting of the BJP Parliamentary Party, where he also touched upon the controversial farm laws.

Mr. Modi cited the party's good performance in the panchayat elections, where the "good intentions" behind the farm laws were clearly communicated to the people, and said it was a reason for remaining firm on them. He made a specific reference to the panchayat election in Pali in Rajasthan, the Lok Sabha constituency of former Union Minister P.P. Chaudhary, as an example. The BJP won more than 90% of the seats in the election, which took place amid protests against the farm laws.

Leading the way: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday. • PTI

"Sharing his experiences of corona pandemic, Prime Minister Modi also told MPs that during that period, the country was not only facing the challenge of the virus, but on others fronts as well as there were tensions on LAC, cyclones, earthquakes and then there was locust swarm attack but despite all these odds, India emerged stronger and the entire world realised its potential," Minister of state for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal said at a media briefing after the meeting.

Mr. Modi also said he has been holding public office – earlier as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and now Prime Minister – for more than two decades without taking an off day.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also addressed the meeting.

Mr. Jaishankar emphasised that India's stature rose in the world during the pandemic for its medical diplomacy – first in providing antibiotics and testing kits and later for its vaccine diplomacy, Mr. Meghwal said.

Ms. Sitharman emphasised that despite the economic impact of the pandemic, the government did not impose any additional tax on the public and came up with a comprehensive budget for all.

BJP MPs raise Deshmukh issue again

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The treasury benches in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday again raked up the allegations made by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of running an extortion racket.

The ruckus started a little before noon when BJP MP Sushil Modi sought to speak towards the end of the Zero Hour, demanding dismissal of Mr. Deshmukh. House Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu immediately shot down the demand, leading to protests from the treasury benches. Many BJP MPs stood up and started shouting slogans.

Later, speaking outside the House, senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said, "It is the duty of the treasury benches to run the House. It is most unfortunate that the ministers themselves are leading the charge to disrupt the House. The Chair must name such ministers and advice them to conduct themselves. ."

Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Modi said the events in Maharashtra were unprecedented and therefore, the reactions to it would also be "equally unprecedented". "It is not a question of treasury benches or the opposition benches. This is a critical allegation against the Home Minister of such a big State like Maharashtra," he said. Mr. Sushil Modi said Mr. Singh is not the only one to make such allegations.

"A lady IPS officer has also accused the State Home Minister of taking money for transfers and postings. Then there is the case of IPS officer Sanjay Pandey who has filed a case in the SC, challenging the appointment of current DGP. So over all there is chaos in Maharashtra," he said.

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IN BRIEF

Encroachments found at 321 ancient sites

NEW DELHI

Encroachments have been reported at 321 monuments and ancient sites across States since 2014, the Union Culture Ministry informed the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. In response to a question by Biju Janata Dal MP Amar Patnaik, Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel provided a list of encroached monuments and sites that included the Purana Qila in Delhi and the Ellora Caves in Maharashtra. The list is being updated, he added.

HC orders transgender wing in Assam hospital

GUWAHATI

The Gauhati High Court has directed the Assam government to create a separate wing at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) for the transgender community. The court also asked the Central government to issue a list of benefits for transgenders under the Ayushman Bharat scheme. A petition had been filed by Swati Bidhan Baruah, a transgender rights activist and the first transgender judge in the northeast.

Oxfam stands by report on labour inequalities

NEW DELHI

Non-profit group Oxfam on Tuesday stated that the methodology used in its Inequality Index 2020 is in the public domain, a day after Labour Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar told the Lok Sabha that the ranking and methodology lacked clarity. Oxfam India's lead specialist against inequality Anjela Taneja stated: "The methodology adopted in the index is in the public domain as is the basis of India's scoring." India was ranked 151 out of 158 countries in terms of workers' rights.

Even acid attack couldn't stop gritty woman from pursuing her dream

Court awards life term to attacker of the 22-year-old, who joined the police force within 10 months of the ordeal and is now aiming higher

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

A local court in Rae Bareli on March 19 provided 22-year-old Pooja (name changed) a sense of closure two years after she was brutally attacked with acid. The court awarded the accused, her distant relative, life imprisonment for throwing acid on her in April 2019 when she was going for screening for a job in the police force.

Pooja had suffered 29% burns; the acid burnt her neck, chest, abdomen, back and elbow and spent almost two months in hospital.

The tragedy, however, did not deter her from chasing her ambition. In February 2020, ten months after the acid attack, Pooja joined the police and has been posted in a police station in east Uttar Pradesh.

"When there is passion in the heart for something, nothing comes in the way. I could only see my goal and was bent on achieving it," she says.

On April 16, 2019, Pooja, then 20, was on her way to a coaching centre for competitive exams in Unchahar when the accused Pradeep, her brother-in-law's cousin, was allegedly waiting for her on the side of the road with a bottle in his hand. Pradeep is said to have caught hold of her cycle and poured acid on her back. As a crowd gathered, the accused fled the scene.

SPECIAL

Due to the pain and burns, Pooja lost consciousness after four-five minutes.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Vineet Singh, who investigated the case, says the accused attacked Pooja because she rejected his marriage proposal. "Acid is mostly used to deface the girl when she refuses to continue the affair or marry," he said.

In her statement to the court, Pooja said she knew the accused for five years and that he would phone her and message her expressing love and asking for marriage apart from sending her indecent texts. Due to this, she said, she started avoiding his calls.

While convicting Pradeep under Section 326 A of the IPC, special judge Heera Lal said there was no ground for any "empathy" for such persons who disfigure a woman by pouring acid on her. The convict was also fined ₹50,000.

Given the low conviction rate in acid attacks, Pooja is content with the disposal of the case. When she was attacked she had not only cleared the exam for police constable but also the Railway Protection Force. However, she missed the physical examination as she was admitted to the hospital then. Now, she is preparing for examinations to qualify for a rank higher than that of a constable. Pooja says women should not give up their career due to fear of men or society. "Some even stopped going to college due to fear after such incidents happened to others. Women should focus on being self-dependent," she said.

81% of positive samples in Punjab of U.K. strain

Mutant virus affecting young people more: Amarinder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

With 81% of the 401 COVID-19 samples sent by the State for genome sequencing turning out positive for the U.K. variant, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Tuesday appealed to the people to get themselves vaccinated. He urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to widen the vaccination ambit to cover those under 60 since this mutant had been found to be infecting young people more.

The process needed to be expedited, he said, pointing to the fact that experts had found the existing Covishield vaccine to be equally effective against the U.K. variant – B.1.1.7.

Capt. Singh also urged people to strictly adhere to all safety protocols, including wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. The appeal came after State's expert committee head K.K. Talwar apprised him of the developments on the new variant, which has been witnessing a surge in the last few weeks.

Virus trail: A health worker collecting a nasal swab sample at the Civil Hospital in Amritsar. ▪AFP

The Health Department had sent 478 positive samples to the NIB, the IGIB and the NCDC for genome sequencing, of which results of 90 samples were received and those showed only two samples for the new N440K variant.

Thereafter, 401 more samples, collected between February 1 and March 10, were sent to the NCDC for genome sequencing.

The result of these samples was worrying, as it showed presence of B.1.1.7 variant in 326 of them, said Dr. Talwar.

40,715 fresh cases reported across country

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on Tuesday joined the list of eight other States, including Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, which are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new COVID-19 cases, the Union Health Ministry said in a statement.

India reported 40,715 new cases and 199 fatalities in the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Tuesday, the Ministry said. Six states – Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu – accounted for 80.90% of the new infections.

Six States accounted for 80.4% of the daily deaths, with Maharashtra and Punjab reporting 58 each, followed by Kerala and Chhattisgarh, with 12 deaths each. The Ministry added that 795 cases had been identified so far in the country with the U.K., South Africa and Brazil variants of the virus.

Supply side constraints for Covaxin: NITI Aayog

V.K. Paul seeks increased output

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin currently constituted only around 8% of the doses administered so far as there were "supply side" constraints, NITI Aayog Member (Health) V.K. Paul said at a seminar on Tuesday.

"We'd like them (Bharat Biotech) to increase the output. As per our current estimate, Bharat Biotech is expected to deliver 120 million (12 crore) doses until August and 480 million is expected from Serum Institute. Serum supplies about 60 million doses now and we'd like that to increase to 80 or 100 million," Dr. Paul said, speaking at an online seminar organised by the Sun Pharma Science Foundation.

From July and August more vaccines, including from different companies, were expected, he added.

According to the most updated figures available on the government's CoWin website, about 42 lakh doses of Covaxin had been administered so far, compared to the roughly 4.4 crore Covishield doses.

Covaxin is manufactured by Bharat Biotech in Hyderabad. ▪K. PICHUMANI

The Hindu reached out to Bharat Biotech for comment but didn't get a response until the time of going to press.

Both Covishield and Covaxin were rolled out under emergency use authorisation but the lack of efficacy data resulted in a significant degree of hesitation. "Now that interim efficacy data is out, there is more confidence in the vaccine," Dr. Paul added. He denied that this was affecting the overall pace of India's vaccination programme. "We are able to administer vaccines as per need," he said.

Vaccination figures cross 5 crore mark

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered crossed 5 crore with 5,00,75,162 jabs given till Tuesday, as per the provisional report till 7 p.m., said the Health Ministry.

The Ministry said beneficiaries must insist on receiving a hard copy or a digital copy/link of their vaccination certificate.

"In private hospitals, this has been included in the fee charged from you. You may use your observation period of 30 minutes to ensure that you get the certificate. Do not return home without it. If the hospital does not provide a certificate, the beneficiary may lodge a complaint at toll-free number 1075," the Ministry said.

The CoWIN platform has been amended to do away with the feature of the auto scheduling of the second dose on the 29th day. Beneficiaries can decided on the date within the interval of four to eight weeks.

OTT case: SC stays all pleas in HCs

The Centre has sought transfer of the cases in High Courts to the top court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the proceedings in High Courts in cases seeking regulation of content shown on over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

A Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud listed the case for hearing after the Holi break.

The hearing was based on a plea by the Centre to transfer the cases in the High Courts to the Supreme Court.

The Bench was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that despite the apex court's earlier order issuing notice on the transfer plea filed by the Centre to club all such petitions filed in various High Courts, the Punjab and Haryana High Court is still proceeding in the matter pending there.

Mr. Mehta said several fresh petitions were being filed in different High Courts on the issue.

Counter affidavit

A counter-affidavit filed by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in another case said Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules of 2021 provides a "comprehensive" mechanism to check content on OTT platforms.

The Ministry said the Rules was based on a globally recognised model and keeps a fine balance, considering the major audience these OTT platforms had while at the same time providing a healthy classification of content based on age groups.

Recently, another Supreme Court Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan had criticised the 2021 Rules as lacking teeth to punish violators or to screen offensive content.

Centre's offer

In that case, Mr. Mehta, speaking on behalf of the Centre, had agreed to consider drafting new regulations or even legislation to address the concern raised by the court about OTT platforms.

The court had recorded in its order that the new Rules notified days back were "more in the nature of guidelines" and there was "no effective mechanism for screening or to take appropriate action" against violators.

Indus water panel holds meeting

116th round of Permanent Indus Commission amid wider normalisation of ties

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

After a gap of more than two and half years Indian and Pakistani delegations on Monday began the 116th Meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission here. The meeting which coincided with the National Day of Pakistan is being viewed as part of the broader process of normalisation of bilateral ties between the two neighbours.

The two-day meeting of the Commission is being led on the Indian side by Indus Water Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Saxena. The Pakistani delegation is led by Pakistan's Commissioner for Indus Waters Syed Mohammad Mehr Ali Shah. The last meeting of the Permanent Indus Commission was held on August 29, 2018.

Indus Water Commissioner Pradeep Kumar Saxena, right, with his Pakistani counterpart Muhammad Mehar Ali Shah. ▪PTI

Hours after the conclusion of the first day's meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind greeted Pakistan on the occasion of its National Day which marks the March 23, 1940 Lahore Resolution which paved the way for the creation of Pakistan.

At an event to mark the National Day, organised in the Pakistan High Commission, Aftab Hasan Khan, Charge'd Affaires, said, "Pakistan wants to have friendly relations with all countries including India. To achieve peace between India and Pakistan both countries shall resolve all outstanding issues."

The positive backdrop of the talks between the two delegation has indicated that the interaction is likely supported by the reported back channel talks that are taking place between India and Pakistan. *The Hindu* has reported earlier that the United Arab Emirates is playing a role in connecting India and Pakistan through back channel negotiations. The issue, however, did not draw a response from the Ministry of External Affairs.

Hurriyat welcomes thaw in India, Pak. relations

Mirwaiz extends 'full support'

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Hurriyat, headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, on Tuesday welcomed the "shift towards good neighbourly relations" between India and Pakistan and offered to extend "full support to all the initiatives aimed at bringing peace and prosperity and a fair and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute".

"The agreement on adhering to the ceasefire on the Line of Control and the subsequent statements and actions indicate a positive shift in the relations between the two neighbours. This is being observed with anticipation by the people of J&K, who are deeply affected by the state of the relations between the two neighbours as they are for the past seven decades striving for a resolution to the Kashmir conflict," a spokesman of the Mirwaiz said in a statement.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

The Hurriyat said it sees the recent measures as the first step in the direction of a meaningful dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict.

The spokesman said the Hurriyat was ready to extend full support to all the initiatives between the two countries "that aim at bringing peace and prosperity to all the people of the subcontinent and seek a fair and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute".

Delhi should have a bigger role in peace process: Afghanistan

Haneef Atmar briefs Indian leadership on Ghani's new plan

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Afghanistan wants a larger role for India in the peace and reconciliation process, said visiting Foreign Minister Haneef Atmar, adding that he had discussed President Ghani's new peace plan, the ongoing Intra-Afghan dialogue and "Extended Troika" talks in Moscow last week with the Indian leadership. Mr. Atmar met National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Tuesday, after holding bilateral talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday.

"India has legitimate interests in the peace and security of Afghanistan and we are seeking a greater role for India," Mr. Atmar told journalists at the Indian Women's Press Corps after his official meetings in Delhi. "We are negotiating to make sure that Afghanistan does not become a safe haven for international terrorists who are keen to turn it not just in their battlefield but into a safe haven including, unfortunately, against India as well. So, India has a role not just in Afghanistan but with other regional and international partners," he said.

> **The plan will pave the way for a lasting peace based on the will of the Afghan people**

After his meeting with Mr. Doval, the Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said Mr. Atmar had discussed the Ghani government peace plan, which is understood to include fresh elections within the year if the Taliban agrees to a ceasefire, and for Mr. Ghani to hand over power to the elected government. The plan runs counter to the U.S. proposal, revealed in a leaked letter from US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, that suggests Afghan-Taliban negotiations for a power sharing arrangement, and for an interim government to take over from President Ghani's government.

"[Mr. Atmar] said the plan would pave the way for a lasting peace based on the will of the Afghan people and strengthen Afghanistan's role as a bridge for connectivity and cooperation between regional countries and the international community," an MFA readout of the meeting said, adding that Mr. Doval had said "the unity among Afghans and consensus at regional and international levels were essential factors for achieving sustainable peace".

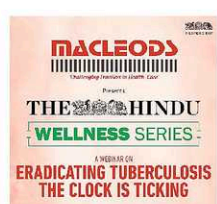
'New tools needed to control spread of TB'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Amid concerns over a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, experts have warned that there is a need for new interventions and tools to control the increasing pace of spread of tuberculosis (TB) and also improve the cure rate of the disease.

Ashok Mahasur, senior chest consultant, P.D. Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai, said those with lower immunity are prone to develop tuberculosis and TB patients with low immunity may develop COVID-19 and this was interrelated. On the positive side, the use of masks during the pandemic has reduced cases of TB and chronic respiratory diseases. It is a useful tool to prevent spread of TB, he said.

The discussions were part of a webinar on 'Eradicating Tuberculosis-The Clock is Ticking' on Tuesday, organised as part of



The Hindu Wellness Series presented by Macleods.

S.K. Katiyar, past president, Indian College of Chest Physicians and Indian Chest Society said there was a rise in new cases of TB every year.

He underlined the need for new interventions like vaccines and new drugs would help reduce burden of TB. Nearly 55% of the TB cases emerge due to malnutrition, which also hampers response to drugs, he said.

Shilpa Joshi, vice-president, Indian Dietetic Association, elaborated on the need to follow balanced nutritious diet post treatment.

Notify health policy on rare diseases: HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday asked the Centre to finalise and notify the National Health Policy for Rare Diseases by March 31.

Justice Prathiba M Singh also directed the government to set up a National Consortium for Research, Development and Therapeutics (NCRDT) for treatment of such diseases..

Acting on petitions concerning children suffering from rare diseases, Justice Singh asked the government to consider increasing the budget for rare diseases for the coming financial year. It said the NCRDT should consist of the Department of Biotechnology, the Indian Council of Medical Research, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Drugs Controller General of India and related ministries and departments.

Regal with a touch of SPORTINESS

Mercedes' E-Class is as enjoyable from behind the wheel, as it is from the back seat, with little to complain about the overall package

NIKHIL BHATIA

Mercedes has rolled out the facelift for its fifth-gen E-Class in India, with the E-Class in its long-wheelbase avatar and the options of four-cylinder petrol (E 200) and diesel engines (E 220d), and a six-cylinder diesel (E 350d). So, what is it like?

The E-Class' visual makeover is no mere nip and tuck job. Mercedes has grafted in a new grille, headlights and slimmer taillights to align styling with the very latest models, and the visual effect is impressive. The 5m-plus E-Class looks as regal as ever but there is a hint of sportiness too now. Offered exclusively in a new AMG Line trim, the E 350d is identifiable by its bolder grille, sportier bumpers and attractive 18-inch AMG rims.

The high-quality E-Class cabin continues to beautifully blend old-world warmth with new-age tech, with surfaces finished in open pore wood and digital screens sitting in visual harmony.

MERCEDES-BENZ E 350D SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	6 cyl, 2925cc, diesel
MAX POWER	286hp at 3400-4600rpm
MAX TORQUE	600Nm at 1200-3200
GEARBOX	9-speed automatic
LENGTH (MM)	5075mm
WIDTH (MM)	1860mm
HEIGHT (MM)	1495mm
WHEELBASE (MM)	3079mm

Among the updates inside is the new three-spoke steering wheel with upgraded touch panels to operate the central infotainment screen and digital dials. The touch sensitivity is improved over the older E's steering buttons, but some controls still seem a bit fiddly.

The E 350d is unique for its Cream and Tropez Blue interior theme, with the upper dash and door pads finished in the same blue shade. While it looks distinctive, it might not be to everyone's taste, and may not work well with some exterior colours.

If there is an area that the E-Class continues to ace, it is comfort. The front seats are excellent, though it is the rear seat that will interest most buyers. There is tremendous legroom, thanks to the long wheelbase. The seat back is reclinable by 37 degrees and the pillow-like head restraints add to the comfort factor. While there is space for a middle passenger, the rear seat is best experienced by two occupants, with the massive centre armrest folded down.

Curiously, there is only one rear cupholder positioned on the centre console. Another downer is the efficacy of the air-con system at the back, which does not cool the cabin quickly enough. However, you do get the option of pre-cooling your car in advance using the Mercedes app on your phone. The updated tablet in the rear armrest also lets you operate certain functions of the touchscreen up front.

There is plenty by way of kit too, but what is missing is powered operation for the boot lid, and while the spare wheel sits below the boot floor, the luggage space itself is quite limited.

As mentioned, there are three engines on offer, though with us here is the six-cylinder E 350d diesel. The mill is the same in-line six that also powers the S-Class, GLE and GLS, but this is the first time one can experience it on the E-Class.

The unit develops 286hp and 600Nm of max torque, but it is the engine's refinement that gets you first. It is very quiet at idle and even on the go, the slightly grainy sound from the engine bay is unobtrusive. Performance is expectedly brisk, with easy access to power all through the rev. Playing its supporting role incredibly well is the 9-speed automatic gearbox that works with honeydew smoothness.

The steering is well-weighted and precise, and for a car so large, the Merc is quite easy to drive. The 350d's air suspension is absorbent and cushy at town speeds in Comfort mode, but up the pace and it feels floaty. Sport is your go-to suspension setting for faster journeys. It arrests unnecessary up and down movements and generally makes the big E feel more tied down.

Also to be kept in mind is that the air-suspension-equipped E 350d is also prone to touching its belly on large speed breakers, so it is prudent to raise the suspension height via a button on the centre console in advance.

When it comes to buying the updated luxury sedan, typical E-Class buyers who are buying one for the rear-seat experience will be satisfied with the E 200 (₹ 63.6-67.2 lakh, ex-showroom) or the E 220d (₹ 64.8-68.3 lakh).

This range-topping E 350d (₹₹ 80.9 lakh) is a stretch, but the added outlay also gets you a properly strong engine and the enhanced comfort of air suspension. This is a car that is as enjoyable from behind the wheel, as it is at the back seat. The new look is also impactful and there is simply little to complain about the rest of the package.

The E-Class has long been the default choice for large luxury sedan buyers in India. With the latest updates, the proposition has gotten stronger still.

Visual Harmony The E Class is where old-world warmth meets new-age tech
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

AUTO SNIPPETS

Bajaj Chetak e-scooter prices increased

Bajaj first launched its Chetak electric scooter in two variants — Urbane and Premium — in 2020. Both variants have now received a price hike with the Urbane now costing ₹ 1.15 lakh while the Premium variant costs ₹ 1.20 lakh.
Powering it is a 3.8kW/4.1kW (continuous/peak power) electric motor, which sends power to the rear wheel via an automated transmission. This motor derives power from a lithium-ion battery pack that claims to deliver a real-world range of 95km in Eco Mode and 85km in Sport mode. Bajaj is also offering a warranty of three years/50,000km on the IP67-rated battery. The charge time on the Chetak is a claimed 5 hours for 100% and 1 hour for 25%.
(All prices, ex-showroom, Delhi.)

Jeep Wrangler launched at ₹ 53.90 lakh

Jeep has launched the locally assembled Wrangler off-roader in India, with prices ranging from ₹ 53.9-57.9 lakh (ex-showroom, India). It is offered in the same Unlimited and Rubicon trims as before, along with a new 80th Anniversary Edition. The Wrangler has a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder, turbo-petrol engine that is good for 268hp and 400Nm of torque. An 8-speed torque converter automatic gearbox is available as standard. Additionally, the Wrangler gets the 'Selec-Trac' full-time 4WD system. The Rubicon takes it a step further with the company's 'Rock-Trac' full-time 4WD system. Most creature comforts remain common across the model range.

C5 Aircross India launch on April 7

Citroen's first model for India, the C5 Aircross, will be launched on April 7, 2021. Bookings are currently open and all customers booking before April 6 will avail a complimentary 5 year/50,000km maintenance package. The C5 Aircross will be available in two variants — Feel and Shine — with both offering a fair bit of kit. Powering the C5 Aircross will be a sole 2.0-litre diesel engine developing a meaty 177hp and 400Nm of torque. The unit will be paired with an 8-speed automatic gearbox as standard. Citroen is expected to price the C5 Aircross around the ₹ 30 lakh mark (ex-showroom).

Q&A WITH HORMAZD

Diesel or petrol?

I am planning to buy the new 2021 Jeep Compass. Can you please help me choose between the diesel and petrol variants? I have read and seen many reviews of the Jeep compass petrol-automatic and my takeaway is that the engine is a bit underpowered, has a turbo lag below 2,500rpm, the gearbox is sluggish, and the fuel economy is poor (but that is not high on my agenda).
I want an automatic variant, that can be used as a daily driver in the city and for occasional long drives, with an average of 6,000-8,000 km per year. It should have a very good drive experience and with a potential for good resale value after 4-5 years.
Amarinder Bhandari, Gurgaon

● The new Compass is a huge improvement over the older one, but comes at a cost. However, you will find your money buys you the most capable SUV in its class, which is now kitted with all the features that customers want.

Your observations on the petrol engine are correct and for those reasons our choice between the petrol and diesel is the latter, purely because it is a stronger engine and offers a level of performance that is wanting in the petrol version.

Head over heart

I am planning to buy a Range Rover Sport SE 3.0 diesel or a Mercedes- Benz GLE 400d. I want to know what their pros and cons are, and which one is better in terms of performance, driving, comfort, service and resale value.
Fahad, Tirunelveli

● The Range Rover Sport diesel is the more desirable of the two. It is bigger, has a good balance between ride and handling and is much better off-road. The interiors too are quite classy and rich. The GLE 400d has the nicer engine and is smoother and stronger than the Range Rover's diesel. Also, the GLE is easier to get in and out of and is not as high as the Range Rover. In the end, it's a question of head versus heart. The GLE is a better investment as Mercs have better resale and a better sales and service network, too, but the Range Rover with its fabulous road presence is the one that appeals to the heart.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of *Autocar India*. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in

The universal appeal of two wheels

Tweaked ergonomics, decent amounts of grip and a sporty profile, add to the new Honda CB350RS' charm

RISHABH BHASKAR

The new Honda CB350RS is based on the popular, retro-styled H'ness CB350. However, it takes a slightly new approach towards design and ergonomics. Is it worth the stretch?

The design
The similarities with the H'ness CB350 is evident in the shape of the fuel tank and LED headlamp. The dual-tone, black and yellow paintwork is attractive, while the headlamp uses a matt black ring instead of chrome and is flanked by new LED turn indicators.

The side profile also reveals the motorcycle's predominantly black theme, with only a little chrome peppered on the exhaust heat shield, handlebar and mirrors. Besides that, the tail section has been redesigned for a compact, yet modern look.

Honda has integrated a rectangular LED tail-lamp and grab rail under the seat, while the small plastic fender puts up the new 17-inch wheel shod with a 150-section MRF Kurve tyre on full display.

Ergonomics
Besides the design, the ergonomics have been tweaked for a sportier riding position by moving the foot pegs behind by 112mm and placing them higher by 12mm. The handlebar is a smidgen wide and placed 10mm higher and 41mm farther than the one on the H'ness. This, along with the scooped, yet firm and supportive seat, results in a riding position that is sporty, yet very comfortable.

Engine and performance
This 348.36cc, long-stroke single is in the same state of tune, producing 21.1hp peak power and 30Nm of peak torque; Honda has not tinkered with the internal gearing or the final drive ratio.

Hence, it comes as no surprise that the performance is nearly the same, despite the RS weighing 2kgs less than the H'ness. The fuel economy is marginally better, with the RS managing to squeeze about 1.5kpl more in the city or on the highway.

The slick 5-speed gearbox, along with the slip and assist clutch, makes light work of keeping the engine in the power-band, while the raspy exhaust note elevates the riding experience. It still struggles to climb up an incline in the top gear, though.

Ride and handling
Underneath the bodywork, the Honda CB350RS has the same half-duplex cradle frame as the H'ness; the suspension units and steering rake are identical as well. On the road, these tyres offer decent amounts of grip, even when the motorcycle is leaned into a corner, while the handling is neutral and predictable. Considering the 19-inch front wheel and the tyre pattern, you can ride the motorcycle down a trail as well, and the additional 2mm of ground clearance on the RS makes it fit to take on bad roads.

Conclusion
The Honda CB350RS comes across as a very well-rounded package. Although styling has always been a personal choice, the RS' design will find universal appeal. This, coupled with the involved riding experience, makes the motorcycle worth considering. If you are considering a 350cc Honda in today's time, the CB350RS is the one to buy.

HONDA CB350RS SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE	348.36cc, single-cylinder, air-cooled
MAX POWER (hp @ rpm)	21.1hp at 5500rpm
MAX TORQUE (nm @ rpm)	30Nm at 3000rpm
GEARBOX	5-speed
KERB WEIGHT	179kg
SEAT HEIGHT	800mm
FRONT BRAKE SIZE (MM)	310mm disc
REAR BRAKE SIZE (MM)	240mm disc
TYRES (F/R)	100/90-19 / 150/70-17
WHEEL SIZE (F/R)	19-inches / 17-inhes

Easy on the eye The Honda CB350RS takes a new approach to design and ergonomics
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Nobody puts baby in a corner

With toddlers in tow, these parents are changing diapers and scaling mountains as they backpack across cities between reading bedtime stories and sleeping in tents

SWETA AKUNDI

As winter draws to an end and the sun stays out a bit longer every day in the Norwegian sky, Mina Floriana and Alexander Read are going on an expedition across the country. For 24 days and 350 kilometres, the duo will be trekking and camping, far away from people. And if luck favours them, chance upon magical trolls. Mina has slept over 300 nights in tents, and she is all of five.

"I have been with Nature since I was a small boy. So when Mina was born in 2015 it was as natural as breathing to continue our outdoors life – known as *friluftsliv* here in Norway. Our first long hike in the mountains was when she was one-and-a-half years old. We stayed there in the mountains for a month or so in our tent," says Alexander, from Oslo.

Introducing their toddlers to the outdoors at a young age – as soon as they take their first steps – is a way of life for parents like Alexander. Camping in harsh conditions, putting up at youth hostels and getting lost in unfamiliar cities, and scaling mountains; all help build character, and according to these parents, no age is too soon to begin.

Deenaz Raisinghani clearly remembers when her daughter Arianna started walking for the first time, chasing pigeons at the Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul, where they were backpacking. Now six, Arianna has been backpacking since she was less than a year old – the first country she camped across was Bhutan, when she was seven months old.

"It's an idea that was conceived when I was pregnant with her. I had never travelled across Europe, so I wanted to go there and take my baby along," says Pune-based Deenaz.

While Alexander and Mina prefer to 'troll-hunt' in solitude, in far-removed places of Norway, Deenaz on her trips depended on the kindness of strangers: the locals, fellow hostellers from different countries, and host families.

"Arianna befriended a Turkish youth hostel employee named Hawa at Pathpoint hostel in Cologne, Germany. He was delighted to have a baby at the hostel, so he kept playing hide and seek with her. She also made good friends with a local Brazilian family whose home we stayed at in Barcelona and met their kids and pet dogs too," says Deenaz.

Trek diaries (Clockwise frrom top left) Mina with her family in Norway; Alexander changing his daughter's diapers atop a mountain; Arianna in Jaipur; Poonguzhali with her daughter Sangamithra at their farm; Deenaz and Arianna

▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Often, she was offered help by strangers on public transport. "They would just see a mom alone with her baby on a train or bus and would offer to help with the pram or the luggage while getting off from the transport," she adds.

Lessons in kindness

Deenaz believes this has made Arianna less judgemental, more empathetic and open to new experiences.

In Coimbatore, Senbaga Poonguzhali shares this sentiment. Poonguzhali has been trekking with her daughter Sangamithra, since she was four, and is amazed at how much she has accepted the wilderness and gotten over her fear of bugs.

"The first time we visited Mulli forest near Baralikadu, she did not want to walk there because she thought it was not a clean place. If we saw a grasshopper nearby, that's it, the activity had to be packed up and we had to leave," says Poonguzhali.

But as they began trekking outdoors more and more, Sangamithra's connection with the earth and soil strengthened.

"Around two years ago, when she was five, we trekked the Kolli hills. As it is, it was a steep climb for her, and it was also raining hard. But still, she enjoyed the trek so much. She still recalls it every now and then," she says.

Poonguzhali homeschools Sangamithra, and they identify trees, based on their leaves (neem, *kondrai*, jacaranda), and birds while on treks. "I myself had never seen an owl all my life until I went on a trek with her," she says.

With the added responsibility of carrying a toddler on treks, 'YOLO' decision making does not cut it.

"You have to figure out the best forms of transportation and be ready to walk around extensively while wearing the baby or carrying them in the pram," says Deenaz. "In Arianna's initial years, changing and feeding her at intervals would be an issue, but everything worked itself out. The more trips we took, the more we got closer as mum and daughter. Now she is my true companion."

What kids can teach us

As a former soldier and officer from the Costal Ranger Commando, Alexander too is very serious about being well prepared for risk management on expeditions with Mina. "The mountains in Norway can dip to low temperatures and one has to take the weather seriously," he says.

Their longest stay out was for 57 days in their tent – a winter expedition on the Nordryggen mountain ridge covering 500 kilometres on pulls and skis: "We also talk about being away from her mother and sister. We talk about the feeling of missing someone and at the same time how we can love being where we are and doing what we are doing."

Because ultimately, their main goal is to be able to get to know one another better.

"I think that I have become a better father and person because of our adventures," says Alexander. "Mina has opened up a previously unknown door into a magical world where trolls are as real as you and me."

"Not just so, she has fundamentally changed how I value a hike and an expedition all together," he continues.

"Previously, the destination was an important part of the adventure. But now, the value lies in the here and now, in the down-to-earth meetings with Nature and ourselves. Small narratives that embeds magic, trolls, ups and downs and everything in between. My job is to make sure that the planning is taken care of, and then use as much energy as possible to lean into Mina and her world. That is when the *turmagi* (hiking/adventure-magic) starts to happen."

In the spotlight

How Arjun Mathur, in demand after the success of *Made in Heaven*, is gearing up for his films and career ahead

PRADEEP KUMAR

It was not overnight stardom, but Arjun Mathur did make heads turn playing Karan Mehra in the Amazon Prime web series *Made in Heaven*The actor says he is now busy with "back-to-back projects until August" of this year. The list includes a second season of *Made in Heaven*. "The quality of offers [coming my way] has improved. There are filmmakers who now 'want' to work with me. I'm aware that I am entering a new phase in my career, and it is exciting," he says, over a phone call from Mumbai. Up next for Arjun is the ZEE5 film starring Manoj Bajpayee, *Silence... Can You Hear It?* A thriller written and directed by Aban Bharucha Deohans, Arjun plays Ravi Khanna, who he describes as "a suave politician with shades of grey". Bajpayee is the cop investigating the death of a young woman. Edited excerpts:

I'm an instinctive actor. I don't over prepare. I depend a lot on conversations I have with my director and the script reading sessions with co-actors

ARJUN MATHUR

Tell us about playing a politician in *Silence... Can You Hear It?*

● Every thriller will have a character like Ravi Khanna, someone whom you can't tell if he is lying or speaking the truth, or if he is operating with an agenda. For me, it is different from the characters I have played before. I have this image of playing 'clean, good boy' roles. Ravi Khanna turns that notion on its head.

Working with Manoj Bajpayee must have been rewarding?

● I have been a fan of Manoj since *Satya*. It was interesting to go toe-to-toe with an actor of his stature and skill. It is rare to see someone of such immense standing be so down-to-earth and welcoming. He takes the responsibility of creating a comfort level with his co-actors and the crew.

Was the experience of working with big stars different post the success of *Made in Heaven*?

● The experiences that weren't too enjoyable were in big star vehicles where I was used as an embellishment. I immediately shifted focus and started working in indie projects that gave me the opportunity to work with skilled actors, and not those with over-inflated egos. That said, I have no regrets. There is a learning in every experience.

Is the quality of content better in streaming than in mainstream cinema?

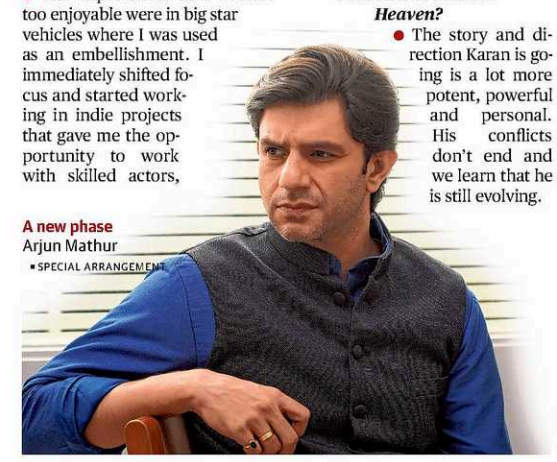
● Definitely. The quality is far better than anything mainstream cinema is offering at this point. That is because on these platforms, we are competing for eye balls with cutting-edge content from the world over. That forces everybody to pull up their socks. A lot of our mainstream cinema still caters to the lowest common denominator, for lack of a better word.

How do you prep for roles?

● I'm an instinctive actor. I don't over prepare. Say, if I have to physically change myself or alter my vocal quality, things that will need training, I would do that, but otherwise, I am someone who depends a lot on the conversations I have with my director and the script reading sessions with co-actors. My main preparation is the first reactions I have to the script and characters.

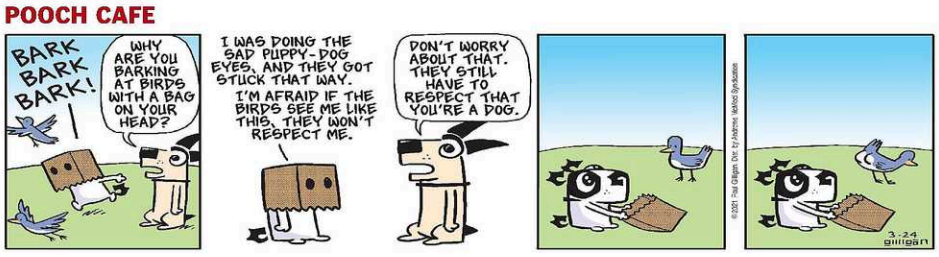
What can we expect from Season 2 of *Made in Heaven*?

● The story and direction Karan is going is a lot more potent, powerful and personal. His conflicts don't end and we learn that he is still evolving.



A new phase
Arjun Mathur
▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

PEANUTS

TIGER

CALVIN AND HOBBES

Myanmar junta defends crackdown

Military regime calls anti-coup protesters 'insurgents holding weapons' and vows to end 'anarchy'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Myanmar's junta on Tuesday defended its seven-week crackdown that has left more than 260 democracy protesters dead, insisting it would not tolerate "anarchy".

The junta has unleashed deadly violence as it struggles to quell nationwide protests against the February 1 ousting of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a news conference in the capital Naypyidaw, junta spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun put the death toll lower at 164.

"I am sad because these violent terrorist people who died are our nationals," he said.

The streets of towns and cities across the country have seen chaotic scenes for weeks as security forces clash with protesters demanding the restoration of democracy and the release of Ms. Suu Kyi.

Warning signal: Two motorcycle-borne men alerting protesters of the arrival of security forces in Mandalay. ▪AP

The authorities have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to disperse protests, prompting a senior UN rights expert to warn they may be committing "crimes against humanity".

But despite widespread international condemnation, the junta spokesman defended the response, saying that the security forces were dealing with "insurgents holding weapons" and five police and four soldiers had been killed.

"We have to crack down on the anarchy. Which countries in the world accept anarchy?" he said.

Despite the bloodshed, protesters took to the streets again on Tuesday, staging demonstrations in Yangon.

Media targeted

As well as breaking up protests, the military has sought to stem the flow of news about the crackdown, banning several local media outlets and arresting dozens of journalists.

Mobile data networks remains suspended.

Ms. Suu Kyi, not seen in public since being detained on February 1, is facing several criminal charges as well as allegations of accepting illegal payments of gold and cash.

Sean Turnell, an Australian adviser to the 75-year-old Nobel laureate, is being investigated under immigration and state secrets laws, the junta spokesman announced on Tuesday.

International pressure is building on the regime, with the EU on Monday imposing sanctions on junta chief General Min Aung Hlaing and 10 other senior officials. The U.S. – which has already blacklisted the top junta leaders – sanctioned Myanmar's police chief and an army special operations commander, saying they were responsible for using lethal force against demonstrators.

China, Russia propose new security dialogue platform

Foreign Ministers hit out the U.S. for forming 'small circles'

ANANTH KRISHNAN

China and Russia have proposed setting up a new "regional security dialogue platform" to address security concerns of countries in the region, as their Foreign Ministers hit out at the United States for "forming small circles to seek bloc confrontation".

The proposal came following a meeting between Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in the southern Chinese city of Guilin, and days after the March 19 U.S.-China summit in Alaska and the March 12 leaders' summit of the Quad (India, Australia, Japan and the U.S.), grouping that both Beijing and Moscow have viewed warily.

Both sides said in a joint press release that they "also proposed the establishment of a regional security dialogue platform to converge a new consensus on resolving the security concerns of countries in the region". China and Russia are already part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) security grouping, which includes India.

The press release said "the international community believes that the United States should reflect on the damage it has done to global peace and development in recent years, halt unilateral bullying, stop meddling in other countries' domestic affairs, and stop forming small circles to seek bloc confrontation."

Sergei Lavrov, left, and Wang Yi exchanging documents in Guilin. ▪AFP

True multilateralism

China and Russia have rejected U.S. calls for "a rules-based order" – a call endorsed by the Quad summit – and instead said "all countries should follow the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations" and "uphold true multilateralism, make international relations more democratic, and accept and promote peaceful coexistence and common development of countries with different social systems and development paths".

The two-day dialogue covered a range of issues, including Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear issue, climate change and "the Asia-Pacific situation", the press release said. On the Myanmar coup, both sides "voiced support for all parties in Myanmar to seek a political solution to the current crisis within the Constitution and legal framework, avoid further conflict and bloodshed, prevent external forces from taking advantage of the crisis for their own gains, and continue to advance the democratic transition".

In a separate joint statement following the conclusion of the two-day talks, both sides called for a summit of the UN Security Council's five permanent members to be held. "At a time of increasing global political turbulence, a summit of the permanent members of the UN Security Council is particularly necessary to establish direct dialogue about ways to resolve humankind's common problems in the interests of maintaining global stability," Reuters quoted the joint statement, published on the Russian Foreign Ministry's website, as saying.

The statement also hit out at attempts by the West to interfere in both countries' internal affairs. Both Ministers, in remarks to the press, criticised the U.S. and the EU for their recent sanctions on Russia and China.

15 killed in huge Rohingya camp blaze in Bangladesh

Over 550 people injured, 400 unaccounted for, says UN

REUTERS
COX'S BAZAR

At least 15 people have been killed in a massive fire that ripped through a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh, while at least 400 remain missing, the UN refugee agency said on Tuesday.

"It is massive, it is devastating," said UNHCR's Johannes Van der Klaauw, who joined a Geneva briefing virtually from Dhaka, Bangladesh. "We still have 400 people unaccounted for, maybe somewhere in the rubble," he said.

He said the UNHCR had reports of more than 550 people injured and about 45,000 displaced.

Thousands are homeless

Bangladeshi officials are investigating the cause of the blaze even as officials, aid workers and families sift through thousands of shanties as people scrambled to save their meagre possessions.

Grief-stricken: People sifting through the rubble for their belongings after a fire at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. ▪AFP

"Everything has gone. Thousands are without homes," Aman Ullah, a Rohingya refugee from the Balukhali camp, told Reuters. "The fire was brought under control after six hours but some parts of the camp could be seen smoking all night long."

Police have so far confirmed seven deaths.

10 killed in shooting at Colorado supermarket

Biden calls for tighter gun control

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BOULDER

A shooting at a crowded Colorado supermarket that killed 10 people, including the first police officer to arrive, sent terrorised shoppers and workers scrambling for safety and stunned a State that has grieved several mass killings. President Joe Biden called for a ban on assault weapons and tighter gun control measures.

Hundreds of police officers from throughout the Denver metropolitan area responded to the Monday afternoon attack, converging on a King Soopers supermarket in southern Boulder. SWAT officers carrying ballistic shields slowly approached the store as others quickly escorted frightened people away from the building, some of its windows shattered. Customers and employees fled through a back loading dock to safety. Others took refuge in nearby shops.

One suspect was in custody, a tearful Boulder Police Chief Maris Herold said late on Monday. Authorities didn't identify the suspect, though Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty said the suspect was the only person injured and was receiving medical care. Ms. Herold identified the slain officer as Eric Talley, aged 51.

In brief remarks responding to the shooting, Mr. Biden urged Congress to move quickly to close the loopholes in the background check system and also to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines – an effort that would be even more difficult to achieve politically.

According to a police affidavit, the Colorado shooter had purchased an assault rifle six days ago.

Rejecting U.S. peace plan, Ghani to propose election in 6 months

REUTERS
KABUL

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani will propose a new presidential election within six months, under a peace plan he will put forward as a counter-offer to a U.S. proposal that he rejects, two officials told Reuters.

Mr. Ghani will unveil his proposal at a gathering in Turkey next month, signalling his refusal to accept the U.S.'s plan for his elected government to be replaced by an interim administration, the officials said.

The U.S. agreed last year to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by May 1.

Mr. Ghani is opposed to any solution that requires his government to step aside for unelected successors.

"The counter-proposal ... would be to call for early presidential elections if the Taliban agree on a ceasefire," an official said.

14 who plotted to kill Hasina to face gallows

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DHAKA

Fourteen jihadists were sentenced to death in Bangladesh on Tuesday for attempting to assassinate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina more than two decades ago, a prosecutor said.

The 2000 bomb plot was one of several attempts on Hasina's life in a wave of violence by Islamic extremists who were angry at her secular stance at the time.

Since then, a major crackdown against homegrown Islamist groups has seen more than 100 extremists killed in raids by police and more than 1,000 suspected militants arrested.

A fast-track court handed down death sentences to all 14 accused – five of them are absconding.

Israel voters take fourth shot at deciding Netanyahu's fate

His hopes for win rest on vaccine rollout, renewed Arab ties

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JERUSALEM

Israelis were voting on Tuesday in their fourth election in less than two years, with the nation deeply split on whether veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should stay in power.

Mr. Netanyahu, 71, is Israel's longest-serving premier but his inability to unite a stable governing majority behind him has mired the country in political gridlock.

He hopes to be rewarded by voters for establishing ties with a series of Arab countries, and for a COVID-19 vaccination campaign that has inoculated half of Israel's roughly nine million people.

Election workers in full protective gear staffed special polling stations for voters in quarantine and those with the coronavirus – but most citizens wore only face masks thanks to the world-leading inoculation effort.

Benjamin Netanyahu

Corruption charges

While Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party appears set to win the most seats in the 120-seat Knesset, the premier will need coalition partners to secure a majority.

That means Israel is looking at three possible outcomes: another coalition under Mr. Netanyahu, who has been in power for 12 straight years, an ideologically divided government united only by its opposition to him, or a looming fifth election.

He is on trial over corruption charges – allegations he denies, but which have helped fuel a protest movement with weekly rallies outside his Jerusalem residence.

To form a government, Mr. Netanyahu would have to strike deals with small factions that control a handful of seats, possibly including Religious Zionism, a new extremist, far-right alliance.

Sri Lanka secures $1.5 bn Chinese loan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka and China have signed a $1.5 billion currency swap deal, the island nation's central bank said on Tuesday, as it struggles with a major foreign exchange crisis and debt repayments.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka said the three-year swap arrangement for 10 billion yuan with the People's Bank of China was "with a view to promoting bilateral trade and direct investment for economic development of the two countries".

Chinese influence in the South Asian nation has been growing in recent years, through loans and projects under its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, raising concerns among regional powers and Western nations.

DELHI JAL BOARD GOVT OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (EAST) I
M 16 MAYUR VIHAR PKT E PHASE II NEW DELHI 110091

Stop Corona: 1. Wash Your Hands 2. Wear Mask 3. Maintain Social Distance

PRESS NOTICE TENDER
NIT NO.44/ East-I/ (2020-21)

Sl No.	Name of Work	Estimated Contract Value (ECV)/ Amount put to tender	Tender Fees	Date of Release of Corrigendum in E-Procurement Solution & Tender ID No.	Last Date/ Time of receipt of tender E-Procurement Solution
01	Replacement of old AC/CI rusted distribution water line in D-Block Pandav Nagar Complex Gali No. 5,6,7 & 8 and connecting streets in AC-58 in East-I	47,15,331.00	500.00	19.03.2021 2021_DJB_20 1920_1	03.04.2021 At 03:15 PM

Further details in this regard can be seen at https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V 546/2020-21

Pratap Singh
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (EAST)-I

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Executive Engineer, Bengaluru South Division, Amruthnagara, Konankunte Main Road, Soudamini Layout, Bengaluru - 62

No.: BBMP/EE/BSD/TEND/14/2020-21 Date: 22.03.2021

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER
(Only through e-Procurement) - Single & Two Cover Tender
(Standard Tender Document - KW1, KW2, KW3 & KW4)

The Executive Engineer (Bengaluru South Division), BBMP, Bengaluru-62 invites tenders from eligible Contractors registered in Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / National Highway or any State Government Organizations for the Construction of works detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approximate value of work (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	De-Silting of Drains in **Ward No. 184,** Uttarahalli. **(2nd Call), (Reserved for SC)**	25.00
2	Construction of Yoga Hall in CA Site BTM Residency Akshya Nagar in **Ward No. 192,** Begur. **(3rd Call), (Reserved for Others)**	50.00
3	Repairs and Development of roads and drains at Gottigere in **Ward No. 194. (2nd Call), (Reserved for Others)**	75.00
4	Construction of Public Toilets at Gottigere Park in **Ward No. 194. (2nd Call), (Reserved for Others)**	60.00
5	Maintenance of Gym Equipments and Children Play Equipments in Ward Jurisdiction in **Ward No. 184,** Uttarahalli. **(Reserved for Others)**	20.00
6	Providing Street Lights and Maintenance in **Ward No. 192. (Reserved for Others)**	70.00
7	Improvements of Play Ground and Construction of Auditorium at Uttrahalli **Ward No. 184. (Reserved for Others)**	100.00
8	Additional Development work including Electrification indoor Stadium at Bangalore South Constituency Uttarahalli in **Ward No. 184. (Reserved for Others)**	100.00
9	Providing Retaining wall and Size stone masonry for compound at BSK 5th Stage park in **Ward No. 184,** Uttarahalli. **(Reserved for Others)**	100.00
10	Construction of Indoor Stadium at Bangalore South Constituency Uttarahalli in **Ward No. 184. (Reserved for Others)**	200.00

Note: As per the Government of Karnataka Order No.: ಆಇ675, ವೆಚ್ಚ–12/2020, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ದಿನಾಂಕ: 22.12.2020 and Hon'ble Commissioner, BBMP Office Order No.: ಆಯುಕ್ತರು/ಬಿಆರ್/ಇ–9251/2020–21, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 30.01.2021, exemption is given to EMD. (if EMD Declaration Form is submitted)

Item No. 1, 2 & 5 is Single Cover Tender System and Item No. 3, 4, 6 to 10 Two Cover Tender System.

Calendar of Events: (1) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before **4:00 p.m.** on **15.04.2021** and the opening of tenders will be as per the e-procurement portal guidelines. **(2)** Date of Technical bid opening of tenders is on **16.04.2021** by **4:30 p.m.** **(3)** Financial bid opening will be done after Technical bid approval. Further details may be obtained from the above office, during office hours or website **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Bengaluru South Division, BBMP

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.
Wear Mask | 6 Feet Follow Physical Distancing | Maintain Hand Hygiene

Xi, Kim exchange messages to reaffirm China-N. Korea alliance

Xi vows to contribute to stability in Korean Peninsula

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL

The leaders of China and North Korea are reaffirming their traditional alliance following contentious talks between top diplomats from Washington and Beijing and diplomatic isolation and economic problems in the North that have left it ever-more dependent on the Chinese.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said on Tuesday that leader Kim Jong-un called for stronger "unity and cooperation" with China in the face of challenges posed by "hostile forces" while exchanging messages with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

According to KCNA and China's Xinhua news agency, Mr. Xi in his own message to Mr. Kim described bilateral relations as a "valuable asset" to both countries and vowed to make unspecified contributions to the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

KCNA said Mr. Xi also expressed a commitment to "provide the peoples of the two countries with better life." Some analysts saw this as an indication that China would soon provide North Korea with badly needed food, fertilizer and other aid.

The exchange came as the Biden administration steps up diplomatic efforts to strengthen cooperation with Asian allies South Korea and Japan to deal with the North Korean nuclear threat and China's growing regional influence.

Government of Odisha
Sports & Youth Services Department
C-1, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751012
SYS-CSS-CSSP-0002-2021-3261 /, Dated March 23, 2021

Short Advertisement

Sports & Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha invites separate bids in sealed envelopes from eligible firms for procurement of following sports science equipment for setting up of Sports Science Centre at the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE) at Kalinga Stadium, Bhubaneswar in respect of the following RFPs.

Sl. No.	RFP No and date	Brief description of equipment
1	SYS - 3178 dt.22.3.21	1. Bio-Mechanical Analysis and 3D Motion Capture System and 2. Force plates/ platforms for neuro-muscular performance and limb assessment
2	SYS - 3179 dt.22.3.21	1. Upper body arm Ergometer without stand 2. Arm Ergometer rehab trainer without stand 3. Anaerobic lower body Wingate testing cycle Ergometer, 4. Cycle Ergometer for VO2 testing along with Bluetooth chest heart rate band
3	SYS - 3180 dt.22.3.21	Wearable spirometry, cardio pulmonary/ metabolic test equipment / system
4	SYS - 3181 dt.22.3.21	Motorised treadmill
5	SYS - 3182 dt.22.3.21	1. Lactate testing device and 2. Test strips (100 nos)

Detailed specification of equipment, terms and conditions and other details are available at https://department.sportsodisha.gov.in/. The last date for submission of proposals with all documents by registered/ speed post addressed to ' Deputy Secretary to Government, Sports & Youth Services Department, C-1, Nayapalli, Odisha, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751012 ' is 4 PM, April 13, 2021.

TT-15 :
Deputy Secretary to Government
OIPR-29001/11/0018/2021

MARKET WATCH

	23-03-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	50,051	0.56
US Dollar	72.43	-0.08
Gold	44,374	0.24
Brent oil	62.02	-3.71

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	738.55	16.65
Asian Paints	2410.30	-15.40
Axis Bank	730.55	14.35
Bajaj Auto	3678.35	13.60
Bajaj Finserv	9405.20	-0.65
Bajaj Finance	5378.80	-10.55
Bharti Airtel	529.25	1.25
BPCL	436.50	-2.85
Britannia Ind	3568.40	4.00
Cipla	776.10	3.25
Coal India	135.25	-0.40
Divis Lab	3495.95	90.00
Dr Reddys Lab	4372.25	18.30
Eicher Motors	2702.75	25.90
GAIL (India)	134.40	-2.40
Grasim Ind	1411.25	-2.65
HCL Tech	980.85	2.10
HDFC	2509.90	-21.95
HDFC Bank	1500.15	31.00
HDFC Life	683.55	3.70
Hero MotoCorp	3067.45	-28.40
Hindalco	331.70	-8.05
Hind Unilever	2337.30	-15.90
ICICI Bank	586.40	12.95
IndusInd Bank	990.05	21.90
Infosys	1371.55	0.75
Indian OilCorp	96.75	-2.40
ITC	222.20	-3.80
JSW Steel	441.80	-3.50
Kotak Bank	1812.65	-10.00
L&T	1404.35	4.30
M&M	844.65	-8.40
Maruti Suzuki	7186.25	85.00
Nestle India Ltd.	16681.35	93.30
NTPC	108.65	-1.20
ONGC	107.15	-2.45
PowerGrid Corp	219.00	-4.55
Reliance Ind	2087.50	25.10
SBI Life	898.90	-1.30
State Bank	372.70	5.70
Shree Cement	28312.20	1357.70
Sun Pharma	587.85	-3.15
Tata Motors	307.40	4.35
Tata Steel	741.15	-2.35
TCS	3142.60	12.95
Tech Mahindra	1013.85	0.30
Titan	1495.35	35.05
UltraTech Cement	6939.10	211.10
UPL	633.35	5.20
Wipro	415.50	1.05

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on March 23

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.22	72.54
Euro	85.82	86.20
British Pound	99.48	99.92
Japanese Yen (100)	66.55	66.85
Chinese Yuan	11.09	11.14
Swiss Franc	77.67	78.02
Singapore Dollar	53.78	54.03
Canadian Dollar	57.39	57.67
Malaysian Ringitt	17.51	17.60

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF

Nissan to raise prices across models from April

CHENNAI

Nissan Motor India has announced a price increase across all available models of Nissan and Datsun, effective April, following a continuous escalation in auto part prices. "We are now constrained to increase our prices across all Nissan and Datsun models," said Rakesh Srivastava, MD.

Airtel Africa to sell 1,424 towers for $119 million

NEW DELHI

Airtel Africa will sell 1,424 towers in Madagascar and Malawi to Helios Towers for $119 million, Bharti Airtel said in a filing. The two firms have also entered into a pact for tower assets in Chad and Gabon but particulars were not disclosed. The transaction may close in the last quarter of 2021. PTI

Ready to discuss GST on fuel if States want it: FM

Council takes all decisions on the tax, not FinMin, she says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre is ready to consider bringing fuel under the Goods and Services Tax regime if the States bring up the issue at the GST Council, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday, arguing that all decisions related to the indirect tax are driven by the Council and not the Ministry of Finance.

The Minister introduced 127 amendments to the Finance Bill, 2021, which was passed by the Lok Sabha. These included an income tax break for the proposed development finance institution to fund infrastructure and a tweak in the proposed tax provisions for employees' provident fund (EPF) contributions.

Defending the decision to impose an Agriculture Infrastructure Development Fund Cess on several items including fuel in the Budget, Ms. Sitharaman said that the proceeds from the collections would be shared with the States as they were the ones in charge of farm infrastructure such as APMCs and marketing yards.

"The cess may not get devolved to States, but eventually it will be used for improving infrastructure in agriculture and the farm yards and the marketing yards, which are with the State governments and so the funds will have to go the States only," the FM said.

The Minister also sought to assuage States' concerns about a possible reduction in fund allocations owing to the Finance Commission's recommendation to set up a non-lapsable Defence and Internal Security Modernisation Fund. "In principle, we have agreed to it. [But] the fear that it will be imposed on States is not well-founded at all. We have not yet taken a decision on this," she said.

Tank full: Both Centre and States are taxing fuel. The Centre's taxes have to be shared with States, the FM said. • K. PICHUMANI

"In the Finance Bill, a few new proposals are being added of a minor nature," the minister said.

EPF Tax

The government has also introduced an amendment in the Budget proposal to tax income on employee contributions of more than ₹2.5 lakh a year into Provident Fund accounts.

"There is 1% of people who were going up to ₹5 crore contribution also. The ₹2.5 lakh [cap] covers 92%-93% of people," the FM said. "Therefore, I don't think this is going to affect most people for whom tax-free, assured income is provided under the scheme," she added. "Through an amendment, I intend to raise this limit to ₹5 lakh in those cases, and only in those cases where there is no contribution by the employer in the EPF account," Ms. Sitharaman said.

Taxing fuel

Responding to many MPs' concerns about the high taxes on petrol and diesel and suggestions to bring them under the GST regime, Ms. Sitharaman said that both the Centre and States were taxing fuel and the Centre's taxes had to be shared with the States.

"And if there is this concern, rightly, a concern about the fuel taxes. I would honestly think, many of the States would be watching this, and in the next GST Council, if that discussion comes up, I will be glad to have it on the agenda and discuss it. Let the States come and discuss it," the minister said.

"Issues related to GST, being posed to Finance Minister, are not Finance Ministry matters," she said. "They are GST Council matters in which all States are members. It's a collective decision and without their clearance, things can't happen," Ms. Sitharaman pointed out.

Aadhaar intimation

Permanent Account Number (PAN) card holders failing to intimate their Aadhaar numbers to the Income Tax department on, or before a prescribed date, shall be liable to pay an Aadhaar intimation default fee of up to ₹1,000, as per amendments made to the Finance Bill.

States to get ₹30,000-cr. in GST dues

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre will release ₹30,000 crore as GST compensation to States this month, from the compensation cess collections during the year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman informed the Lok Sabha.

The pending compensation dues to States for 2020-21 are expected to be more than ₹77,000 crore, the Minister added.

"The GST Compensation due to States from April 2020 to January 2021 is ₹2,17,844 crore, and back-to-back loans released to States to meet the compensation shortfall are ₹1,10,208 crore," she said,

"So, the compensation likely due to States and UTs in FY2020-21 is ₹77,636 crore," she said.

Bank stocks rally after SC verdict on moratorium

SBI, UltraTech, RIL among top gainers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Equity indices regained their footing on Tuesday, propelled by banking stocks which surged after the Supreme Court declined to extend the the loan moratorium period and said complete waiver of interest was not possible.

Reversing the previous session's losses, the 30-share S&P BSE Sensex rose 280 points, or 0.56%, to 50,051. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 78 points, or 0.53%, to close at 14,815.

UltraTech Cement was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 3%, followed by IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Titan, Axis Bank, SBI and RIL.

"The banking stocks were lifted post Supreme Court's

order against granting interest waiver and extension of moratorium period," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. "While its decision to not charge compound interest added a minor concern in the banking space," Mr. Nair added.

FIIs were net sellers in the capital market as they offloaded shares worth ₹787 crore, as per exchange data.

'Borrowers may get relief of ₹7,500 cr.'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Borrowers who could not avail of the six-month moratorium benefit because of the ₹2-crore loan ceiling may get compound interest relief of ₹7,000-₹7,500 crore following the Supreme Court's verdict on Tuesday, ratings agency ICRA said.

Even as the Supreme Court denied further extension on compound interest, it said the benefit should be for all borrowers without any cap on the loan amount.

"As a result, borrowers excluded earlier may get additional relief of ₹7,000-₹7,500 crore in the form of compound-interest benefit," said Anil Gupta, vice-president - financial sector ratings, ICRA Ltd.

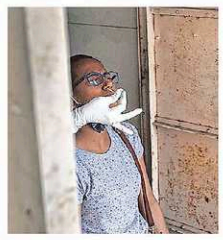
Return to normalcy not till 2022, KPMG cites 45% of CEOs

31% bet on business-as-usual later in 2021, survey shows

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

As several countries grapple with the second wave of COVID-19, almost half of global CEOs surveyed have said they did not expect to see a return to 'normal' until 2022.

As per the findings of the 2021 KPMG CEO Outlook Pulse Survey, 45% of global top honchos executives said 'normal' course of business would not return until sometime in 2022, as opposed to 31% who anticipated this would happen later this year. Of those surveyed, 24% said their business model had been changed forever



by the pandemic. Conducted by KPMG in February and March, the study asked 500 global CEOs about their response to the pandemic and the outlook over a three-year horizon. About 55% of CEOs remained concerned about employees' access to a COVID-19 vaccine, which is influencing their outlook as to when employees will return to the workplace; while 90% were considering asking staff to report for duty after they are vaccinated.

However, 34% of global executives remained worried about misinformation on COVID-19 vaccine safety and the potential this might have on employees choosing not to have it administered.

"Before any major decisions are made, CEOs want to be confident that their workforce is protected against this virus," Bill Thomas, global chairman and CEO, KPMG, said.

Adani to add stake in GPL for ₹3,604 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI/AHMEDABAD

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) said it would acquire the 58.1% stake held by D.V.S. Raju and family in Gangavaram Port Ltd. (GPL) for ₹3,604 crore.

APSEZ had earlier announced the acquisition of Warburg Pincus's 31.5% stake in GPL. With the acquisition, APSEZ would hold 89.6% stake in GPL.

"GPL will benefit from APSEZ's pan-India foot print, logistics integration, customer-centric philosophy, operational efficiencies and strong balance sheet," it said. GPL is debt-free, with a cash balance of more than ₹500 crore.

Forensic auditor to vet Suzlon's books

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Suzlon Energy said market regulator SEBI has appointed a forensic auditor to carry out forensic audit of its financial statements.

"The company is in receipt of a letter from the Securities and Exchange Board of India dated March 22, informing the company that it (SEBI) has appointed the forensic auditor to carry out a forensic audit with respect to the financial statements of the company," it said in a filing.

SEBI said the appointment was in the context of disclosures of financial information and business transactions.

IRDAI extends relief on life covers till Sept. 30

It waives wet sign as COVID cases rise

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Insurance regulator IRDAI has permitted life insurers to continue issuing policy documents in electronic format as well as dispense with the requirement of getting customers' wet signature on the proposal forms till September 30.

The decision, extending validity of the two exemptions beyond March 31, comes amid growing concerns over a rise COVID-19 cases in the country.

"Life Insurers are allowed to obtain the customer's consent through electronic means [in other words] without requiring wet signature on the proposal form till September 30," CGM V. Jayanth Kumar said in a circular.

Another circular said insurers, in the backdrop of the pandemic, have expressed difficulties in printing, handling and dispatch of policy documents.

Taking this into consideration and the need to adopt digital means of doing business in the interests of policyholders and other stakeholders, the validity of the exemption from the requirement to issue policy document, copy of proposal form in physical form is being extended till September 30 with conditions.

'States' market borrowings rise 28%'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Fifteen States on Tuesday raised a total of ₹17,783 crore at the auction of the State government securities or State Development Loans (SDLs), according to a Care Ratings report.

While Gujarat accepted an additional ₹500 crore over the notified amount, Punjab did not accept any amount. "So far in the current fiscal year, 28 States and 2 UTs have cumulatively raised a total of ₹7.78 lakh crore via market borrowings, 28% more than the borrowings in the corresponding period of 2019-20 [₹6.07 lakh crore]," the agency said in the report.

Family member CEOs upstage professional peers, shows study

They oversaw higher returns to shareholders: EMA Partners

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU

While only 82, or 34%, of the top 243 listed Indian companies are run by promoter or family member chief executives, these company leaders outperformed their professional CEO peers in terms of delivering total returns to shareholders over a five-year period ending in March 2020, the findings of a study by London-based executive search firm EMA Partners show.

"This is the first study of this kind carried out to understand the current proportion of family member CEOs versus professional CEOs in the country," said Krishna Prakash, co-founder and managing partner, EMA Partners. "This is also to... identify who created more shareholder wealth, the family member CEOs or professional CEOs," he added.

An analysis of the compounded annual growth rate of total returns to shareholders (TRS) found that during the study period, the 243 listed firms reported an average decline of 2% in TRS due to the pandemic-triggered market decline. Interestingly, family member CEOs outperformed the market, creating a positive 2% average TRS, while the professional chiefs oversaw an average negative TRS growth of 4%.

Family member CEOs were predominantly in the majority in the healthcare, lifesciences and pharma, and industrials and manufacturing sectors (67% and 53%, respectively). Professional CEOs were dominant across basic materials, energy & utilities, finance, TMT and consumer & retail.

The respondents comprised BSE-listed firms having a market capitalisation of more than ₹100 crore.

SPORT

NCA conducts fast track level 2 courses

SPORTS REPORTER
BENGALURU

A host of popular cricketers undertook two fast track level 2 courses, conducted by the National Cricket Academy (NCA) here.

The likes of Hrishikesh Kanitkar, Abhinav Mukund, Ramesh Powar, Wasim Jaffer, Sarandeep Singh, Debashish Mohanty, Vinay Kumar, Lakshmipathy Balaji and Robin Uthappa attended the course, which was open to internationals and those who have played over 75 First Class games.

Skill acquisition, applied biomechanics in pace bowling, spin bowling, batting, wicket-keeping, building social and personal competence and video analysis were some of the topics covered.

Sourav Ganguly, BCCI President said, "The experience gained through the rigours of playing First Class and international cricket coupled with knowledge of the technical and tactical intricacies of our game makes for a great combination for a coach.

- Skill acquisition, applied biomechanics in pace bowling, spin bowling, batting, wicket-keeping, building social and personal competence and video analysis were some of the topics covered

"I believe we have some of the best coaching talents in the world and these courses conducted by the NCA will greatly benefit not only those that have participated in it but also the next generation of cricketers who will be coached by these coaches."

Why cricket-watching is not just about watching cricket

BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

It has been almost a year since I watched cricket live, and it feels strange. Not just international cricket but First Class, club, even the Sunday knockabout in the neighbourhood. The pandemic has done worse things than shut the door on what some see as an indulgence anyway. Yet no one voluntarily gives it up. Either the playing of it or the watching.

Cricket-watching is not just about watching cricket. You can decide whether you want it to be an individual sport, sitting by yourself in a stadium, thinking, planning, spending quality time with yourself, taking comfort in the feeling of being alone in a crowd. Digression and diversion are built into the aesthetics of cricket.

Or you might prefer the team game, allowing yourself to be carried away by the energy of the crowd and revelling in a shared experience. Some people knit, some walk around looking for food or (when abroad) a drink. Or a chance meeting with Michael Holding taking a break from the commentary box.

Cricket-watching is also about spending time with former players and potential stars, the past and the future in a continuum through the present. It is about nostalgia, and the elegiac which is never far from any discussion.

Yesterday was always better than today. Many will recognise this sentiment about today's game where a "hard utilitarianism and commercialisation have far too long controlled it." But that was written well over a hundred years ago by the essayist E.V. Lucas.

The arguments

And the arguments. Always the arguments. Not about the DRS or dodgy catches, but about who was better than whom, who should have played for India but didn't and vice versa. A retired player gets better every year with every stroke he doesn't play or ball he doesn't bowl – the past is frozen in the mind on a period when a player was at his best (or worst).

In *Breath of Sadness*, sportswriter Ian Ridley's poignant book about watching cricket following the death of his wife, he says, "Cricket didn't talk back to me and it didn't offer advice, it didn't tell me what to do nor how to feel, like a best friend, it was just there for me, willing to embrace me and allow me to just be, whatever mood I was in." You choose how you want the game to treat you, and it always obliges. Without judging you.

The playwright, Nobel laureate and cricket obsessive Harold Pinter once pointed out, "Drama happens in big cricket matches. But also in small cricket matches. When we play, my club, each thing that happens is dramatic: the gasps that follow a miss at slip, the anger of an lbw decision that is turned down. It is the same thing wherever you play, really." This is an insight most fans don't get.

Every club player is capable of playing that one special stroke or bowling that one stunning delivery once or twice in a career. The top players have such moments closer together – perhaps in the same over. A report of a Viv Richards double century began with, "Richards got his eye in with the kind of strokes an average batsman never gets to play in a lifetime." It said more than his biographies did.

No substitute for the real thing

And now it's been a year. It's like admitting that I haven't had a bath or eaten for that long. The lay-off has merely reconfirmed something I have always believed: television is no substitute for the real thing.

Sure, there's slow motion replay, and fake sounds from a fake crowd. But notice how often the camera turns away discreetly when Virat Kohli begins to argue with an umpire or tells an opposition player just where he gets off? Kohli is not camera-shy but cameras turn Kohli-shy when the skipper threatens to cross a line. Technology doesn't give you the whole picture, just what the authorities want you to see.

I spent a large part of my growing years following my hero Gundappa Viswanath around the city at league matches. He did to local bowlers what he had done to Andy Roberts and Dennis Lillee and Derek Underwood. The local bowlers didn't seem to mind, many thought it was an honour.

More relaxed then

Test cricketers turned out for their clubs, and were more relaxed then, happy to speak to fans, and seldom rude. In any case, Bengaluru was a small city, and you always knew someone who knew an international player and was willing to make the introduction.

Missing a year of cricket-watching has reminded me of the kind of cricket-watching I miss too.

Cricket has been at the forefront of my life: watching it, playing it, writing about it. No single view speaks for the sport. And that's its beauty.

Prasidh, Shardul derail rapid England chase, India goes 1-0 up

Former's four on debut and latter's three in two overs stun tourists who collapse from 169-2 to 251; Dhawan, Rahul and debutant Krunal headline batting effort

ENGLAND IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR
PUNE

Shikhar Dhawan made the most of two reprieves to set the foundation in the first half. Virat Kohli continued his silken touch. K.L. Rahul justified his inclusion ahead of Rishabh Pant with a final flurry. Pacers Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Shardul Thakur were at their usual best.

Day of the debutants

But it was the two debutants – Krunal Pandya and Prasidh Krishna – who caught the eye, playing significant roles in India's win over England in the first ODI at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium on Tuesday.

Despite Dhawan and Kohli's 105-run partnership for the second wicket, England's bowlers pulled things back after Eoin Morgan was again lucky with the toss. But Rahul and Krunal – the elder of the Pandya siblings – ensured India had a sizeable total with a whirlwind stand. The duo's unbeaten 112-run association in 9.3 overs meant India raced to 317 for five.

Back with a bang

While Krunal made his mark with an unbeaten 58 off just 31 balls, the other debutant – Prasidh – came back with a bang after being taken to the cleaners by Jonny Bairstow in the first PowerPlay. Prasidh's four-wicket haul, including the key scalps of Jason Roy and Ben Stokes in successive overs, was crucial in India bowling England out in the 43rd over.

The 66-run margin may indicate a facile win but when Bairstow and Roy got England off to a flying start, India had plenty to ponder.

The former whacked Prasidh for 22 runs in the sixth over, including lofted drives, two of which landed in the empty stands. With Roy also coming to the party, the dangerous partnership had swollen to 131 in just 14 overs.

Breaking through

When captain Kohli reintroduced Prasidh in the 15th over, Roy cut him over backward point for a four off the first ball. Off the next, however, Suryakumar Yadav, substituting for an injured Rohit Sharma who was hit on the shoulder while batting, caught an uppish, mistimed drive at point.

In his next over, Prasidh accounted for Stokes, with another substitute, Shubman Gill, filling in for an injured Shreyas Iyer after he partially dislocated his shoulder in the field, holding a dolly at extra cover.

Had Kohli accepted the edge off the first ball that Morgan, batting with a split webbing, faced, Prasidh and India would have heaved a sigh of relief.

Taking control

But though Prasidh missed out on taking three wickets in two overs, Shardul managed the feat to give India control of the contest.

Having terminated Bairstow's stay by having him caught at deep mid-wicket in the 23rd over, Shardul sent back Morgan and the dangerous Jos Buttler in the space of four balls in the 25th, after which the result was only a matter of time.

Earlier in the evening, when Krunal joined Rahul after Hardik's dismissal, at 205 for five, India was in danger of falling well short of the 300-run mark.

But Krunal went after Sam Curran in the 42nd over, pulling and flicking him for three fours.

Joining the party

Rahul joined the party in the 44th, clearing the boundary off leggie Adil Rashid.

The mayhem continued even when the venomous Mark Wood came back for the last two overs, as Krunal and Rahul opened their shoulders to ensure India ended on a high.

The right approach: Dhawan switched gears after a sedate start. ▪SPORTZPICS/BCCI

SOUND BYTES

I kept myself quite positive when I didn't get much game-time in the T20 series. I was focusing on my process, fitness, skill-work, gym-work... I always stay in a positive mental space. I always try and look at positives from every situation. That's what I was doing. I was confident with my batting. I knew that if I got an opportunity, I would take it

SHIKHAR DHAWAN, ON LACK OF GAME-TIME AHEAD OF THE SERIES

I think the majority of today's game we played really well and it is a shame that we couldn't build on the bowling unit's effort to restrict India to 317. And our two fantastic openers, the way they played upfront, we sort of failed to continue to build partnerships from there

EOIN MORGAN

The debutants' file

KRUNAL PANDYA AGE: 29

Major teams: India, India-A, Baroda, Mumbai Indians

BATTING	M	Inns	Runs	HS	SR	50s	100s
T20Is	18	9	121	26*	131.52	0	0
First Class	8	15	470	160	65.55	2	2
List A	66	63	1983	133*	88.48	11	2
T20s	121	93	1524	86	137.91	3	0
IPL	71	60	1000	86	142.45	1	0

BOWLING	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	5W
T20Is	18	18	14	4/36	38.42	8.11	0
First Class	8	10	14	4/40	25.85	3.18	0
List A	66	64	80	6/41	31.15	4.94	2
T20s	121	118	89	4/36	30.75	7.34	0
IPL	71	69	46	3/14	32.78	7.27	0

PRASIDH KRISHNA AGE: 25

Major teams: India-A, Karnataka, Kolkata Knight Riders

BOWLING	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	5W
First Class	9	17	34	5/49	20.26	2.79	1
List A	48	48	81	6/33	23.07	5.17	2
T20s	40	40	33	4/30	35.84	8.49	0
IPL	24	24	18	4/30	44.50	9.33	0

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Stokes 28 *(42b, 4x4)*, Shikhar Dhawan c Morgan b Stokes 98 *(106b, 11x4, 2x6)*, Virat Kohli c Moeen b Wood 56 *(60b, 6x4)*, Shreyas Iyer c sub (Livingstone) b Wood 6 *(9b, 1x4)*, K.L. Rahul (not out) 62 *(43b, 4x4, 4x6)*, Hardik Pandya c Bairstow b Stokes 1 *(9b)*, Krunal Pandya (not out) 58 *(31b, 7x4, 2x6)*; Extras: (lb-3, w-5): 8; Total (for five wkts. in 50 overs): 317.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-64 (Rohit, 15.1 overs), 2-169 (Kohli, 32.1), 3-187 (Shreyas, 34.5), 4-197 (Dhawan, 38.1), 5-205 (Hardik, 40.3).

ENGLAND BOWLING

Wood 10-1-75-2, Sam Curran 10-1-48-0, Tom Curran 10-0-63-0, Stokes 8-1-34-3, Rashid 9-0-66-0, Moeen 3-0-28-0

ENGLAND

Jason Roy c sub (Suryakumar) b Prasidh 46 *(35b, 7x4, 1x6)*, Jonny Bairstow c Kuldeep b Shardul 94 *(66b, 6x4, 7x6)*, Ben Stokes c sub (Gill) b Prasidh 1 *(11b)*, Eoin Morgan c Rahul b Shardul 22 *(30b, 1x4, 1x6)*, Jos Buttler lbw b Shardul 2 *(4b)*, Sam Billings c Kohli b Prasidh 18 *(22b, 1x4)*, Moeen Ali c Rahul b Bhuvneshwar 30 *(37b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Sam Curran c sub (Gill) b Krunal 12 *(20b, 1x4)*, Tom Curran c Bhuvneshwar b Prasidh 11 *(16b, 1x4)*, Adil Rashid c Rahul b Bhuvneshwar 0 *(5b)*, Mark Wood (not out) 2 *(7b)*; Extras (lb-3, w-10): 13; Total (in 42.1 overs): 251.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-135 (Roy, 14.2), 2-137 (Stokes, 16.2), 3-169 (Bairstow, 22.1), 4-175 (Morgan, 24.1), 5-176 (Buttler, 24.4), 6-217 (Billings, 32.1), 7-237 (Moeen, 37.1), 8-239 (Sam Curran, 38.1), 9-241 (Rashid, 39.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Bhuvneshwar 9-0-30-2, Prasidh 8.1-1-54-4, Shardul 6-0-37-3, Krunal 10-0-59-1, Kuldeep 9-0-68-0.

Toss: England; **MoM:** Dhawan.

India won by 66 runs to take a 1-0 lead in three-match series.

Second ODI: March 26, 1.30 p.m.

- Krunal Pandya's 26-ball 50 is the fastest by a debutant in ODIs, eclipsing John Morris' record (35 balls) for New Zealand against England in 1990. It was also the quickest by an Indian since 2012
- Rahul and Krunal's unbeaten 112-run stand in 9.3 overs took India to 317 for five
- While 16 Indian bowlers have claimed three wickets on their ODI debut, Prasidh is the first to take a four-for in his first match

Sri Lanka fights back

SL IN WEST INDIES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA)

West Indies fast bowler Kemar Roach struck early to remove Dimuth Karunaratne in just the fifth over of Sri Lanka's second innings but the visitors knuckled down to reach 148 for one at tea, 46 runs ahead, on the third day of the first Test on Tuesday.

Lahiru Thirimanne, who top-scored with 70 in Sri Lanka's first innings, looked solid again as he remained unbeaten on 59 and added 140 for the unbroken second wicket with Oshada Fernando, who stroked nine boundaries on his way to an unbeaten 79.

Earlier, Vishwa Fernando dismissed top-scorer Rahkeem Cornwall for 61 and last-man Shannon Gabriel in the space of four deliveries as the West Indies was all out for 271, a first innings lead of 102.

Suranga Lakmal ended with career-best Test innings figures of five for 47.

The scores: Sri Lanka 169 (Lahiru Thirimanne 70, Jason Holder 5/27, Kemar Roach 3/47) and 148/1 (Thirimanne 59 batting, Oshada Fernando 79 batting) vs West Indies 271 (John Campbell 42, Kyle Mayers 45, Joshua da Silva 46, Rahkeem Cornwall 61, Suranga Lakmal 5/47), **at tea.**

Special knock: Cornwall pulled his weight for Windies. ▪AFP

Indian women bring cheer to the faithful with thumping win

Shafali Verma's pyrotechnics light up the chase after Rajeshwari Gayakwad has the South Africans in a bind

SA IN INDIA

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
LUCKNOW

India on Tuesday night came up with a performance as clinical as it could get. A pity it came a bit too late in the night.

They may have scored the crushing nine-wicket victory in a dead rubber against South Africa, but the Women in Blue will cherish it for a while. As will the enthusiastic crowd at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium.

The Indian fans not just got to see their team win in commanding fashion, but were treated to an exceptional spell of spin bowling and then some magnificent batting before the final game in the series ended well ahead of schedule.

The Indians took just 11 overs to breeze past South Africa's modest 112 for seven. Shafali Verma was the main reason for that.

The 17-year-old opener smashed 60 off just 30 balls (7x4, 5x6) as she celebrated her return to the No. 1 spot in the ICC's T20 batting rankings. If she massacred a South African attack that had troubled the Indian batting in the first two T20Is, and for much of the five ODIs before that, her captain played her role of the smiling assassin to perfection.

When the left-handed stylist wasn't doing that, she got to watch Shafali playing a memorably destructive innings, as the youngster danced down the track when she felt like it and swung her bat around to great effect.

Shafali was unstoppable. She took 18 off the South African spearhead Shabnim Ismail in the first over of the innings, with three fours and a six. The pacer would go for 19 in her second over, this time Smriti doing most of the damage. The stand-in skipper remained unbeaten on 48 (28b, 9x4) and her stand with Shafali was worth 96.

Earlier, left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad (three for nine) ensured the South African innings never got going. She cleaned up the openers Lizelle Lee and Anneke Bosch to reduce the visitors to 15 for two in the PowerPlay.

South Africa never recovered. No batter got to 30, as the Indians bowled straight and fielded well.

A little later, the Shafali-Smriti show got underway.

Smashing success: Player-of-the-series Shafali Verma was at her aggressive best as she put India on the path to victory with a blazing half-century. ▪BCCI

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA

Lizelle Lee b Rajeshwari 12 *(14b, 2x4)*, Anneke Bosch b Rajeshwari 0 *(2b)*, Faye Tunnicliffe b Simran 18 *(35b, 1x4)*, Laura Wolvaardt c Deepti b Radha 0 *(3b)*, Sune Luus b Deepti 28 *(25b, 3x4)*, Nadine de Klerk b Rajeshwari 9 *(12b, 1x4)*, Lara Goodall (not out) 25 *(17b, 2x4)*, Sinalo Jafta c Richa b Arundhati 16 *(9b, 2x4)*, Nondumiso Shangase (not out) 2 *(3b)*; Extras (w-2): 2; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 112.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-6 (Bosch, 1.3 overs), 2-15 (Lee, 5.4), 3-16 (Wolvaardt, 6.3), 4-40 (Tunnicliffe, 10.6), 5-63 (de Klerk, 14.3), 6-71 (Luus, 15.4), 7-98 (Jafta 18.3).

INDIA BOWLING

Arundhati 4-0-18-1, Rajeshwari 4-1-9-3, Radha 4-0-24-1, Deepti 4-0-22-1, Simran 3-0-29-1, Harleen 1-0-10-0.

INDIA

Shafali Verma c Shabnim b Shangase 60 *(30b, 7x4, 5x6)*, Smriti Mandhana (not out) 48 *(28b, 9x4)*, Harleen Deol (not out) 4 *(8b)*; Extras (w-2): 2; Total (for one wkt. in 11 overs): 114.

FALL OF WICKET

1-96 (Shafali, 8.3).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Shabnim 2-0-37-0, de Klerk 3-0-32-0, Sekhukhune 3-0-20-0, Bosch 1-0-7-0, Shangase 2-0-18-1.

Toss: India.

Player-of-the-match: Rajeshwari; **Player-of-the-series:** Shafali.

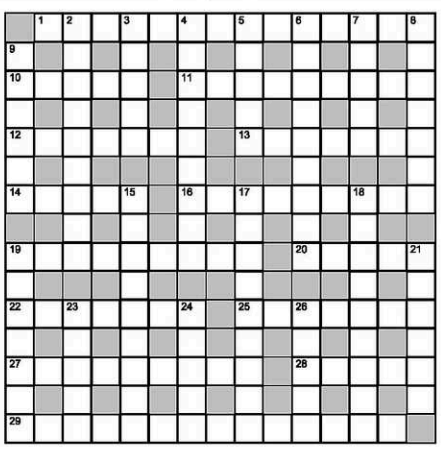
India won by nine wickets with nine overs to spare, South Africa clinched series 2-1.

TH CROSSWORD + 13203

(set by Arden)

Display keystrokes of genius. Type your answers into online grids! @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



ACROSS

1 Gas not even cool when compressed (6,8)
10 Laws protect, even conceal a resident (5)
11 Dispatched outside – bad scene, being old (9)
12 Language of money (7)
13 Maybe Minneapolis lost its main character (7)
14 Cat's finally falling in step (5)
16 Explain cryptic clue on 'Indian fruit' (9)
19 One plays around island or many islands in one place? (9)
20 Tailor only new material (5)
22 Announcer assumes Rechabite is an animal (7)
25 Block in later version covers very short distance (7)
27 Different rationale for one who cedes ownership rights (9)
28 Inverse part? (5)
29 Avoids name in supplement, playboys play a childish game (5,3,6)

DOWN

2 Perhaps Michael originally made a switch to enter both sides (9)
3 Lift a chunk of wood (5)
4 New wine kept overhead shows unsavouriness (9)
5 Cat under pressure will jump (5)
6 Doubt at regular intervals before sitting – that's the thing (9)
7 Perfect to hide a long time inside (5)
8 Understanding how to divide thirty into three equal parts, essentially (7)
9 Promise pickle or jam (6)
15 Replace inspector general or replace those who call your attention (9)
17 May be unrelated but still same (9)
18 Everyone will ask daughter to leave before the last dance (9)
19 It's daily incase of a bird (7)
21 Hold light to cover left side primarily (6)
23 One line clue at the very top about a bone (5)
24 Managed to stay in and inform (3,2)
26 Capital account – one that supports credit (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

No.SS3024 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to puzzle 13202

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Benefits of penance

Saint Thirumoolar acknowledges in his Thirumandiram that Lord Siva revealed to him the Saiva agamas. Having acquired knowledge of these sacred texts, Thirumoolar visited Chidambaram, where Siva as Lord Nataraja is seen doing His Cosmic dance. Having witnessed this divine dance, Thirumoolar no longer wanted to inhabit a human body, said R. Narayanan in a discourse. And yet he remained in the human body. Everyone in this world must see the Lord's dance in Chidambaram, says Thirumoolar.

Thirumoolar had done tapas for a long time, and as a result, he was blessed with longevity. However, his inclination was to quit this world and be with Lord Siva. With such an ardent desire to be with the Lord, every day he spent on the earth seemed like a yuga to the saint. Thirumoolar was a jnani, and naturally, his desire was to exit the world. He says he lived for one crore yugas. Sekkizhar, in his Peria Puranam, which details the lives of the sixty-three Saivite saints, says Thirumoolar lived for three thousand years. But this should be taken to mean that he lived for many years. A literal interpretation must not be given to these words.

In his Thirumandiram, Thirumoolar explains to one of his students the reason for his long life on earth. The student is called Indra, and Thirumoolar tells him that he (Thirumoolar) served Goddess Sakthi. She is the Goddess of the Universe, and She has ensured that he lives long. It is penance which destroys one's enemies and saves devotees. Tapas governs the world. Here Thirumoolar personifies tapas as a divine being, and shows the benefits of doing penance. Thus, Thirumoolar explains that while he was disinclined to dwell in a human body, his penance extended his life span on earth. To be with Lord Siva was what he wanted.

Angad-Ganemat combine on target

India beats back Kazakhstan's challenge to claim gold in mixed skeet

Delighted duo: Angad and Ganemat present a happy picture after taking the honours in mixed skeet. ▪KAMESH SRINIVASAN

SHOOTING WC

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

India captured another gold as Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Ganemat Sekhon won the mixed skeet event, beating Kazakhstan 33-29, in the shooting World Cup at the Dr. Karni Singh Range on Tuesday.

There was an assurance about the way the Indian pair went about the task, as it topped qualification with 141, with Angad shooting 72 out of 75, winding up nicely with a perfect 25.

Ganemat had played her part well by starting with a perfect round.

Three teams were tied on 140, which included the Indian pair of Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Parinaaz Dhaliwal. Kazakhstan pulled through past India and Qatar in the shoot-off.

In the gold medal match, Kazakhstan was ahead 11-10, as Olga Panarina and Alexandr Yechshenko shot strong, but the Indian pair equalised at the half way stage at 16-16, and pulled ahead to a 23-20, 26-24 lead, before the last station.

Ganemat shot three and Angad shot all four to put up a total which was beyond the reach of Kazakhstan even though it shot perfect.

Mairaj, who had shot the best in qualification with 73, and Parinaaz were beaten to the bronze by Qatar 32-31.

India leads the medals table with seven gold, three silver and four bronze. USA follows with two gold, one silver and one bronze, while Kazakhstan, Iran, Denmark and Britain have at least one gold each.

Sarnobat ahead

In the precision stage of women's 25-metre sports pistol, Rahi Sarnobat led with 291, ahead of Chinki Yadav (289) and Manu Bhaker (288).

The rapid fire section will be staged on Wednesday with the top eight making the final.

In the men's 50-metre rifle 3-position event, Sanjeev Rajput led qualification with 1172, while Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Niraj Kumar shot identical scores of 1165.

Istvan Peni (Hungary), Aleksi Leppa (Finland), Jan Lochbihler (Switzerland), Juho Kurki (Finland) and Steffen Olsen (Denmark) were the others to make the final, which will be a 45-shot contest on Wednesday morning.

The results: Mixed skeet: 1. India (Ganemat Sekhon, Angad Vir Singh Bajwa) 33 (141); 2. Kazakhstan (Olga Panarina, Alexandr Yechshenko) 29 (140)2; 3. Qatar (Reem Al Sharshani, Rashid Hamad) 32 (140) (1,2); 4. India-2 (Parinaaz Dhaliwal, Mairaj Ahmad Khan) 31(140) (1,1).

Kiwis seal ODI series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand secured a series-clinching five-wicket win in the second ODI against Bangladesh on Tuesday after a string of fielding errors dashed the tourists' hopes of victory.

Black Caps skipper Tom Latham scored an unbeaten 110 after being dropped twice with New Zealand chasing 272.

The Black Caps took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The scores:

Bangladesh 271/6 in 50 overs (Tamim Iqbal 78, Soumya Sarkar 32, Mushfiqur Rahim 34, Mohammad Mithun 73 n.o.) lost to New Zealand 275/5 in 48.2 overs (Devon Conway 72, Tom Latham 110 n.o., James Neesham 30).

AFI reconstitutes selection committee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Athletics Federation of India on Tuesday reconstituted the selection committees for seniors and juniors. Gurbachan Singh Randhawa will continue to chair the senior committee, while P.T. Usha has been named chairperson of the junior committee.

AFI president Adille Sumariwalla, secretary Ravinder Chaudhary, chief coach Radhakrishnan Nair and planning committee chairman Lalit Bhanot will continue to be ex-officio members of both.

The committees:

Seniors: G.S. Randhawa (chairman), Bahadur Singh Chauhan, Bahadur Singh Saggu, Uday Prabhu, Praveen Jolly, Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, Krishna Poonia and Gopal Saini.

Juniors: P.T. Usha (chairperson), Soma Biswas, Anand Menzes, Satbir Singh, Sandeep Sarkaria, Sunita Rani, Rama Chandran, Joseph Abraham, Harwant Kaur, M.D. Valsama, Kamal Ali Khan.

Shafali regains top spot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

Shafali Verma rose a rung to reclaim the top spot in the ICC women's T20 rankings, riding on her fine performances in the ongoing series against South Africa.

The 17-year-old has leapfrogged Australia's Beth Mooney with scores of 23 and 47.

Kennard sparks Clippers' rally

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LOS ANGELES

Luke Kennard conjured a perfect shooting display and Terance Mann added 21 from the bench as Los Angeles Clippers overturned a 22-point deficit to end Atlanta Hawks eight-game winning streak on Monday.

Kennard went eight-from-eight and made four three-pointers to take the Clippers – who had trailed 88-66 with four minutes remaining in the third quarter – to a 119-110 win.

The results: Spurs 97 lost to Hornets 100; Bucks 140 bt Pacers 113; Bulls 95 lost to Jazz 120; Rockets 117 bt Raptors 99; Grizzlies 132 bt Celtics 126; Clippers 119 bt Hawks 110.

Dev Javia advances

SPORTS BUREAU
PUNE

Dev Javia beat wild card entrant Sai Karteek Reddy 7-6 (2), 6-4 in the first round of the KPIT $15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the Deccan Gymkhana on Tuesday.

Former National champion Niki Poonacha continued to be troubled by a wrist injury and retired in the second set against qualifier Henry Patten of Britain.

The results:

Singles (first round): Henry Patten (GBR) bt Niki Poonacha 6-1 (retd.); Zsombor Velcz (Hun) bt Marco Brugnerotto (Ita) 4-6, 6-4, 7-5; Dev Javia bt Sai Karteek Reddy 7-6(2), 6-4; Jonathan Mridha (Swe) bt Aryan Goveas 7-6(3), 7-5; Paras Dahiya bt Suraj Prabodh 6-2, 7-6(10); Filip Bergevi (Swe) bt Karan Singh 6-2, 7-5.

Doubles (pre-quarterfinals): Faisal Qamar & Dhruv Sunish bt Vijay Sundar Prashanth & Vishnu Vardhan 6-4, 3-6, [10-6]; Simon Carr (Irl) & Alexander Kotzen (US) bt Chandril Sood & Lakshit Sood 6-4, 7-5; Zane Khan (US) & Dalbor Svrcina (Cze) bt Sidharth Rawat & Manish Sureshkumar 2-6, 6-3, [10-3]; Anvit Bendre & Parikshit Somani bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Niki Poonacha 6-4, 1-6, [10-6]; Luca Castelnuovo (Sui) & Arjun Kadhe bt Aidan Mchugh (GBR) & Dominik Palan (Cze) 4-6, 7-5, [10-2].

Mohit stuns Swarandeep

ITF SENIORS

PECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Mohit Phogat defeated second seed Swarandeep Singh Dhodi 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the over-35 pre-quarterfinals of the ITF seniors' tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex on Tuesday.

The results (pre-quarterfinals): Over-35: Aditya Khanna bt Rohan Narayan 6-0, 6-0; Nitin Sharma bt Dinesh Chandra Suyal 6-1, 7-5; Raj Kumar bt Badri Vishal 6-0, 6-3; Kamlesh Shukla bt Deepak Arora 6-0, 6-1; Vipin Sirpaul bt Avinash Kunwar 6-3, 4-6, 7-6(4); Kapil Bhalla bt Abhishek Kumar Sahu 6-3, 6-1; Mukesh Kumar bt Manav Arora 4-6, 6-2, 6-0; Mohit Phogat bt Swarandeep Singh Dhodi 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Over-45: Yogesh Kohli bt Kuldeep Rawat 6-2, 6-4; Narendra Kankaria bt Anshul Bagai 6-3, 7-6(4); Naresh Kumar bt Vijay Kumar 6-3, 7-6(3); Gagandeep Wasu bt Sunil Lulla 6-1, 6-3; Sheetal Sharma bt Ashish Pant 7-5, 6-2; Preetam Yashvant bt Manish Aggarwal 6-1, 6-0; Syed Babar Mahmood Zaidi bt Vinay Mohan 6-3, 6-4; Deepak Marwaha bt Bipin Balakrishnan 6-1, 6-1.

Over-55: Pawan Jain bt Amardeep Singh 6-1, 6-1; Sharak Tak bt Arun Aggarwal 6-1, 6-2; Nagaraj Revanasiddaiah bt Anil Nigam 6-0, 6-0; Dilip Singh Nongmaithem bt Kishore Choudhary 6-3, 6-0; Kuldeep Singh bt Rakesh Kohli 6-4, 6-3; Ajeet Bhardwaj bt Rajan Beri 6-4, 6-2; Sanjai Kumar bt Sanjay Parashar 6-1, 6-1; Chandra Bhushan bt Dipankar Chakravarti 6-2, 6-1.

Over-65: Ravi Singh bt Mahesh Goyal 6-0, 6-1; Yogesh Shah bt Sarvendra Kunwar 6-2, 6-3; Dileep Shivpuri bt KUlwant Singh Rawat 6-0, 6-1.

The race to the top begins

I-LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

With just the last round of fixtures remaining, three teams – Gokulam Kerala FC, TRAU FC and Churchill Brothers – are in the running for the I-League crown this season.

The title could very well be decided by the last kick of the championship, with two matches featuring the three sides set to to be held simultaneously on Saturday.

Three in the fray

Even the race for the league's top scorer award is tantalisingly poised as three front-runners will be in action at the same time on Saturday and just one goal separating them.

Leading the charts is none other than TRAU FC's Bidyashagar Singh, who has 11 goals to his name so far.

Behind him are Churchill Brothers' Luka Majcen and Gokulam Kerala FC's Dennis Antwi, with 10 goals each.

Only one Indian in I-League history has finished as the top goal-scorer – Sunil Chhetri, who scored 14 goals for Bengaluru FC in the 2013-14 season when his side went on to lift the trophy.

Stimac promises ample chances

Says no one will be eliminated for one or two mistakes

FOOTBALL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

India football coach Igor Stimac on Tuesday said the young players in the national side will be given ample chances to prove themselves at the international level as he looks to build a team for the future. The Indian team is currently training here ahead of the FIFA friendlies against Oman and UAE.

"It's fantastic to see guys at 19, 20, 21, 23 making it to the national squad. We are trying to build on the FIFA U-17 World Cup, and develop their knowledge," Stimac said.

Igor Stimac. ▪AP

"We are trying to make sure that in the next four years they become ready to play against the best, and win against them. It's a long process and it takes time."

India takes on Oman in Dubai on March 25 in the first of two international friendlies, with the second match against the UAE slated for March 29.

"The young guns proved it in ISL this season. It's now for them to prove at the international level. I will give them the chance to do so.

"There is no reason for anyone to feel scared or have any kind of fear. Not a single player will be eliminated for one or two mistakes but we are trying to work on not to repeat them."

Raring to go: Sunil Narine and Andre Russell would be determined to do well in the IPL. ▪TWITTER/KKRIDERS

Caribbean stars join KKR camp in Mumbai

Y.B. SARANGI
KOLKATA

Getting used to life in a bio-bubble during the pandemic, Kolkata Knight Riders all-rounder Andre Russell is determined to do well in the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Russell and Sunil Narine, the two long-serving KKR players from the Caribbean, arrived in Mumbai on Tuesday and began their seven-day quarantine.

"Now is the time when we are going to do what we do best, because we know the bubble. We are used to this situation, our mindset is already planned for this. *Korbo Lorbo Jeetbo* (We will do it, fight it, win it)!" Russell told *www.kkr.in*.

Russell and Narine are quite happy playing in India. "We are closer to you guys now, the games are in India... whether you guys are watching from home or the stands, we will be representing purple and gold," said Russell. "Whenever you think about the IPL, you think about India," said Narine, reflecting on playing the tournament in the UAE last season.

DELHI ROUND-UP

Sporting Club in final

Shivam Gupta's 95 and Rohan Rathi's 60 helped Sporting Club beat Golden Hawks Club by four wickets and enter the RM Singh memorial tournament final.

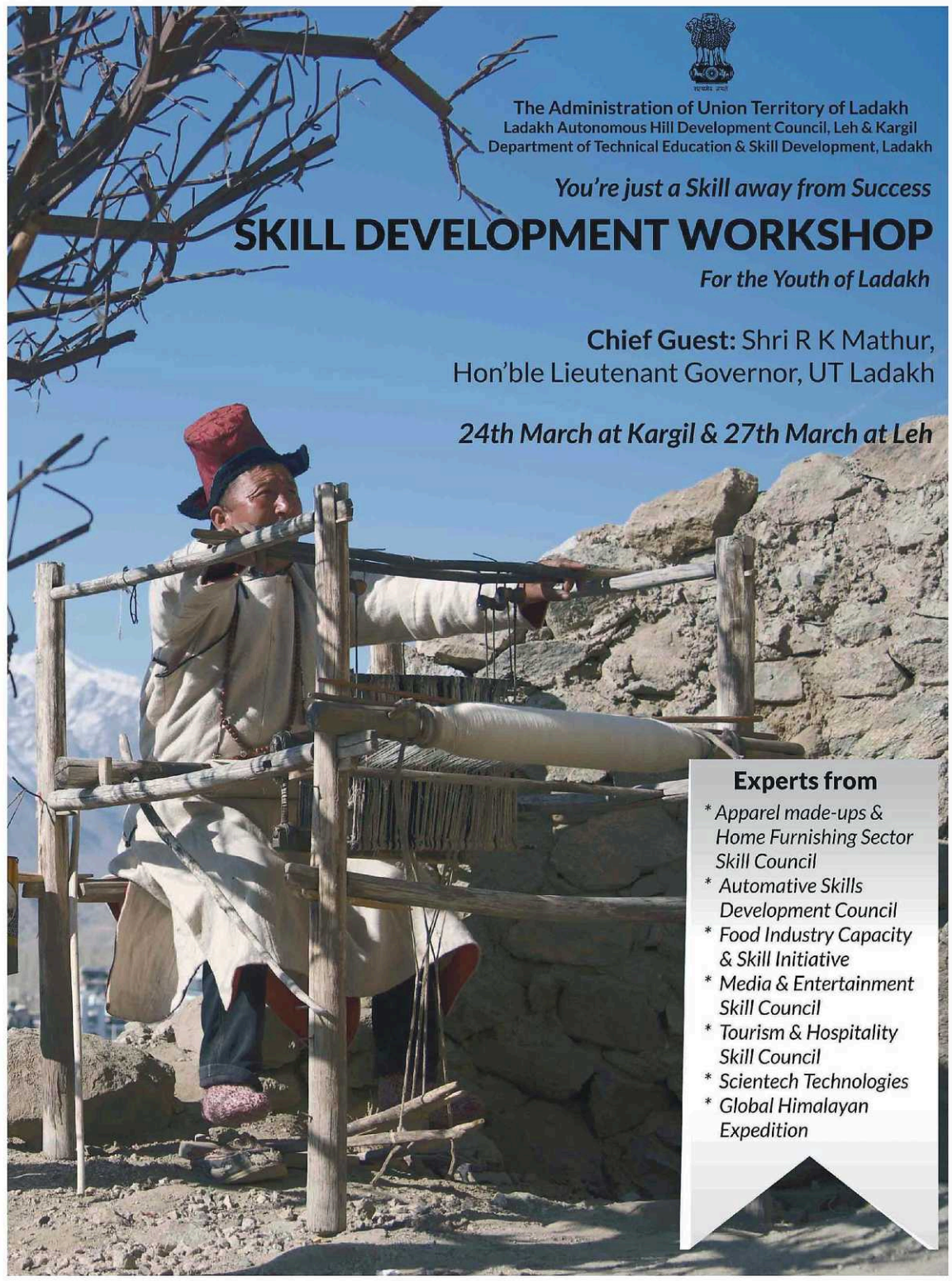
The scores: GHC 225/7 in 40 overs (Vaibhav Sharma 54) lost to Sporting Club 229/6 in 36.2 overs (Shivam Gupta 95, Rohan Rathi 60, Saurav Dagar 42, Rocky Nagar 4/37).

Half-centuries by Eshan, Yashvardhan

Eshan and Yashvardhan Obrai made half-centuries as Gyanti Academy beat M-10 Academy by three wickets in the Shashi Sharma memorial Under-19 tournament.

The scores: M-10 Academy 242 in 39.2 overs (Mayank Gosai 75, Mridull Surroch 60, Dhruv Sharma 38, Piyush Pugalia 3/28) lost to Gyanti Academy 243/7 in 38.3 overs (Eshan 67 n.o., Yashvardhan Obrai 59, Rishabh Manchanda 3/41).

Ajmal Khan Club in semis

Man-of-the-match Rishi Kumar made 57 not out and Hardik Kumar added 54 as Ajmal Khan Club beat West Delhi Academy by three wickets to enter the semifinals of the Harcourt Butler Under-15 tournament.

The scores: West Delhi Academy 225/7 in 40 overs (Madhur Yadav 104, Tejas Malhotra 36) lost to Ajmal Khan Club 229/7 in 33.1 overs (Rishi Kumar 57 n.o., Hardik Kumar 54,, Naman Bhardwaj 3/44).