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### NEARBY



Cong. pledges allowance for jobless, power perks

NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday released two manifestos for the Delhi Assembly elections – the first one focussing on creating jobs, new pension scheme and cashback for water and electricity and the second one on ways to curb air pollution in the city.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Ex-IPS officer stopped from addressing students

GAZIABAD

The Aligarh police on Sunday stopped former IPS officer Abdur Rahman from addressing students protesting against CAA. Mr. Rahman told reporters that he was detained for an hour at the Lodha police station.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 5

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EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGES 16 &amp; 17

## Second case of coronavirus infection confirmed in Kerala

India suspends e-visas for travellers from China

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI/ALAPPUZHA

India's second case of the novel coronavirus (nCoV) infection was confirmed in Alappuzha, Kerala, after a student, admitted to the isolation ward of the Government Medical College, tested positive on Sunday.

Officials in Kerala said a total of eight suspected cases had been admitted to isolation wards at the Government Medical College Hospital and General Hospital in Alappuzha.

Health Minister K.K. Shylaja said, "One more confirmed case of nCoV has been reported in the State. The patient is stable. At present, there are four people, including the affected person, in the isolated ward at the Government Medical College Hospital. Of them, three have been returned recently from Wuhan. The other suspected case is a relative of one of them. We are awaiting the test reports of other suspected cases. A majority of those in observation



Stringent checks: Indian nationals being screened at the Delhi airport on Sunday on their arrival from Wuhan. ▶ PTI

in the district are in house quarantine."

#### Travel curbs

Following the Alappuzha case, the Union government temporarily suspended the e-visa facility for Chinese and foreigners residing in China. Indian citizens have been asked to refrain from travel to China and warned that in case of travel on return from China, they could be quarantined.

A statement issued by the

Union Health Ministry said: "Anyone with travel history in China since January 15, 2020, and from now on could be quarantined."

The Indian Embassy in Beijing tweeted that owing to the current developments, travel to India on e-visas stood temporarily suspended.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

MAN FROM WUHAN DIES

IN PHILIPPINES ▶ PAGE 14

NO ROOM FOR PANIC ▶ EDITORIAL

## Money earned in India by NRIs will be taxed, says Nirmala

Clarification follows letter from Kerala CM over impact on workers in West Asia

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
VIKAS DHOT

NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday scotched fears that provisions introduced in the Budget would bring Indian workers' income in zero tax jurisdictions, like the UAE, into the Indian tax net.

The Finance Bill has proposed three major changes to prevent tax abuse by citizens who don't pay taxes anywhere in the world – reducing the number of days that an Indian citizen can be granted non-resident status for tax purposes from 182 to 120; citizens who don't pay taxes anywhere will be deemed to be a resident; and the definition of 'not ordinarily resident' has been tightened.

"Let's say an NRI, living in Dubai or elsewhere, is not taxed for his income there, but has some earnings through something in India for which he doesn't pay tax here. We are saying, for that income which is generated in India, pay a tax

income which is generated in India, pay a tax," she said.

#### 'It will hurt Indians'

Alarmed by the possible implications of the new provisions, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday, recording the State's strong disagreement over the provision as it will hurt Indians working in the Middle East, "who toil and bring foreign exchange to the country" through remittances.

"The new provision is being interpreted to create an impression that those Indians who are bona fide workers in other countries, including in the Middle East, and who are not liable to tax in these countries, will be taxed in India on the income that they have earned there. This interpretation is not correct," the Finance Minister said.

The Ministry will incorporate a clarification, if required, into the law so that only income derived from an Indian business or profession will be taxable for such citizens, the Minister said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

CONGRESS PROTEST ▶ PAGE 13

dians who are bona fide workers in other countries, including in the Middle East, and who are not liable to tax in these countries, will be taxed in India on the income that they have earned there. This interpretation is not correct," the Finance Minister said.

Financial sector disinvestment is expected to yield around ₹90,000 crore as part of the government's ambitious target to raise ₹2.1 lakh crore from PSU privatisation and stake sale, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA  
PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

The government is yet to take a call on the quantum of its stake to be offloaded from the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), whose stock market listing was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget.

Financial sector disinvestment is expected to yield around ₹90,000 crore as part of the government's ambitious target to raise ₹2.1 lakh crore from PSU

privatisation and stake sale, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told *The Hindu* on Sunday.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 12

with his team searched the area. No empty bullet shells were found there. Also, there are different versions regarding the vehicle on which the alleged miscreants were travelling," said Kumar Gyanesh, Additional DCP (South-East). "Many people, including students, have gathered outside the police station. They will be asked to give their complaint," he added.

## Unidentified miscreants open fire at JMI

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Two unidentified bike-borne men reportedly opened fire in the air near the anti-CAA protest site outside Jamia Millia Islamia late on Sunday night.

Shadosh, a volunteer with the Jamia Coordination Committee (JCC) who was at the site, said he heard loud shots in the air and sped away.

The police said they were verifying the JCC's claims.

"SHO, Jamia Nagar, along

No. 5 and saw a red scooter leaving the site.

Shail Khudai, a member of the JCC, a group comprising students and alumni of the university, said two persons came on a two-wheeler on the road opposite the protest site, fired two rounds in the air and sped away.

The police said they were verifying the JCC's claims.

"SHO, Jamia Nagar, along

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## MOCK INTERVIEW CSE-2019

Under the guidance of Ex-UPSC Board members, experienced Civil servants

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\* Former Director of IIPA**Shri Anil K. Sinha (Retd. IAS)**

\* Executive Director National Institute of Disaster Management Govt. of India

**Shri Skand Ranjan Tayal (Retd. IFS)**

Former Ambassador to South Korea, Uzbekistan

**Prof. Rajveer Sharma**

(Retd. Prof. of Political Science D.U.)

**Shri Saurobh Kumar (Retd. IFS)**

(Former Ambassador to Vietnam, Ireland)

**Shri S.S. Chaudhary**

Director Vajirao &amp; Reddy Institute

**Shri M. Ramachandran (Retd. IAS)**\* Former Secretary Govt. of India  
\* Former Chief Secretary Govt. of U.P.**Shri R. Srinivasan IES (Retd.)**

(Retd. Advisor to the Govt. of India)

**Dr. G.C. Srivastava (Retd. IAS)**

\* Ex-member Secretary 12th Finance Commission

\* Vice Chairman Central Administrative Tribunal

**Shri B.B. Srivastava (Retd. IAS)**

Former Secretary to the Govt. of India Department of Land Resources (Ministry of Rural Development)

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(Retd. Prof. of Environmental Science &amp; Biotech D.U.)

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\* Two mock interviews and one personal sitting with our mock interview experts.

\* Each mock interview will be video recorded and the same will be made available to the candidate for self analysis.

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## Study on bat-hunters of Nagaland under scanner

It was carried out by researchers from the U.S., China and India

### Steeped in secrecy

Researchers from the U.S., China and India conducted the study on bats and humans carrying antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola

■ The study found the presence of filovirus-reactive antibodies in human and bat populations in northeast India

■ Bats often carry Ebola, rabies, marburg and the SARS coronavirus

■ The study suggested that bats in South Asia act as a reservoir host of a diverse range of filoviruses

■ For the study done in 2017, 85 individuals participating in an annual bat harvest at Mimi, Nagaland, were picked

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# Cong. promises unemployment allowance, free electricity up to 300 units

Party releases two manifestos, with the second one aimed at reducing air pollution; Maken says party drew points from Congress-ruled States like Punjab, Chhattisgarh, M.P.

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ  
NEW DELHI

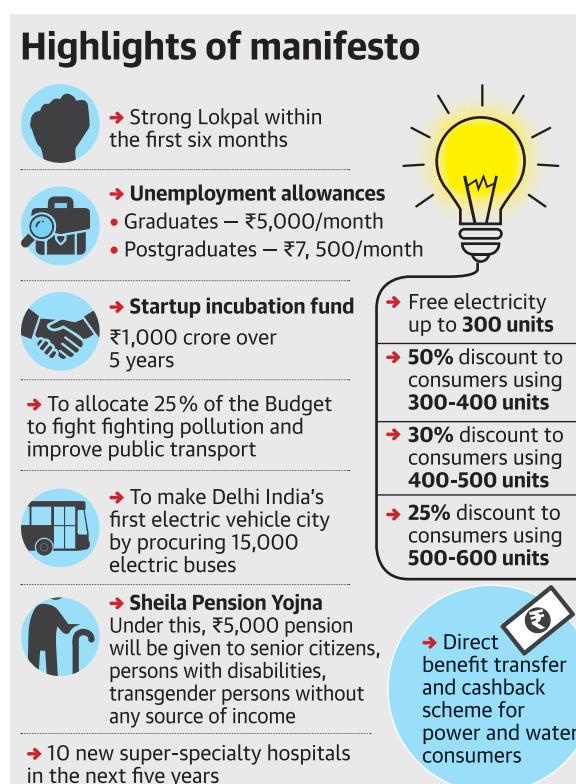
The Congress on Sunday released two manifestos for the Delhi Assembly elections – the first one focussing on creating jobs, new pension scheme, and cashback schemes for water and electricity and the second one on ways to curb the rising air pollution in the Capital.

#### Party stand on CAA

The Congress said if voted to power, the party would by February 21, pass a resolution in the Delhi Assembly demanding the Centre to drop the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. It added that it would also not let the Centre implement the National Population Register (NPR) in its current form as well as the National Register for Citizens (NRC).

The manifesto also mentions that it stands in solidarity with everyone who has raised the National Flag in support of the Constitution and in opposition to the BJP's version of NPR, NRC and CAA. The party promised that within the first six months, it would introduce a strong Lokpal in Delhi.

Delhi Congress chief Sub-



(From left) Congress senior leaders – Rajeev Gowda, Ajay Maken, Subhash Chopra, Anand Sharma, and Kuljit Singh Nagra – release party manifesto for State Assembly polls on Sunday. ■ BIBEK CHETTRI

hash Chopra, manifesto committee chairman Ajay Maken and Raja Sabha MP Anand Sharma while releasing the document said unlike the BJP and AAP that only made false promises, their party has a track record of fulfilling promises. The leaders said even in other States, which are being ruled by the Congress, the party had fulfilled all promises made ahead of the elections.

Mr. Maken said Congress' social welfare schemes have

been included after working out their financial viability – like unemployment allowance and the pension scheme.

He said unemployment allowances have been modelled on the patterns of Congress-ruled States like Punjab and Chhattisgarh while some other points in the manifesto have also been drawn from other Congress-ruled States like Madhya Pradesh. He said unlike in Delhi, the power subsidies in the Congress-ruled States are going into the kitties of government companies.

The party promised to launch "Yuva Swabhiman Yojna", which seeks to provide unemployment allowance of ₹5,000 for graduates and ₹7,500 for postgraduates per month. It will also provide them skill training to help them get employed. The party said they will start an incentive for

young entrepreneurs to open startups with the Delhi Congress investing ₹1,000 crore per year for the next five years. The Congress promised industrial power at ₹6/unit to promote non-polluting industries. This will also ensure that the industries do not move out of the city and help provide employment.

The party promised to launch schemes to provide incentive to conserve electricity and water. They said

they would introduce a cash-back scheme in which money will be directly transferred to the consumer if the household consumes less than the amount of water/electricity that will be provided free.

The party said it will provide free electricity upto 300 units and a 50% discount to consumers using 300-400 units. The consumers using 400-500 units and those between 500-600 units will be given a 30% and 25% discount respectively. It added that instead of transferring money to private companies like in the case of the AAP government, customers would be benefited by as there will be direct transfers.

The manifesto said the party will spend 25% of the Budget each year on fighting pollution and improving transport facilities. The party said it will increase the green cover to 30% and make Delhi India's first "electric vehicle city" via The Delhi Electrical Vehicles Initiative (DEV) by procuring 15,000 electric buses.

The party promised to work with governments of Punjab and if possible with the governments of Haryana and U.P. to help convert rice stubble to energy with an aim to solve the problems of smog.

In the healthcare sector, the party has promised to build 10 super-specialty hospitals in the next five years and add 5,000 maternity beds. For the benefit of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and transgender persons without any source of income, it has promised – Sheila Pension Yojna – under which ₹5,000 will be given to the above-mentioned categories.

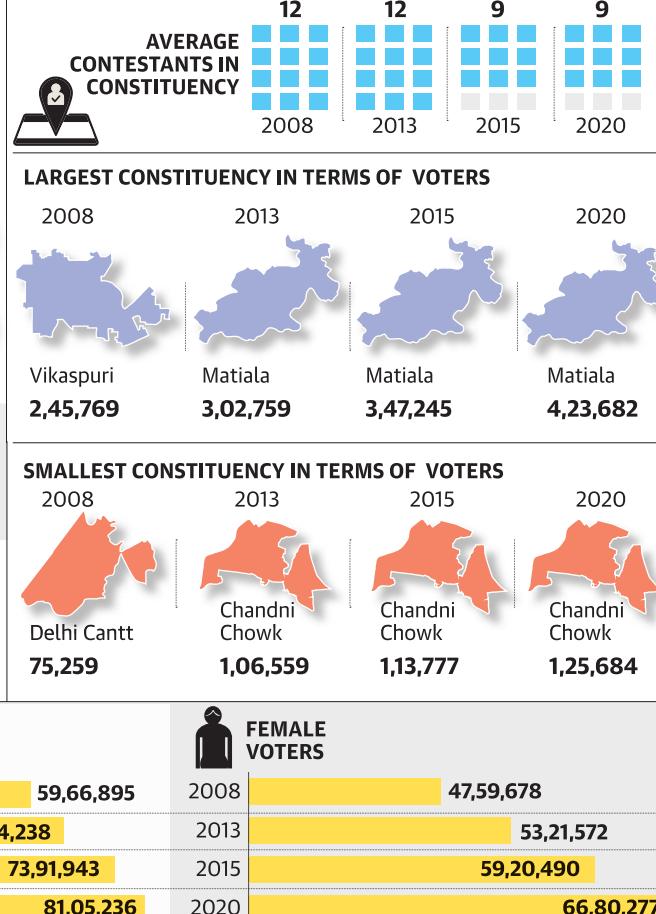
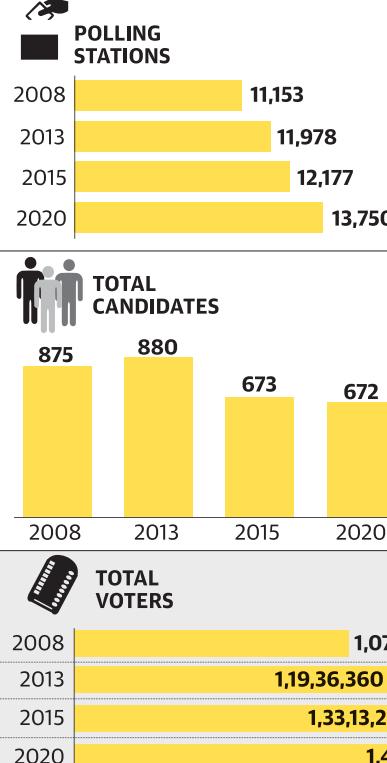
The party has also promised to regularise all unauthorised colonies and spend ₹35,000 crore in five years for the upliftment of these colonies. It has promised in-situ rehabilitation to jhuggi dwellers where each family will get a 350 sq-ft flat at the same place on the lines of projects that the Congress had taken up in Kathputli Colony and Kalkaji.

#### A dig at BJP

The party said the elections will be fought on local issues and that it would resist all attempts by the BJP to polarise the election by delivering "inflammatory" speeches.

## Delhi in numbers

A detailed account of last four State Assembly elections



SOURCE: STATISTICAL REPORTS OF ECI

## Delhi CEO urges youth to exercise their franchise on February 8

He asks people to reconsider holiday plans on voting day



Delhi CEO Ranbir Singh

able person as your leader."

Mr. Singh said people should try to research about candidates before casting their votes.

#### 'Choose carefully'

"You have to be careful in choosing your leader.

When we go to the market,

we compare two products

before buying. But when it

comes to voting, people

don't adopt a similar tactic.

They randomly vote. So you

must think carefully before

voting," he added.

The Delhi CEO added

that many people must have planned to go on vacations a day before the voting and asked them to reconsider their plans.

"There will be no holiday without voting because the holiday has been given for this purpose. So you can celebrate your holiday only after voting," he added.

The event also saw a group of artistes performing over a dozen songs composed by music maestro A.R. Rahman. The group sang and danced to Mr. Rahman's tracks like "Kehna Hi Kya", "Tu Hi Re", "Jai Ho", "Dil Se", "Jiya Jiya" and others.

AAP writes to EC demanding campaign ban on U.P. CM

## Adityanath addresses public rally in Badarpur

He speaks about schemes of Central govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Senior AAP leader and Raja Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Sunday said the party has written to the Election Commission (EC) demanding Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's arrest and ban from campaigning in Delhi for his "divisive speeches".

"It is strange that the EC does not act against Adityanath. He should be banned from campaigning in Delhi and the EC should lodge an FIR against him for his divisive speeches. If the EC does not give time to meet the AAP delegates by 12.00 p.m. tomorrow [Monday], we will protest outside its office," Mr. Singh said.

He added that the party has attached a clip of Mr. Adityanath's speeches in the letter to the EC. "The EC can't remain indifferent to this grave issue. It is the misuse of democratic and constitutional institutions," Mr. Singh added.

He alleged: "He [Adityanath] is not ready to explain the reason behind the failures of his own government and how the law and order situation in the U.P. is deteriorating. He is not ready to talk about electricity, water, roads, education, and health. He spits venom here and tries to divide the people on communal lines," Mr. Singh alleged.

Addressing a rally at Badarpur Assembly constituency in the Capital, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attacked the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and also talked about the efforts of the Modi government at the Centre.

Having arrived two hours late, Mr. Adityanath said: "I would have been here at five o'clock. I had planned my programme accordingly but because of Shaheen Bagh..."

He then started speaking about the various efforts made by the Modi government such as the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, Swachh Bharat Mission and others.

He said the Kejriwal government did not allow various schemes of the Centre to be implemented in the Capital.

He said Arvind Kejriwal (Chief Minister) was trying to create tension in the city by supporting protesters in Shaheen Bagh. He also told the crowd: "Do you want a BJP government or a government of people feeding Shaheen Bagh biryani?"

He dismissed the stirs as "excuses", saying that the protesters want the removal of Article 370 and triple talak. The protesters are

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Let me make it clear, the protests at Shaheen Bagh are excuses. In Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal [Chief Minister] has not allowed any scheme of the Central government to be implemented

**YOGI ADITYANATH**  
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

against the win in the Ayodhya temple case, he added.

In relation to CAA, he said action has been taken against people protesting against the Act in Uttar Pradesh.

He said properties of protesters in his State were seized to recover the costs of public damage.

**Yogi on Kanwar yatras**  
The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said after coming to power, he not only ensured safe passage to the devotees in Kanwar yatras but also ensured that the police did not disturb them during their programmes that include music and DJs.

"Whoever is attempting to attack the BJP, *unhe boli se nahi, police ki gol se samjhaya Jayega* [They will not be taught through dialogue, but with police bullet]."

The protesters are

## Campaign hots up on last weekend before Delhi polls

AAP, BJP, Cong., leaders hold several roadshows, small public meetings across all Assembly constituencies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

On the last Sunday before the Delhi Assembly polls, the political parties made use of the weekend to reach out to voters by deploying several star campaigners to seek votes for their local MLA candidates.

Unlike previous elections, there were no large public rallies with the parties resorting to roadshows, small public meetings, and door-to-door campaigns.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday addressed two roadshows at Kirari and Mundka Assembly constituencies and then held three meetings at Vishwas Nagar, Laxmi Nagar and Rithala.

**CM on illegal colonies**  
Mr. Kejriwal in Kirari said AAP has worked towards the transformation of unauthorised colonies and alleged that the Congress and the BJP are against providing free amenities to the people of Delhi.

"All the unauthorised colonies in Delhi had the same fate as Kirari. In the last five years, we have built roads and drains, installed water and sewer pipelines, installed CCTV cameras but some colonies are left because the work pending for 70 years cannot be completed in just five years," Mr. Kejriwal said.

He added: "If you vote for AAP, the provisions of free water, electricity, health-

care, bus rides, etc, will continue. The BJP has already said in its manifesto that they will neither provide free electricity nor free bus rides for women. Opposition leaders have time and again maligned my image for providing free electricity and water. So, I appeal to the people to think and vote."

The BJP said senior leaders, including Amit Shah, J.P. Nadda, Prakash Javadekar, Shyam Jaju and Manoj Tiwari, would take stock of poll preparations at party election offices located across all the Assembly constituencies here between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m.

**In favour of CAA**  
Earlier during the day, Union Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan flagged off a bike rally from the Delhi BJP office in support of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Mr. Shah and Mr. Nadda also led a programme which included 1,00,782 party workers intending to directly contact "every house" in each of the 70 constituencies.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh addressed a public meeting in favour of the party's candidate from Rajendra Nagar constituency, R.P. Singh, where he raised issues related to potable water.

"For the last five years, the Kejriwal government has been making a fool out of people. They could not provide clean water to Delhi even after bringing 67 seats. The situation in this colony is similar to that in most areas of Delhi," he alleged.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar also entered the political fray here addressing a public meeting along with Mr. Nadda in support

of Sangam Vihar Alliance candidate, Dr. Shiv Charan Lal Gupta.

"Mr. Kejriwal said the people of Bihar come to Delhi with a ticket of ₹500 and get treatment of ₹5 lakh for free. Do the people

SIDHARTH RAVI  
NEW DELHI

Vinod Kumar, a resident of the Aali village in Okhla constituency, observes with a tinge of philosophy: "Dilli abhi dur hai" [Delhi is far away].

The Assembly polls might be less than a week away, but in Mr. Kumar's constituency, to which belongs Delhi's most discussed spots – Shaheen Bagh and Jamia Millia Islamia – a week might seem like a long time, where the election fortunes could swing and sway every day. On the apparent, AAP seems the local flavour, with BJP's polarisation politics drawing a lot of stick, but a late twist can't be ruled out.

Dominated by the Muslim community in localities such as Zakir Nagar, Batla House, Gaffar Manzil, Jasola, Shaheen Bagh and others, the Okhla constituency has returned a candidate from the same community in every Assembly election since its inception in 1993. So do they hope this time, as Amanullah Khan, Minister in the Delhi government, is bracing to defend his turf.

The Congress has put up ex-MLA from the area, Parvez Hashmi, forgoing Arif Mohomed Khan, who managed to win the seat in the 2013 Assembly election. An agitated Arif had even filed his nomination but later withdrew his candidature. The BJP has furnished a ticket to local leader Bhram Singh, who Amanullah had beaten by over 60,000 votes in the previous polls.

#### Groundswell of support

AAP has groundswell of support from all quarters. "My vote is going to the Aam Aadmi Party, there's no question," said Israr Ahmed Kahn (48), a shopkeeper in the narrow lanes of Zakir Nagar. "Look at the work they've done for schools, health, water, electricity. They've done work. All this talk focus on the protest has no bearing on the elections," he observed.

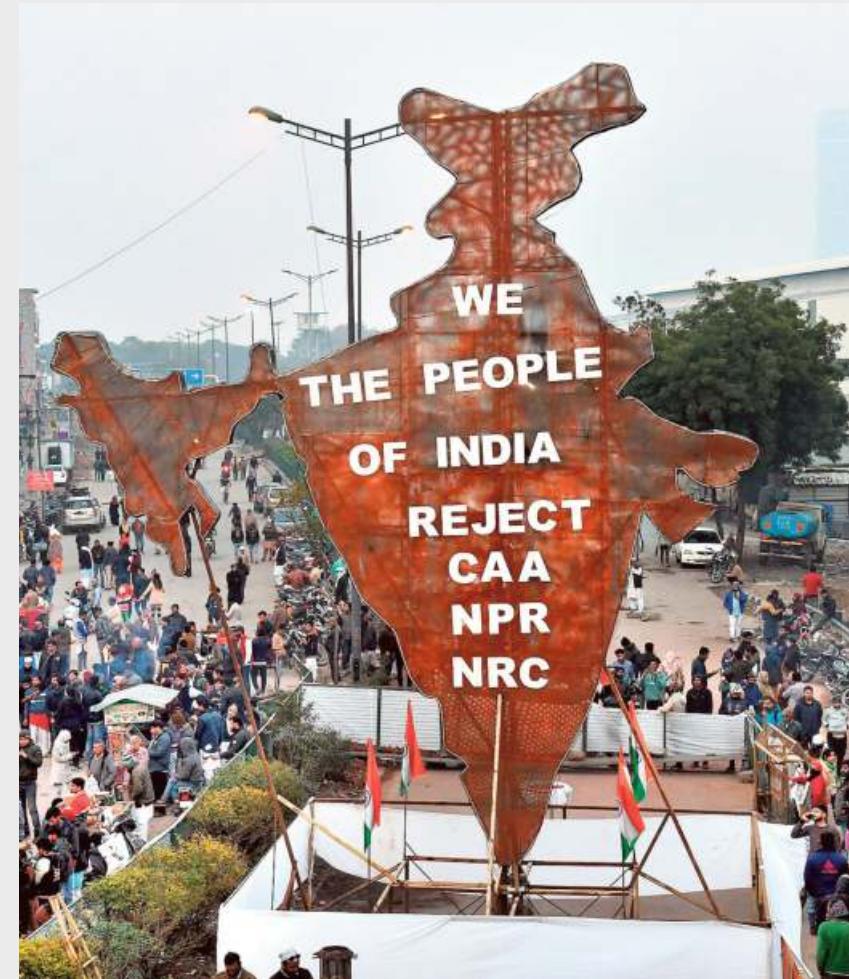
Farhan Khan, an IT employee, said he would support the party which "asked for votes on the basis of their work." He listed out the strides AAP made in sectors such as electricity, education and health.

Danish Mirza, who works in a multinational company said he didn't get an electricity bill for three months, apart from which "They don't talk about Hindu and Muslim, they don't talk about Pakistan," he said. But he added: "Voting for the Congress would be a waste of time too."

"If Arif Mohammad [Congress

# In Okhla, AAP holds sway

BJP's disruptive brand of politics combined with Kejriwal-led dispensation's goodwill could favour a 2015 encore



leader denied ticket] was standing then there might have been something to think about but now it's clear," he said.

For others such as Sajid Khan, voting for AAP was not a matter of rewarding good work but an ideological stance. "I still get a very high electricity bill. Most of their claims are untrue," he said. "But looking at the situation today, I don't care for AAP but we need to defeat the BJP," he said.

The BJP's campaign has found several detractors from here and elsewhere. "All the issues being created are misdirection so that no real questions are asked," said Sajad Ahmed Khan, a businessman.

**Polarised environment**  
Commenting on an increasingly polarised environment being created, he argued: "None of our basics is being taken care of, like unemployment, education, cleanliness. How does it matter then if we are killed in riots? We are dying slowly anyway."

Distracted by the BJP and sections of the media, Yusuf Khan, a shopkeeper in Jasola, says: "What is this kind of dialogue being used? These people are attacking our demonstrations because they're failing to do anything right. They've brought this country down to the knees." For him, the upcoming elections are not about local issues but issues that are "troubling the country at large".

"This is the first time I'm seeing this type of an election," said Vinod Kumar from Aali village. "No real issues are being talked about, the media is sold out, it's all about scaring people and polarising communities," he added.

While Mr. Kumar says he doesn't need "freebies" offered by the AAP government, he will vote for them. "But the way the campaign is going, you don't know which way this will go," he said.

Yashpal Singh, a Congress supporter from the same village

concurs: "The BJP has nothing to show, so they run this narrative of Hindu-Muslim. Why aren't they removing them [the protesters at Shaheen Bagh] if it's such a problem?" he said, arguing that it was an attempt to keep tensions simmering.

In Sarita Vihar, which has a large number of dairies and is dominated by Gujjar and Jaat communities, every person

Hindu spoke to said they supported the BJP. However, among the BJP supporters too, many said that the protests were being "allowed" to go on in order to reap electoral benefits.

"As long as the issue is kept hot, it will benefit the BJP," said Yashpal Singh, an electrician. He also said that he was "secular" even though he voted for the BJP. "But if they [protesters] weren't

(Clockwise from top left) Women protesting against Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Shaheen Bagh on Sunday; a hoarding erected at the protest site; protesters at a demonstration. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR / SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA / R.V. MOORTHY

willing to move back even a little then why should we? I feel like as a Hindu I should vote for my party," he said.

"When the elections began, it was certain that AAP would win, but now, looking at the things coming out of these protests, talks of cutting up Assam, my thoughts have also changed," he added.

Others such as Manish Kumar (34) argued against various free schemes offered by AAP, and reckoned that some of it would negatively impact the economy. "Where is the money for this going to come from?" he argued. "The focus should be on jobs," he asserted.

Declaring her support for the

BJP, Anju Agarwal said that the party was doing a good job at the centre. "AAP has done nothing in the last five years. And six months before elections they started declaring all sorts of schemes," she said, dismissing claims of improvement in school education and mohalla clinics, made by the party.

Others such as Ram Kumar (43) a labourer from Madanpur Khadar, and Bholi (25), a street vendor, said they would vote for the BJP, because of Prime Minister Modi. "I don't even know the MLA of the area but my vote will go to Modi," said Kumar.

Upto 3,35,077 are listed in the electoral rolls for the Okhla constituency. With shootings having taken place twice in three days at different protest sites in the constituency and fears of violent outbreak looming, the polls could turn out to be an unpredictable affair. As Vinod Kumar said philosophically, Delhi is still far away, even though the polls are less than a week away.

## Lovely's personal connect with people on display at roadshow

Residents say Cong. can pin its hope on its Gandhi Nagar candidate

SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

With trumpets, *dholas* (drums) and bursting of crackers, Congress candidate Arvind Singh Lovely's roadshow on Saturday looked more like a victory march than a padyatra meant for public outreach.

While ensuring to walk through each lane in the colony and at times entering few of the residences, Mr. Lovely remarked, "I have a one-to-one connect with each of the family here. All the people you see here have come out on their own to show support."

"The election scenario in Gandhi Nagar is completely different. Even though there is a strong BJP presence, whenever I contest, people extend their support for me as a candidate," Mr. Lovely said.

The candidate from east Delhi's Gandhi Nagar constituency and a three-time MLA said: "Whatever work I did till 2013 has remained the same. Nothing seems to have moved forward, be it new hospitals, schools or community centres. This area is also a huge trading centre and people over here have got nothing apart from harassment due to sealing and as a result of which businesses are on the verge of collapse."

"Traffic is a huge problem here and not even a single DTC bus operates in the area. Thanks to the poor fleet that they have



Congress candidate Arvind Singh Lovely campaigning in Gandhi Nagar. ■ BIBEK CHETTRI

#### CAMPAIGN TRAIL

currently," said Mr. Lovely amid being continuously approached by residents of the colony with sweet boxes and garlands.

Mr. Lovely had also contested the Lok Sabha polls from the East Delhi constituency in 2019 but didn't emerge successful.

When asked about the same, he said, "Even though I did not win, people were still forcing me to contest this election as they want a familiar face who will work for them."

**Public opinion**  
Seventy-year-old Mithilesh Sharma, a housewife residing in the colony said:

"What has the government done for us in the past? Though it keeps talking about CCTVs, we can't really see any in our lanes."

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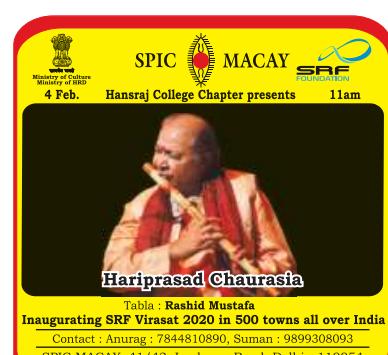
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'BJP star campaigners attacking CM personally'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Senior AAP leader Raghav Chadha on Sunday said that the BJP was bringing leaders from other States to campaign in Delhi who were not able to address the queries of the common people and were resorting to personal attacks and abusive campaigns against the Chief Minister.

"In Delhi elections, the BJP doesn't fight with the Aam Aadmi Party, but with the common people of Delhi. Abuses and personal attacks insult and defame the people of Delhi, not the Chief Minister nor the Aam Aadmi Party," Mr. Chadha said.

He said that the BJP is so baffled in these elections that they had to bring all their senior Ministers and Chief Ministers from other States to Delhi for campaigning.

"For the last five years they didn't even pay any attention to the plight of the people of Delhi, but suddenly they have focused all their attention on Delhi. In all their rallies, they are targeting Arvind Kejriwal, someone makes fun of his health, personal remarks are made on his appearance, on his family members. The BJP is resorting to dirty politics in these elections," Mr. Chadha said.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi	232	Gurugram 173
Ghaziabad	278	Faridabad 208
Noida	235	Greater Noida 262
Good 0-50	Satisfactory 51-100	Moderate 101-200
Poor 201-300	Very poor 301-400	Severe >401
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS)   SOURCE: CPCB		

Clear sky, shallow fog likely in Capital today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

It was a sunny day in the national capital on Sunday and the maximum temperature settled at 20.5 degrees Celsius, two notches below the season's average.

The morning was cold as the minimum temperature was recorded at 6 degrees Celsius, three notches below average, officials said.

The humidity oscillated between 100% and 56%.

On Monday, there will be shallow fog in the morning and the sky is expected to remain clear through the day, according to the weather office.

The maximum and minimum temperatures would hover around 21 and 6 degrees Celsius respectively, the weathermen said.

Poor AQI

On Sunday, the city's Air Quality Index (AQI) at 9 a.m. was 223, which falls in the 'poor' category, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) said.

Saturday's maximum temperature was recorded at 22 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature was 5.7 degrees Celsius.

DELHI TODAY

Talk: Health lecture on "Stroke Awareness" by Dr. Chandril Chugh, Senior Consultant and Head Interventional Neurology, Max Saket Hospital, at Conference Room - I, India International Centre (IIC), 6.30 p.m.

Talk: "Is it possible to reset your Hormones?", a talk on revamping hormones for healthy living by Dr. Faryal Luhar, expert, functional medicine, and naturopath at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 7 p.m.

Exhibition: "Ye Meri Roti Hai", a solo art show by artist Kingson Swargiary at Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre (IHC), 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Exhibition: "I Wonder", a solo show of artist Biplob Sarkar, Art District XIII, F-213 C, Ground Floor, Lado Sarai, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

(Mail your listings for this column at [cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in](mailto:cityeditordelhi@thehindu.co.in))

# Rise in millionaires contesting Delhi Assembly polls: ADR report

AAP has the highest number of candidates with criminal record

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

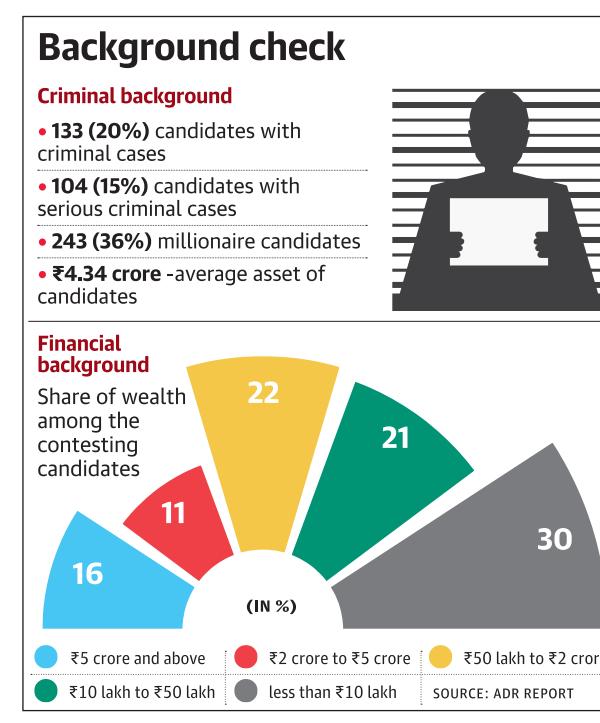
A report by election watch body – the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) – has revealed that the number of millionaire candidates contesting the Delhi Assembly elections has increased by 34% in comparison to the last elections held in February 2015.

A study of the affidavits filed by 672 candidates who are in the fray by ADR has revealed that 36% of contestants are millionaire. This means out of 672 candidates 243 are millionaire. The report said the average assets per candidate is ₹4.34 crore. "In 2015 Assembly elections, the average assets per candidate for 673 candidates was ₹3.32 crore," the report says.

The richest candidates are with the Congress. Of 66 candidates fielded by the Congress, 55 are millionaire. This is followed by the Aam Aadmi Party whose 51 candidates out of 70 are millionaires; 47 of 67 candidates from the BJP fall in the same league.

Among major parties, the report said the average assets per candidate for 70 AAP candidates is ₹15.25 crore and that of the 66 Congress candidates is ₹11.68 crore.

The top four candidates with the highest declared assets are from AAP – Dharampal Lakra (Mundka) having total assets over ₹292 crore;



and Raj Kumar Anand (Patel Nagar) with assets of over ₹78 crore.

AAP's Kartar Singh Tanwar from Chhattarpur has the highest total income shown in the income tax returns (including that of spouse and dependants). Mr. Tanwar has consistently been one of the richest candidates in Delhi elections. He has worked with the Congress and the BSP before.

Criminal antecedents

Of 672 candidates, 20% have declared criminal cases. This is a 3% increase from the 2015 figures. A total of 104 candidates have serious criminal cases this is an increase of 11% from the 2015 figures.

AAP has the greatest share of candidates with criminal record.

As per the ADR report 51% of their candidates which is 36 of 70 have criminal cases. This is followed by the BJP whose 17 out of 67 candidates have criminal records. The Congress has 10 candidates of 66 with criminal records.

Educational record

The ADR report suggests poor educational credentials of the contestants in Assembly elections. Only 44% of the candidates that is 298 out of 672 are graduates.

On the brighter side, only 16 candidates out of the 672 are illiterate.

erate and 11 have doctorate degrees, the ADR report says.

Age factor

The ADR report has thrown a positive feature that 66% of all the contestants in Delhi elections are below 50 years of age. Of 672 candidates in the fray, 441 are between 25-50 years and 212 (32%) are in the age group of 51 to 70 years.

"There are 11 [2%] candidates who have declared their age to be between 71 to 80 years. Eight candidates have not given their age," the ADR report states.

Women candidates

The report said that 13 more women candidates are in the fray than in the 2015 Assembly elections. There are 11.8% women contesting the February 8 Assembly elections.

"Seventy-nine women candidates are contesting the Delhi Assembly elections this year. In 2015 Assembly elections, 66 out of 673 candidates were women."

Among the parties, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party has nine women candidates of its 70 faces.

"The Congress has fielded the maximum number of women candidates – 10 among its 66 candidates, and the BJP has six women of its 67 candidates," the report said.

A total of 17 independent candidates fighting the polls are women.

Delhi is going to the polls on February 8 and the results will be out on February 11.

# District administration, ASI at odds over poll event at Qutub Minar

ASI gave nod for event, officials say food was cooked near monument

DAMINI NATH  
SIDHARTH RAVI  
NEW DELHI

A voter awareness programme organised by the South Delhi district administration at Qutub Minar on February 1 has irked Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) officials, who say they had allowed cultural activities outside the monument but not the cooking and serving of food at the event.

The District Magistrate, B.M. Mishra, however, denied allegations, including that cooking, took place in the area and said ASI officials were trying to "settle their ego" by hyping up a non-issue.

In a letter on January 31 granting permission for the programme ahead of the February 8 Delhi Assembly polls, the ASI said the competent authority had approved the "proposal for organising a cultural programme outside the premise of Qutub Minar" on February 1 and 2.

An ASI official said the district authorities had only asked for permission for cultural activities, but on February 1, started to ask for approval for hosting a dinner at the site. The official said the ASI refused to allow this as such activities are not allowed in protected monuments, including the 12th Century Qutub Minar, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site as well.

The Congress has fielded the maximum number of women candidates – 10 among its 66 candidates, and the BJP has six women of its 67 candidates," the report said.

Among the parties, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party has nine women candidates of its 70 faces.

"The Congress has fielded the maximum number of women candidates – 10 among its 66 candidates, and the BJP has six women of its 67 candidates," the report said.

Delhi is going to the polls on February 8 and the results will be out on February 11.



Litter left behind at Qutub Minar complex on Sunday after an election awareness campaign. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

orities "took over" the site, with the help of the police and held the event, including cooking food on an open fire. The site, with the Qutub Minar looming over it, was left strewn with garbage that was cleared by ASI staff on Sunday afternoon, the official said. Mr. Mishra said that no cook taking place and denied that garbage was left uncollected, stating that the area had been cleared up after the event got over but ASI officials took pictures of the site as it was winding down to support their claim.

Another ASI official said that the matter would be taken up on Monday, including with relevant authorities like the Election Commission of India and the Delhi government.

# Mewat gang members arrested after brief exchange of fire

One injured; four pistols, nine live cartridges seized

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

missioner of Police (Special Cell) P.S. Kushwah said.

Sensing police presence, the tempo driver speeded up but hit the gate of a residential colony in Pushp Vihar. All the occupants came out and fired at the police team, he said.

In retaliation, the policemen also opened fire in which Amin sustained bullet injuries on his legs, he said.

The accused were overpowered and disarmed by the police personnel, the DCP said, adding that Amin was immediately taken to Safdarjung Hospital.

About 14 rounds were fired from both sides. More than seven rounds were fired by the accused, the

police said.

Several cases

Four pistols and nine live cartridges were seized from their possession.

The accused were involved in several cases of robbery and dacoity in Delhi-NCR and adjoining States. They used to rob trucks at gunpoint and used these vehicles to commit robberies, police said.

Amin was wanted in a 2019 case lodged at Mehrauli police station and a non-bailable warrant was issued against him, they said.

According to the police, Amin was also involved in more than 15 criminal cases in Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana and U.P.

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Amin was wanted in a 2019 case lodged at Mehrauli police

Timings

DELHI

MONDAY, FEB. 03
RISE 07:09 SET 18:02
RISE 12:38 SET 01:26
TUESDAY, FEB. 04
RISE 07:08 SET 18:03
RISE 13:19 SET 02:22
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 05
RISE 07:08 SET 18:04
RISE 14:06 SET 03:21

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	21 06
Safdarjung	21 06
Palam	19 06

Delhi Palam Today  
20°C Shallow fog will prevail on a cold morning. A comfortable afternoon lies ahead. Sky will remain partly cloudy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
21°C Shallow to moderate fog is likely in pockets. A partly cloudy sky lies ahead. Thunderstorms may develop in some parts.

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THE HINDU

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# Ex-IPS officer stopped by police from addressing AMU students

Rahman told that his presence on campus could lead to a law and order situation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GHAZIABAD

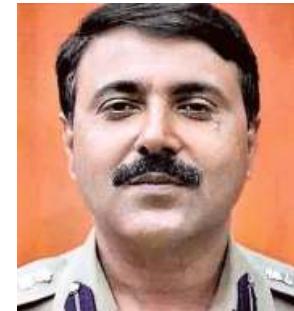
The Aligarh police on Sunday stopped former IPS officer Abdur Rahman from addressing students protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Mr. Rahman told reporters that he was detained for an hour at the Lodha police station and was told that his presence on the campus could lead to a law and order situation.

The former IPS officer said he told the police officers that he would not speak against any political personality and would limit himself to educating students on CAA-NRC-NPR.

#### 'Police scared'

But when they didn't agree, he said, as a law-abiding citizen he decided not to go to the campus but found the Aligarh police unusually



Ex-IPS officer Abdur Rahman who resigned over CAA

scared of the students.

A police source said they had no problem with Mr. Rahman speaking but they felt his presence could be used by anti-social elements among students to make some virulent statements that could affect the law and order. "We have seen in the past such elements using the stage to spread hatred," said the source.

Mr. Rahman resigned in

December after the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha. He was an Inspector General in the Maharashtra police and was posted in the State Human Rights Commission at the time of his resignation. He described the CAA as unconstitutional and his resignation an act of civil disobedience.

In a related development, the fact-finding inquiry committee, formed by AMU Vice-Chancellor Tariq Mansoor, has started its proceedings.

Headed by Justice V.K. Gupta (retd), former Chief Justice, High Courts of Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, it will look into the sequence of events that took place from December 13, 2019, and which led to the disturbances in the intervening night of December 15-16.

when police were called inside the campus by the AMU administration.

The Joint Registrar (Departmental Inquiry) has urged all the students, teachers and non-teaching staff, who are desirous to depose before the inquiry committee, to submit their written statement to him on or before February 7 so that the same may be placed before the committee.

#### V-C grants aid for injured

Meanwhile, 45 days after the incident, Prof. Mansoor has granted relief of ₹1,50,000 to two students who were injured during the police action on the intervening night of December 15-16 from the V-C/Alumni Fund on the recommendation of an internal committee that looked into the evidence related to the incident.

## Storming the sky



IAF's aerobatics team Surya Kiran rehearses for the Defence Expo 2020, in Lucknow on Sunday. ■ PTI

## 8-year-old girl raped by driver

Victim hospitalised in critical condition, say police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BARBANKI (U.P.)

A 26-year-old man was arrested for allegedly raping an eight-year-old girl in Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh, police said on Sunday.

The accused was the driver of a relative of the girl's family. She has been admitted to the district hospital in a serious condition, they said.

"On Saturday evening, a relative of the minor girl had come to meet her family. The girl was playing behind her house when she was raped by the driver, who was in an inebriated state," Superintendent of Police Arvind Chauhan said.

turvedi said.

"The girl raised an alarm, and her family members saw that she was bleeding," he said.

"The accused tried to flee from the spot, but was caught and thrashed by the villagers," he added.

He was arrested and a case registered against him under the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, the officer said.

The victim and her family alleged that a relative of the accused initially pressed them for a compromise and when they refused, he attacked with acid.

The victim has been hospitalised, police said.

## Acid thrown on rape victim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
HAPUR (U.P.)

Acid was allegedly thrown on a rape victim in Uttar Pradesh's Hapur district on Sunday, police said.

The victim and her family alleged that a relative of the accused initially pressed them for a compromise and when they refused, he attacked with acid.

The victim has been hospitalised, police said.

## Farmers threaten stir if procurement policy is changed

Current policy is in the best interest of the country, any deviation could have negative impact: experts

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

As the debate surrounding the review of open-ended procurement policy has started gaining momentum, following a recommendation by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) to the Centre government, several farmers and farmers' bodies in Punjab and Haryana have hinted that any move to stop or limit it would be opposed and resisted.

Agri-experts also believe that the current open-ended procurement policy is in the best interest of the country

and farmers and any deviation could have negative impact on farmers.

#### 'Mounting stocks'

"The CACP has given its recommendation in the backdrop of mounting food stocks, which raises the fear that the Centre would limit procurement as a first step towards putting an end to the MSP purchase," said Jagmohan Singh, State General Secretary of Bhartiya Kisan Union Ekta (Dakshana).

"Any move to stop or limit the purchase of wheat and rice at MSP by the government would be opposed and resisted in the strongest possible manner," Mr. Pandher said.

Expressing similar sentiments Sarwan Singh Pandher, general secretary of the Punjab unit of Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Smriti, said "farmers in Punjab and Haryana are managing to survive only because wheat and paddy here are purchased at the MSP, if this process is stopped or even limited it would be nothing short of signing their death warrant."

"Government should be ready to face agitation if the open ended procurement policy is changed in a manner, which is detrimental to farmers' interest," Mr. Pandher said.

Pargat Singh, who has sown wheat in nearly 14 acres at Rolu Majra village in district Rupnagar, said a reason cited by the CACP for review is that the policy has led to mounting food stocks and adversely affected crop diversification.

#### 'Assured price'

"The reality, however, is that farmers are not being taken out of this cycle (wheat/paddy). In order to bring crop diversification, there's a need to fix proper remunerative and assured market," Mr. Sidhu said.

Government should ensure a mechanism where farmers can get an assured remunerative price for crops cultivated by them other than wheat and paddy," Mr. Singh said.

Noted economist at Ludhiana-based Punjab Agricultural University, Prof. M.S. Sidhu, firmly believes that the current open ended procurement policy should continue in its current form.

"The present policy is in the best interest of the country. Wheat and rice are basic food items. The present policy should continue in the interest of Punjab as well as the country," said Mr. Sidhu.

## Educational intervention heralds a new era of girls' empowerment in Rajasthan

78 girls from a dozen villages of Alwar district's backward Kishangarh Bas block have completed their schooling and are going for higher education

MOHAMMED IQBAL  
KISHANGARH BAS (ALWAR)

Modestly attired Rukmina of Bidarka village is the proud recipient of an award given by the Kishangarh Bas Sub-Divisional Officer on this year's Republic Day in recognition of her contribution to women's empowerment by generating awareness about digital services. She studies for a bachelor's degree and runs an e-governance centre in the nondescript village.

Rukmina, 21, is among the 78 girls from about a dozen villages of Alwar district's Kishangarh Bas block, forming part of the Mewat region, who have completed their schooling and are going for higher and technical education. A prolonged educational

intervention has created this "first batch" of girls in the region which had an abysmal 10% female literacy rate till a decade ago.

#### Daughter of labourer

Daughter of a landless labourer who worked hard to become the in-charge of employment guarantee works, Rukmina is looked upon as an entrepreneur whose e-Mitra centre provides online facilities to the villagers. "I also use this place as a platform for schoolgirls and give them guidance for studies... As Bidarka's first girl to pass out XII, it is very satisfying," Rukmina told *The Hindu*.

While Rukmina is pursuing the bachelor's course from an open university, three girls

from her village have joined Kishangarh P.G. College at the block headquarters and one - Sakunat, daughter of Sarpanch Jamshed Khan - has shifted to Bharatpur to study in the Agriculture College. Since Bidarka has only a government middle school, several girls are staying in hostels in Kishangarh Bas to study till XII.

Shabnam Bano, 23, from the nearby Mirzapur village is the first girl from the block to complete a polytechnic diploma course and join an engineering college. "Though I convinced my parents, I could join the polytechnic college in Alwar after facing strong opposition by villagers who thought that education polluted girls' minds," said

Shabnam, pursuing B.Tech in Alwar's Laxmi Devi Institute of Engineering & Technology.

The educational intervention, which has heralded a new era of empowerment of adolescent girls belonging to

marriages by promoting adolescent girls' education.

AMIED volunteered to conduct bridge courses and run residential and remedial classes for girls to enable them to complete their senior secondary education. The parents were convinced and the local communities in 25 villages were mobilised to send girls to the government-run hostels from villages where only poorly equipped primary and middle schools were functioning.

"The results are very encouraging. A new generation of educated and confident girls has emerged in this region, where people believed till a few years ago that the girls were only meant to do household chores and lend a

hand in the fields during sowing and harvest season," AMIED member-secretary Noor Mohammed said.

Girls in the region were earlier married at the age of 12 to 14.

#### E-Mitra centres

AMIED project coordinator Asha Narang said 10 girls and women had started their e-Mitra centres with the support of Digital Empowerment Foundation and a mobile phone manufacturer. These centres, run with solar power, are also utilised for counselling on reproductive health and digital education as well as for motivating girls and their families for education.

The impact is visible in the villages such as Jilota, Meda-

bas, Musakheda, Ismailpur, Ghansoli, Chorbaisai and Kolagaon. From Bagora village, half-a-dozen girls travel as a group to Kishangarh Bas every day to attend college. Nisha, a Bachelor of Arts student, said marriage was nowhere on priority for the girls until they completed their education.

The project, funded by the American Jewish World Service, has also led to the establishment of groups called Mewat Balika Manch, which fine-tune girls' skills and provide subject-specific support for board examinations. Besides, people's conventions and workshops with religious leaders were organised to discuss the ways to stop the dropout of girls from schools.



Rukmina, recipient of the Republic Day award, at her e-Mitra centre in Alwar's Bidarka village. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Three prisoners escape from Punjab jail, hunt launched

CM orders magisterial probe, directs suspension of jail staff



CM Amarinder Singh

said in the statement that the men apparently made a hole in the wall of their barrack by removing about 10 bricks. They then appear to have scaled the inner wall (about 16 feet high) by standing atop the other, while they climbed the outer wall (21 feet approx.) by using a hook made of a steel bar and the cover of a quilt. They escaped the jail complex from a point near Tower No. 10, which was not under CCTV cover, he said.

One of the escaped prisoners has been identified as Vishal, hailing from Amritsar. The other two are brothers, identified as Gurpreet and Jarnail Khadoor Sahib, the officer added.

The Shiromani Akali Dal on Sunday demanded an immediate dismissal of the Jails Minister and a probe by a sitting judge of the High Court into the escape of the three prisoners.

(With PTI inputs)

## Farmers' collective to hold protest on February 13

It claims Union Budget is 'anti-farmer and pro-corporate'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

The All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee has called the Union Budget "anti-farmer and pro-corporate". It would stage a nationwide protest on February 13 against the "pro-corporate" proposals in the Budget and the government's failure to address the debts among farmers and the rising input cost and ensure profitable sale of crops.

#### 'No space for farmers'

In a statement, it said: "This is a Budget that has no space for farmers. The Narendra Modi government is yet again sending a message to farmers that it is the companies, and not the farmers, that matter to it."

The All-India Kisan Sabha

has also decided to join the protest. Its president Ashok Dhawale said the Union Finance Minister had said the government was committed to doubling farmers' incomes by 2022, but the Budget presented was one of the most anti-farmer Budgets in recent years. "A look at the Finance Bill reveals agriculture and allied sectors have seen massive cuts in allocations," he said in a statement.

The Tobacco Institute of

Budget that Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented was one of the most anti-farmer in recent years

ASHOK DHAWALE

President, All-India Kisan Sabha

India said the increase in the national calamity contingent duty (NCCD) and the resulting rise in cigarette taxation, leading to higher tax arbitrage, would embolden illegal cigarette trade operators, who target India.

# Tribal leader Mahato released from jail

He was arrested in 2009 for leading a movement against the CPI(M) with the help of Maoist party

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

One of West Bengal's most significant leaders, Chhatradhar Mahato, who emerged from non-mainstream politics and led a successful people's movement, was released from jail on Saturday.

He immediately left for his home town in Lalgarh, on the Bengal-Jharkhand border, the epicentre of the Maoist movement a decade ago.

## Life imprisonment

Mr. Mahato, the main leader of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA), was arrested in 2009 for building up a

movement against the Communist Party of India (Marxist) with the help of the outlawed Maoist party.

He was convicted in 2015 and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Opposing police excesses in Jhargram district, Mr. Mahato led a predominantly tribal movement, which catapulted him to prominence. At one point, he allegedly coordinated with the Maoists on one hand and the Trinamool Congress leaders on the other, to build resistance against the CPI(M) government.

The movement flagged alleged atrocities committed by the local CPI(M) leaders over the years and the high-



Chhatradhar Mahato (face covered in black cloth) at the time of his arrest in 2009.  
• FILE PHOTO

handed approach by the administration. Eventually, Mr. Mahato was arrested but the CPI(M) was also defeated in the area.

Despite being in jail, Mr. Mahato contested in the 2011 Assembly polls and bagged nearly 20,000 votes, which "was an indication of his popularity in Jangalmahal", Mr. Mahato's wife Niyozi told *The Hindu* in 2016.

## After Kishenji's killing

However, following his arrest and killing of Maoist leader Mallojula Koteswara Rao (Kishenji), the people's movement in Bengal's western districts fizzled out.

Meanwhile, the TMC also partially lost its grip in the backward tribal areas of Jhargram and Purulia.

In the panchayat polls of 2018, the BJP bagged 42% and 33% seats in Jhargram

and adjacent Purulia respectively, far higher than its State-average of 18%. In the 2019 Lok Sabha poll, the TMC lost both the seats to the BJP and even the adjacent ones, partly dominated by the tribals.

"In this context, many believe that Mr. Mahato can play a significant role in the area. He may form a new party which can pull a percentage of anti-TMC tribal votes, which went to the BJP in the last elections," said a CPI(Maoist) sympathiser.

However, it would depend on Mr. Mahato's crowd pulling ability and "no one knows if he still is as popular as he was at the time of his arrest".

# End ordeal of IIT-Guwahati professor, urge academics

Prof. Saikia was grilled by NIA for four hours on Saturday

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A group of 42 scholars and academics from across the country have issued a statement expressing concern over the ordeal of Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) faculty member Arupjyoti Saikia, who was summoned and grilled by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday.

The NIA did not specify why Professor Saikia had been questioned for about four hours. His colleagues suspected it was in connection with the violent protests

against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in December last year.

## 'Distressed, concerned'

"We... write in distress and with concern with regard to the ongoing ordeal of... Professor Saikia is one of the country's most distinguished and respected historians. The author most recently of a landmark history of the Brahmaputra river, he has also written significant works on forest and agrarian history," the statement said.

"That a scholar of such standing, and a human being of such decency, has

been called for intensive grilling by the NIA is deeply distressing. We urge that the NIA treat him with the dignity and respect he deserves, and allow him to continue his professional work unimpeded," the statement added.

Among the scholars and academics who signed the statement are Dr. Rama-chandra Guha, Professor Ni-raja Gopal Jayal, Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Professor Geeta Venkataraman, Professor Nandini Sundar, Professor Nayantot Lahiri, Dr. Janaki Nair and Dr. Raz-uddin Aquil.

# Disconnection drive part of plan to auction discoms: Odisha CPI(M)

'Regulatory body has failed to safeguard consumers' interests'

## STAFF REPORTER

BERHAMPUR

The CPI(M) in Odisha has alleged that the proposed disconnection drive to collect dues by power utilities – SOUTHCO and NESCO – from February 16 is part of a plan to auction the two private companies in the near future.

SOUTHCO and NESCO have taken this decision after a similar measure by the CESU, another power distribution utility of the State.

State CPI(M) secretary Ali Kishor Patnaik said, "CESU has already been auctioned to Tata Power. It seems the government wants to please and attract the corporate houses to take over the other discoms – SOUTHCO, NESCO, WESCO – by collecting

the arrears before initiating the auctioning process."

As per reports, NESCO has arrears of over ₹1,526 crore in five north-eastern districts, while SOUTHCO has around ₹1,357 crore dues in eight southern districts.

Meanwhile, CESU has collected over ₹61.4 crore and disconnected power supply to 18,730 consumers till January 31.

## 'Govt. dues higher'

Odisha CPI(M) has decided to oppose this exploitation. "The government agencies and private companies have large power dues. If the power utilities start harassing the general public by threatening disconnection in stead of collecting dues from

the government and private companies, a strong people's resistance will be built in Odisha," said Mr. Patnaik.

He also alleged that the Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) has failed to safeguard the interests of power consumers.

According to State CPI(M), Odisha was the first State to go for privatisation in 1996, but has not learnt from past, while several other States are still not adopting the Odisha model.

The CESU, earlier known as CESCO, was managed by American company AES, which withdrew from the CESCO in 2001.

In 2005, OERC cancelled its license but dues could not be collected from AES, said Mr. Patnaik.

## SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one boy (depicted in the photo), Namely: Kabir, S/o: Sh. Gautam Sharma, R/o: H.No. I-4650/16, Budh Bazar Gali, New Modern Shahdara, Delhi, Aged: 12 years, has been missing/ kidnapped from the area of P.S. Laxmi Nagar, Delhi since 24.01.2020 vide FIR No. 38/2020 U/S 363 IPC, Dated 24.01.2020, has been lodged at P.S. Laxmi Nagar, Delhi. His physical description is as under:



Height: 5 feet, Complexion: Shallow, Face: Oval, Physique/Build: Thin, Clothing: Black colour jacket, Red colour inner and Blue colour Jeans pant. The boy is mentally challenged and Dumb.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing/kidnapped boy, may inform SHO, Laxmi Nagar, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : http://cbi.nic.in Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641

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Sl. No.	Job No.	Name of work	Amount in Lac
A 1	29(GM/R)/ M/o Building (P/F) Concertina Coil SW(MC-W-2)	wire on boundary wall/A-51 plot along Nithari road Sector-31, Noida.	₹ 6.32

Which can be uploaded by date: 10.02.2020 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date: 11.02.2020 at 11.00 AM.

General Manager (R), Noida

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(Through GOK e-Procurement Portal only)

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Tenderers for the works detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Value of Work (Rs. in Lakh)	EMD (in Rs. )
1	Maintenance of STP at Dorekere Lake (Call-4)	20.00	25,000/-
2	Improvements to Kalkere Lake. (BBMP Grants) Call-3	350.00	5,25,000/-

Calendar of Events : (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of the Government of Karnataka from 01.02.2020. (2) Pre bid meeting will be held on

05.02.2020 at 3:00 p.m. in the Office of the Executive Engineer Lakes, BBMP. (3) Tenders must be submitted online through e-procurement portal on or before 4:00 p.m. on 10.02.2020

and the opening of tenders will be as per the e-procurement portal guidelines. (4) Bids will be opened on the website https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in in the Office of the Executive Engineer, Lakes, BBMP on 12.02.2020 at 11:30 a.m. Further details may be obtained from the above office, during office hours or website

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# 'Appoint separate SIT to probe clashes'

Ambedkarite outfit demands time-bound report as Bhima-Koregaon commission gets fifth extension

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE  
PUNE

Even as the Uddhav Thackeray-led Mahatma Gandhi (MVA) government granted yet another extension to the two-member commission set up to probe the causes behind the Bhima-Koregaon clashes, Ambedkarite outfits like the city-based Republican Yuva Morcha (RYM) have demanded that the State constitute a separate special investigation team (SIT) to probe afresh the riots that rocked Maharashtra on January 1, 2018.

Rahul Dambale, president of the morda, said the very fact that the commission had recently complained to the MVA government of a severe fund crunch confirmed the worst suspicions of Ambedkarite outfits that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, which had set it up, had no wish for the truth behind the riots to emerge.

The RYM has also demanded that Mr. Thackeray's government immediately direct the Pune rural police to file a charge sheet in the case and set up a trial court to probe the role of Hindutva leaders Milind Ekbole and Sambhaji Bhide.

"While the inefficacy of the Bhima-Koregaon judicial commission has been proven time and again, we urge the State government to appoint a separate SIT to probe the clashes from scratch while mandating it to submit a report within a fixed period," Mr. Dambale said while speaking to *The Hindu*.

On Saturday, the MVA



**Annual ritual:** Hundreds of Dalits gather at the victory pillar in Bhima-Koregaon each year to commemorate their win in the battle of 1818. ■ FILE PHOTO

granted the fifth extension to the commission, comprising retired Kolkata High Court chief justice J.N. Patel and former Maharashtra chief secretary Sumit Mullick, which was set up by the Devendra Fadnavis government to probe the incident. Violence broke out in Bhima-Koregaon and the adjoining villages on New Year's Day in 2018, when hundreds gathered to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the 1818 Bhima-Koregaon battle, leaving one person dead and heightening social tensions across the State.

Mr. Dambale said the commission, whose work was further hamstrung by its lack of resources, had yet to examine several witnesses. "While the Uddhav Thackeray government is mooting the formation of a SIT to probe the Pune Police's in-

vestigation into the Elgar Parishad case, the probe into the main clashes at Bhima-Koregaon itself has been ignored. And it is obvious that the two-member commission has made no significant progress even after two years of the violence," said Mr. Dambale, who claimed to have filed the first affidavit before the commission.

FIRs had been lodged on January 2, 2018 (a day after the clashes) against radical Hindutva leaders Milind Ekbole, who heads the fringe outfit 'Samasta Hindu Aghadi', and Sambhaji Bhide 'Guruji', founder of the Sangli-based, right-wing 'Shiv Pratishthan Hindustan'. While Mr. Ekbole is out on bail, Mr. Bhide has never been probed.

Mr. Dambale alleged that the judicial commission had been operating under pres-

sure from the BJP government, which had shielded Mr. Bhide and Mr. Ekbole.

"The RYM had demanded soon after the riots that the government appoint a sitting judge and not a retired judge as part of the judicial panel. Had a sitting judge been appointed, he would automatically have been able to command facilities and the resources necessary to conduct the probe. Furthermore, the present commission can only give recommendations and has no powers to prosecute," said Mr. Dambale. He also said the commission had done nothing significant despite 500-odd affidavits being submitted in the case, detailing atrocities on Dalits by Hindutva forces in Bhima-Koregaon.

He remarked that the deliberately 'weak' nature of

the commission offered an insight into the disposition of the BJP, which was determined to protect the orchestrators of the clashes right from the start.

Taking issue with the investigation of the Pune rural police, Mr. Dambale pointed out that neither the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act nor the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act, 1999 (MCOCA) was ever applied in the FIRs against Mr. Ekbole and Mr. Bhide registered immediately after the clashes.

"In October 2001, Mr. Ekbole had come under the police scanner in connection with a rioting incident in Saswad and top district authorities had mooted action against him under the Maharashtra Prevention of Dangerous Activities (MPDA) of Slumlords, Bootleggers, Drug-offenders and Dangerous Persons Act, 1981. Yet, despite Mr. Ekbole being a repeat offender, even the MPDA was not applied to him by the Pune rural police in connection with the Bhima-Koregaon clashes," Mr. Dambale said.

Likewise, besides hollow assurances from Pune Rural police authorities, not a single charge sheet had been filed by them in spite of 23 FIRs being lodged by members from Ambedkarite outfits and others in connection with the clashes.

"Only 104 persons among 1,400-odd people identified as the rioters have been arrested or investigated till date by the Pune rural police, which is less than 10%," Mr. Dambale said.

# BJP leader in soup for calling woman tehsildar 'heroine'

Babanrao Lonikar defends himself, says it is not abusive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AURANGABAD

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and former Maharashtra minister Babanrao Lonikar has landed in the soup after an audio clip surfaced on social media in which he purportedly called a woman tehsildar a "heroine", although he did not take anybody's name.

While speaking at a function in Karhala village in Jalna district on Saturday, Mr. Lonikar also said a "heroine can be roped in" for a planned farmers' rally.

The comments invited the ruling Nationalist Congress Party's (NCP) ire, with the party saying that his "unacceptable" remarks amount to outraging the modesty of a woman.

However, Mr. Lonikar defended the use of the word saying that 'heroine' was not an abusive term, and he meant it as a "leader who does good work."

In the audio clip of his speech, the BJP leader can be heard saying, "If farmers want an aid of ₹25,000 from the government, then we can plan the biggest rally in Marathwada here in Partur. We can involve 25,000 to 50,000 people in it. If zilla parishad and panchayat samiti members decide then we can have the biggest march in the State in Partur."

"We can call (former chief minister) Devendra Fadnavis, (former ministers) Chandrakant Patil and Sudhir Mungantiwar. You tell who



**Courting controversy:** Babanrao Lonikar was speaking at a function in Karhala village in Jalna. ■ FILE PHOTO

**Making such remarks about woman's looks amounts to outraging her modesty**

VIDYA CHAVAN  
NCP leader

er the issue of aid to farmers. BJP spokesperson Shirish Boralkar defended the leader saying he was speaking about development of farmers. "His statement was presented in a twisted manner by the media," Mr. Boralkar said.

Senior NCP leader and MLC Vidya Chavan criticised Mr. Lonikar for his remarks. "His comments against the woman tehsildar are completely unacceptable and it reflects the BJP's mentality. Instead of respecting the working women, the BJP leader is bringing shame to them by making comments on their looks," she alleged.

"Making such remarks about woman's looks amounts to outraging her modesty," Ms. Chavan said.

## Citizens' group praised by Gadkari on Twitter

Effort to paint speed breakers lauded

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

In a move aimed at reducing road accidents, a citizens' group in Goa has so far painted over 130 speed breakers in the State white to increase their visibility, which has earned them praise from Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.

The group has been carrying out this activity under the #RostoGoa campaign.

### Blind spots

Activist Cecille Rodrigues, who is leading the campaign, said, "The speed breakers had turned into blind spots, causing road accidents. The RostoGoa initiative began from my own constituency – Taleigao – and spread to other areas, including Calangute and Baga, which are prominent tourist spots."

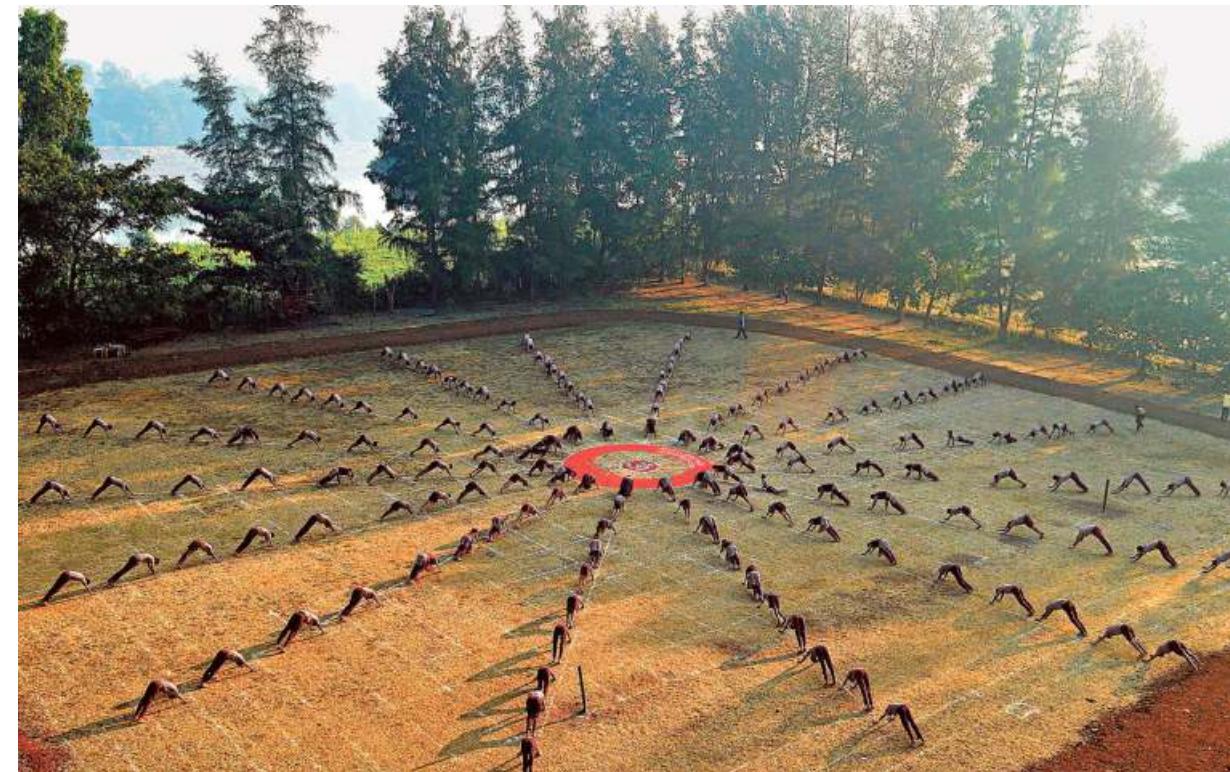
Ms. Rodrigues said the ini-

tiative began with a small group of like-minded people. "Later many others joined as the initiative through social media," she said, adding that she had earlier met with an accident due to a speed breaker.

Mr. Gadkari, the Road Transport and Highways Minister, recently tweeted about the initiative and appreciated the group for its efforts. "Cecille Rodrigues, Seema Chimulkar and Praakash Malani have developed unique road stamp 'Rosto' which cautions drivers of blind spots, thus reducing accidents on the road. #RoadSafetyHeroes (sic)," he said in the tweet.

Goa Forward Party chief Vijai Sardesai on Sunday said his party would move a 'congratulatory motion' for the group over its initiative during the upcoming Budget session of the Assembly.

## Towards brighter days



**In formation:** Students perform Surya Namaskar on Ratha Saptami at Jankalyan school in Karad on Saturday. The Hindu festival, marking the birth of the sun god, is symbolic of the change of season to spring. ■ RAJU SANADI

## New mascot for National Games

Goa's State bird, flame-throated bulbul, gets the tag



**Grand ceremony:** The official mascot of 36th National Games was unveiled by Kiren Rijiju at an event in Panaji on Friday. ■ TWITTER/PIB\_PANAJI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

The flame-throated bulbul, also called the Rubigula, was chosen as the mascot of the 36th National Games to be held in Goa because it is the State bird, a senior sports department official

said on Sunday.

The mascot, which was unveiled by Union Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs Kiren Rijiju on Friday, has been designed by Goa-based artist Sharmila Coutinho, he said.

The 36th National Games will be held between October 20 and November 4 this year, and 12,000 athletes from 36 States and Union Territories are expected to participate in 37 disciplines across 24 venues in Goa.

## Goa budget session to be held from today

Oppn. to raise CAA, Mahadayi issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PANAJI

The Opposition is set to raise burning issues like the new citizenship law, proposed country-wide National Register of Citizens (NRC) and "diversion" of the Mahadayi river water by Karnataka in the Budget session of the Goa Assembly, which will begin on Monday.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant will table the State budget on February 6.

The Opposition comprising Congress had announced that they would raise issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act, NRC and diversion of the Mahadayi river water by the neighbouring State during the five-day-long session.

In the House of 40, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has 27 MLAs. The party-led government enjoys support of two Independent MLAs and an Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) legislator. Among the remaining 10 MLAs, five are from the

Congress, three from the Goa Forward Party, one from the Maharashtra Samajwadi Party and an Independent.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister said his first ever Budget would be on the lines of the Union Budget tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday.

Various industrial bodies, including the Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI), have suggested various measures to boost the sagging revenue, which has taken a hit due to suspended mining operations.

GCCI president Manoj Calculo identified agriculture and revival of sick industries as the key thrust areas for the government to bring the economy back on track.

A special one-day session of the Assembly was held on January 7 to ratify the amendment bill that extends reservations to Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies by another 10 years.

## Mob armed with iron rods damages vehicles in Pune's Sahakar Nagar



**Shattered:** The windshield of a vehicle parked by the side of the road was broken by the mob. ■ MANDAR TANNU

## 3 mild quakes hit Kutch within 14 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDABAD

Three low-intensity earthquakes shook parts of Kutch district in Gujarat within 14 hours ending around 9 a.m. on Sunday, an official said.

While two quakes were recorded within a gap of nearly half an hour on Sun-

day morning, another one was reported on Saturday evening, the official said, adding that no damage to life or property was reported.

"An earthquake of 3.3 magnitude was felt with its epicentre around 46 kms north-north-west from Bela. One of 3.0 magnitude was recorded at 8.35 a.m. on Saturday.

an official of Gandhinagar-based Institute of Seismological Research said. Another quake of 2.1 magnitude was recorded at 9.07 a.m. on Sunday with its epicentre around 46 kms north-north-west from Bela. One of 3.0 magnitude was recorded at 8.35 a.m. on Saturday.

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## IN BRIEF



**Gold worth ₹1.12 crore seized at Calicut airport**

MALAPPURAM A total of 2.81 kg smuggled-in gold was seized from three passengers who arrived at the Calicut International Airport, Kerala, on different flights on Sunday. The gold was worth ₹1.12 crore. Customs officers seized 2.447 kg of gold in the form of two discs hidden inside speakers and 140 gm of gold in the form of 14 buttons concealed inside lipstick. In the third case, the gold was concealed in mouth organs and make-up kits.

**Five arrested in A.P. with red sanders logs**

CHITTOOR Police personnel in Andhra Pradesh intercepted a couple of cars carrying red sanders logs at Nagari mandapam on the Puttur-Chennai National Highway, 70 km from here, in the early hours of Sunday. The vehicles were on their way to Chennai. When those in the two cars tried to give a slip to the police, the latter took five persons into custody after a hot chase. Among them, one is said to be an Army jawan. The police also seized some red sanders logs and sharp weapons.

**Cabinet expansion on Feb. 6: Karnataka CM**

BENGALURU Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa announced on Sunday that he would expand the Cabinet on February 6. Thirteen Ministers would be inducted at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday. This is the first time the Chief Minister has specified a date for ministerial expansion, ending several weeks of speculation. He said the formula for expansion was "10+3", meaning 10 members who crossed over to the BJP and won in the by-elections and three party old-timers.

# Jagan's team reaches out to people on Naidu's home turf

At a public meeting in Naravaripalle, YSRCP leaders push three-capital idea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI



**Spreading the word:** Government Adviser Ajeya Kallam speaking at the meeting near Tirupati on Sunday. With him is MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy. ■ K.V. POORNACHANDRA KUMAR

Naravaripalle village in Andhra Pradesh's Chandragiri constituency, the native place of former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu, witnessed palpable tension on Sunday, with the ruling YSR Congress Party deciding to hold a public meeting on the importance of having three capitals.

MLA and Government Whip Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy chose this place apparently to send the message across to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government would not be cowed down by the spate of demonstrations against the decentralisation move.

The government, however, drew flak for mobilising resources at its disposal for holding a huge meeting.

Government Adviser

of coastal Vizag to natural disasters such as cyclones.

## 'No going back'

Agriculture Minister Kurasa Kannababu said the government would not go back on its decision though it might get delayed due to procedural hassles.

Adviser Sajala Ramakrishna Reddy flayed Mr. Naidu for keeping his people in the dark. In sharp contrast, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy strove for the uplift of the downtrodden.

Tirupati MLA Bhumana Karunakar Reddy said Rayalseema got recognition only after YSR became the Chief Minister. Mr. Naidu had neglected the region though he hailed from it, he added.

Clarifying that his meeting was not politically motivated, Mr. Bhaskar Reddy said he only intended to reach out to every corner of his constituency.

Ajeya Kallam, who listed the events that made the government think of decentralisation, accused the previous regime of financial indiscipline and impropriety in land allocation, thus landing the State in a mess. He wondered why the agitating farmers were worried only about the land value and not a remunerative price.

Mr. Naidu took credit for

the development of HITEC City in Hyderabad, though it was conceived by his predecessors, Mr. Kallam said.

"We have already seen the ill-effects of concentrating all facilities in the same region and hence the decision," he said. Citing the examples of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, he brushed aside both arguments – central location of Amaravati and vulnerability



The Pandalam royal family says it has a right to protect the rites at Sabarimala.

family member Raja Raja Varma.

A person who intends to

worship at the temple has to subscribe to its "institutional morality". "A person who does not subscribe to the code has no locus to call into question the essential practices, custom and usage of the temple," the note said.

The Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, will assemble on February 3 to frame issues on a series of petitions, including

the one on the Sabarimala temple's prohibition of women of menstruating age. These petitions concerning multiple faiths highlight the tug-of-war between the equal right of women to worship and the right to religious practices.

The note said the right to religious practices and beliefs was not subservient to the right to equality. Courts could not impose the concept of "constitutional morality" to override religious practices.

The Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965, does not govern the temple. Though the temple is of a public character, its essential character of an unincorporated family temple could not be altered, Mr. Varma said. Thus, the members of the donor family – the Pandalam royal family – have a right and duty to protect the temple's rites and rituals.

# Woman hailing from A.P. sends SOS from Wuhan

She claimed she is being held back by Chinese authorities

STAFF REPORTER  
KURNool

A 22-year-old woman from Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district is currently stuck in Wuhan, China. She was stopped by the Chinese authorities from flying out of the country on Saturday as she was running a temperature. Wuhan is the epicentre of the novel coronavirus and the authorities suspected that she was carrying the virus.

She has released a video on social media, which has since gone viral.

Identified as A. Jyothi, a native of Eerlapaadi of Bandi Atmakur mandal in the district, has gone to Wuhan as part of her job training. She is employed with TCL in Tirupati and is to get married on February 14.

In the video, Ms. Jyothi says that the Chinese authorities had told her not to board the flight prepared for

Indians in Wuhan as she was running a slightly higher temperature than normal.

Ms. Jyothi has appealed to the Central government to help her and bring her out of Wuhan at the earliest.

Back home, her mother Prameela Devi said she was constantly speaking with her daughter, and that the latter was not running any temperature now. She urged the government to immediately bring her daughter back.

# 2,130 Kerala islands now under CRZ cover

Restrictions will be imposed on development work

K.S. SUDHI  
KOCHI



**Safe zone:** Visitors at Ernakulam's Kadamakudy island, one of the 2,130 in the list. ■ H. VIBHU

As many as 2,130 backwater islands of Kerala, including Maradu, have been brought under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) regime thereby imposing curbs on development activities.

No new development activity will be permitted in these islands in an area between the High Tide Line (HTL) and 50 metres towards the landward side, which is the CRZ area of

these islands. The HTL is the line on the land up to which the highest water line reaches during the spring tide.

The islands of Mulavukad, Chendamangalam, Kothat, Pizhala and Kadamakudy of Ernakulam, where some ma-

jor CRZ violations have been reported, are there in the list of 1,068 islands of the district.

## First attempt

The 474 islands of Alappuzha and the 184 of Kollam are also in the list. Thiruvananthapuram has the least number of islands, 43.

This is for the first time that a list of Kerala islands is being drawn up. It was prepared by the National Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, for the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority. The list will soon be uploaded on the website of the authority.

# Look into farmer's RTI appeal, says Telangana HC

R. AVADHANI  
VEMULAGHAT

In another win for the farmers of Vemulaghath, who have been fighting for the implementation of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LA Act), the High Court of Telangana directed authorities to provide access to the files sought by the applicant.

Md. Hayathuddin had filed a petition seeking information on a certain issue of the Mallanmasagar reservoir project coming up in the district. Vemulaghath is one of the villages that would be submerged under the project.

He had sought information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act but it was not provided despite repeated appeals. Mr. Hayathuddin then approached the High Court. Justice Challa Kodanda Ram issued orders in this direction on January 8.

# Schooling and skilling must go together, says Venkaiah

It's time to revisit our country's education system'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HUBBALLI

Expressing concern over the low level of employability among educated youths in the country, Vice-President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that it was time now for revisiting the education system and ensuring that schooling and skilling went together.

He was addressing a public gathering after inaugurating the Deshpande Skillling Centre, a skill development centre of Airport Road, and interacting with students on Saturday.

Terming the large young Indian population a demographic dividend, which provided great opportunities and also challenges, Mr. Naidu said education should

also lead to enlightenment, enhancement of knowledge, empowerment and employability. The new education policy should also address the issues of skilling and scaling as the country had a huge manpower.

Mr. Naidu said: "Acquiring and upgrading skills is

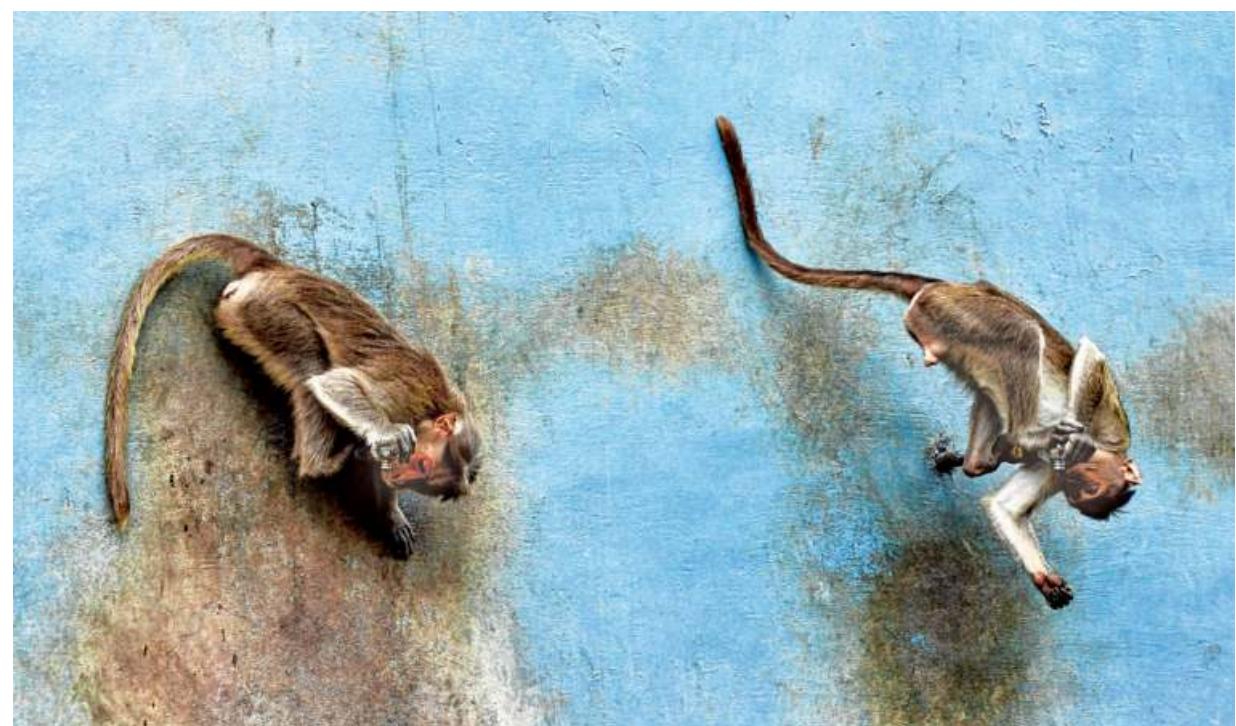
crucial as the world around is changing rapidly. In a country known for unity in diversity, creating opportunities was important. And in this regard, industries should try to establish better linkage with educational institutions like in the West to train and create opportunities for the youths," he said.

He advised the students not to forget their mother tongue in their craze for learning new languages, particularly English. "Learning English is good. But don't become an Englishman. Let the medium be English, but culture should remain Indian," he said.

Mr. Naidu also asked them to be positive in their approach and shun negativity.

Mr. Naidu said: "Acquiring and upgrading skills is

## Feels like summer



**Every drop counts:** Monkeys quenching thirst on a hot day at Devarayanadurga in Tumkur district near Bengaluru. Most places in Karnataka registered a sudden rise in temperatures on Sunday. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

# When runners ended up at a police station

Organisers of marathon in Kerala took a registration fee but failed to give prizes

STAFF REPORTER  
KOZHIKODE

A marathon organised by a private sporting and adventure firm here in Kerala had an unexpected conclusion not at the finish point but at the Nadakkavu police station on Sunday after the participants held the organisers responsible for mismanagement of the event.

The participants, including foreign runners, who turned up early in the morning, accused the organisers of not keeping the promises they made earlier through online media on the prizes.

**Managers disappear**

The Nadakkavu police said they took up the issue after the runners complained

that they could not find the organisers after the event. The participants also locked horns with one of the event coordinators at the spot in their attempt to get back their registration fee. According to the police, the organisers had collected

between ₹350 and ₹550 per head as registration fee. A police officer from Nadakkavu said the issue was settled after an organiser agreed to refund the amount to all the registered participants. He would be booked in case of violation of the promise, the official said.

For many of the participants, it was the first experience in their life. Many foreign participants who emerged as winners could not even understand the unforeseen climax. Some of them had even lost their way in the absence of proper guidelines. There were even participants from other districts who stayed in various hotels in the city on Saturday to prepare for the event.

The critical months are February and March, when a

police officer from Nadakkavu said the issue was settled after an organiser agreed to refund the amount to all the registered participants. He would be booked in case of violation of the promise, the official said.

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## IN BRIEF



## Signature campaign against CAA, NRC

CHENNAI  
The DMK-led Opposition parties in Tamil Nadu kicked off a signature campaign against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR). The ruling AIADMK and its ally, PMK, are responsible for all the protests, DMK president M.K. Stalin said, launching the campaign at Kolathur.

## Social activist Aruna Roy's sister dead

JAIPUR  
Manya Jayaram Lindsay, younger sister of social activist Aruna Roy, died in Hitchin, U.K., after suffering from cancer in recent years. She had set up the preventive and curative health structure at the Social Work and Research Centre, Tilonia – widely known as the Barefoot College – and studied indigenous people in the U.S. and Australia, and the transgender community in India.

## Probe launched after video of attack goes viral

AGARTALA  
Police have launched an investigation after a video of a mob mercilessly beating a young tribal woman in south Tripura went viral. The woman was targeted for allegedly having an extramarital affair. The incident took place at Debbari village in Amarpur on January 29.

## Major security breach at Bhopal airport

MUMBAI  
In a major security breach at the Raja Bhoj International Airport in Bhopal, a youth entered the high-security tarmac area after scaling the perimeter wall. Yogendra Tiwari vandalised a helicopter parked in a hangar, causing extensive damage to its front portion. The intruder then ran off towards the runway when the CISF personnel tried to nab him.

# Hindu outfit leader shot dead in Lucknow

Ranjeet Bachchan was killed during his morning walk; four police personnel suspended

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LUCKNOW

The leader of the right-wing Vishwa Hindu Mahasabha was shot dead in the Uttar Pradesh capital on Sunday while he was out on a morning walk. Ranjeet Bachchan, 40, was shot in the head and his cousin Aditya Srivastava was injured in the attack by unidentified assailants, who also snatched their mobile phones, according to Joint Commissioner of Police Naresh Arora.



**Early morning attack:** The wife of Vishwa Hindu Mahasabha leader Ranjeet Bachchan, who was shot dead by unidentified assailants, in Lucknow on Sunday. ■ PTI

In a complaint registered with the police, Aditya Srivastava said: "I, along with Ranjeet, went out for a morning walk. At around 6 a.m., on the road outside Globe Park, an unknown person who was wrapped in a shawl came from behind,

and asked us to hand over our mobile phones. After this, the unknown person fired at Ranjeet, and also fired at me on my left arm. I ran from the spot."

Police said Bachchan died on the spot while Srivastava

suffered bullet injuries on his left hand. Four police personnel, including a sub-inspector, were suspended for laxity and a case has been registered at the Hazratganj police station in connection with the incident which oc-

curred near the Collectorate building, days after Lucknow came under the Police Commissioner system, aimed at improving law and order.

The police released CCTV footage showing the suspect and announced a cash re-

ward of ₹50,000 for information on the killer.

According to Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha president Swami Chakrapani, Bachchan was also the working president of the outfit's Uttar Pradesh unit.

## CM draws flak

Criticising Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for the incident, Swami Chakrapani said: "Such incidents throw a challenge to UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. He should weigh his options on whether election campaigning in other States is more important or improving the law and order of the State."

JCP Arora said, "As many as eight teams of the crime branch are working to solve the case."

## Wild elephant rescued from ditch in Odisha

5-hour operation to save the animal



**Down in the dumps:** The sub-adult female elephant had strayed away from a 14-member herd. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## STAFF REPORTER

BERHAMPUR

A wild elephant was rescued from a ditch after a five-hour operation by personnel of the Forest Department and the Fire Brigade near Alarigarh under Odisha's Berhampur Forest Division on Sunday.

The elephant had fallen into the ditch during the wee hours of Sunday.

Local people found the animal and informed the Forest officials.

One side of the ditch was dug up and flattened into a slope, to enable the stranded animal to come out.

The sub-adult female ele-

phant had strayed away from a 14-member herd that had been travelling through the elephant corridor near Alarigarh.

The elephant had fallen into the ditch during the wee hours of Sunday.

Local people found the animal and informed the Forest officials.

One side of the ditch was dug up and flattened into a slope, to enable the stranded animal to come out.

## A long wait for care at hospital for Bhopal tragedy survivors

Doctors cite low pay, lack of promotions in govt. facility

SIDHARTH YADAV  
BHOPAL

As tens of doctors quit the only government-run super-specialty hospital for the Bhopal gas tragedy survivors in 2014-2015, former Supreme Court Judge Faizanuddin wrote: "handing over the hospital to the Government of India has in fact proved to be its burial order."

After the Bhopal Memorial Trust – the custodian of the Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre (BMHRC) for a decade – was wound up in 2010 by the court, the former Judge had called it "nobody's child", before its adoption by the Centre.

On January 22, 13 of the 19 doctors resigned from BMHRC, managed by the Centre's Department of Health Research, citing lack

of promotions and infrastructure, low pay and fearing loss of seniority to new

entrants, adding to a "mass exodus" of experts that has afflicted the hospital ever since the Centre became its manager.

The 350-bed hospital, catering to the survivors of the methyl isocyanide gas leak in 1984 from the Union Carbide pesticide unit here, has changed hands three times in a decade. It is set to be tossed back as an autonomous institute under the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), in a bid to improve the availability of doctors by rolling out post-graduate programmes, according to the minutes of a High Power Committee's (HPC) meeting on August 13, 2019, perused by *The Hindu*.

This is despite the illustration of the ICMR's inefficacy in managing the hospital from 2012 to 2015, in the sixth report of a Monitoring Committee headed by retired Madhya Pradesh High Court Judge V.K. Agarwal.

"The ICMR has no experience in running a hospital," said Rachna Dhingra, coordinator, the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal. "In the minutes, there is no mention of the survivors. It is all about protecting the doctors"

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)  
**Forecast for Monday:** Dense fog very likely at isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 26.0...	10.6	24.2	Kozhikode	... 35.0...	24.2	24.2
Ahmedabad	... 27.0...	13.2	22.2	Kurnool	... 32.5...	22.2	22.2
Aizawl	... 17.1...	16.5	—	Lucknow	... 21.8...	8.2	8.2
Allahabad	... 24.2...	7.7	—	Madurai	... 34.0...	22.2	22.2
Bengaluru	... 29.2...	17.4	—	Mangalore	... 33.0...	22.2	22.2
Bhopal	... 22.5...	8.3	—	Mumbai	... 32.3...	17.7	17.7
Bhubaneswar	... 27.2...	20.7	—	Mysuru	... 31.9...	17.4	17.4
Chandigarh	... 18.6...	6.0	—	New Delhi	... 19.6...	0.6	0.6
Chennai	... 31.8...	20.0	—	Patna	... 22.2...	10.6	10.6
Coimbatore	... 32.9...	21.6	—	Port Blair	... 30.4...	25.7	25.7
Dehradun	... 21.2...	4.5	—	Puducherry	... 31.6...	22.6	22.6
Gangtok	... 9.7...	4.7	—	Pune	... 31.5...	15.9	15.9
Goa	... 29.9...	19.2	—	Raipur	... 26.1...	14.7	14.7
Guwahati	... 24.5...	11.3	—	Ranchi	... 22.0...	0.9	0.9
Hubballi	... 30.0...	18.0	—	Shillong	... 14.0...	0.2	0.2
Hyderabad	... 29.7...	20.7	—	Shimla	... 02.2...	12.2...	0.8
Imphal	... 20.7...	5.4	—	Srinagar	... 09.9...	4.2	4.2
Jajpur	... 22.2...	8.4	—	Thiruvananthapuram	... 33.3...	24.3	24.3
Kochi	... 32.0...	25.4	—	Tiruchi	... 33.5...	21.0	21.0
Kohima	... 16.0...	0.5	—	Vijayawada	... 31.4...	22.1	22.1
Kolkata	... 23.7...	14.5	—	Visakhapatnam	... 28.7...	23.0	23.0

(Rainfall in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	37	48	24	120	100	■
Bengaluru	... 43	54	... 80	104	... 100	■
Chennai	06	32	16	61	—	■
Delhi	10	194	80	334	237	■
Hyderabad	02	55	32	89	102	■
Kolkata	33	97	12	88	244	■
Lucknow	04	48	77	267	48	■
Mumbai	14	45	52	201	218	■
Pune	92	30	73	155	114	■
Visakhapatnam	10	32	47	51	51	■

As on January 27, there are 19 doctors, including the 13 whose resignations are yet to be accepted, against 57 sanctioned posts at the hospital, with the strength just a little over 30% against the sanctioned one. There are just three professors against a sanctioned 18, according to BMHRC's data.

To facilitate the teaching programmes, the hospital would be run like the Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, an autonomous institute in Kerala, which "would help retain doctors." The Centre also plans to convert it into an Institute of Excellence.

"This is despite the illustration of the ICMR's inefficacy in managing the hospital from 2012 to 2015, in the sixth report of a Monitoring Committee headed by retired Madhya Pradesh High Court Judge V.K. Agarwal.

"The ICMR has no experience in running a hospital," said Rachna Dhingra, coordinator, the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal. "In the minutes, there is no mention of the survivors. It is all about protecting the doctors"

**VHP, JDP clash over tribal mass wedding in West Bengal**

KOLKATA  
Tension erupted in the Aatmail area in the Malda district on Sunday after activists of the Jharkhand Disom Party (JDP), a locally powerful party of tribals, blocked the national highway-34 protesting against a mass wedding organised by the Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP), officials said. The members of the JDP and the VHP attacked each other leaving a few, including a policeman, injured. The incident occurred when the JDP members alleged that the VHP was organising the wedding ignoring their rituals.

## Doctors turn activists against Paraquat poisoning

Number of fatalities from the agricultural herbicide has fallen at VIMSAR

## SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BURLA  
It may appear strange to see a few young doctors with stethoscopes around their necks talking to relatives of patients on the use of a particular herbicide in agricultural fields. Yet, this can be seen regularly in the corridors of the Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR) here.

VIMSAR, a major public healthcare centre for western Odisha and parts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand,

has registered 157 deaths, mostly of farmers, since September 2017. The reason behind these deaths is the consumption of Paraquat – a herbicide used in agricultural fields. The tragedy stirred the conscience of young doctors, forcing them into the role of medical activists.

## Fatal impact

The young doctors have undertaken hunger strikes, sent missives to their bosses, tried to sensitise the media, and held discussions with farmers' associations. To-

gether, they have drawn attention to the fatal impact of Paraquat – very few have survived after consuming it.

The constant pressure from the young medics has forced the State government to withdraw its subsidy and stop the promotion of Paraquat. "I cannot forget the episode when a woman touched my feet, urging me to save her husband who had consumed Paraquat. It forced us to come out of our comfort zone," said Dr. Shankar Ramachandran, Senior Resident Doctor in VIM-

SAR,



## Cognisant of constraints

The 15th Finance Commission tries not to rock devolution boat given GST's ongoing troubles

The interim report of the 15th Finance Commission, tabled in Parliament on Saturday, has largely preserved the devolution mathematics of its predecessor, belying concerns of a sizeable cut in States' share. The commission has recommended a one percentage point reduction in the vertical split of the divisible pool of tax revenues accruing to States to 41%. This follows the reorganisation of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. While the former State's notional share based on the parameters for horizontal devolution would have been about 0.85%, the commission has cited the security and other special needs of the two territories to enhance their aggregate share to 1%, which would be met by the Centre. As part of an effort to balance the principles of fiscal needs, equity and performance as well as the need to ensure stability and predictability in transfers, the criteria for the horizontal sharing of taxes among States have been rejigged. A crucial new parameter, demographic performance, has been added to the mix. Having been mandated to adopt the population data from the 2011 Census, the commission has incorporated the additional criterion to ensure that States that have done well on demographic management are not unfairly disadvantaged. And since the norm also indirectly evaluates performance on the human capital outcomes of education and health, it has been assigned a weight of 12.5%. This should address the concerns voiced by several States over the switch to the 2011 Census from the 1971 data.

Among the States, with the exception of Tamil Nadu, all the other four southern States see a reduction in the recommended share of taxes for the year 2020-21. Notably, the suggested devolution to Odisha and Uttar Pradesh have also shrunk in percentage terms. Crucially, the commission has flagged the issues dogging the GST, especially as indirect taxes constitute almost half the total tax revenues of the Union. From the sizeable shortfalls and volatility in collections, to serious cases of fraud, the new tax has yet to stabilise leaving a majority of the States dependent on compensation from the Centre. The commission's effort to improve the granularity in devolution to local bodies has generated some interesting results. Urban local bodies, especially municipalities in cities with populations of more than one million, are set to get a larger share of the pie. However, the increase in the percentage of outcome-tied funds to 50%, from 10%, could prove vexing to the last mile providers of basic services in India's federal and highly fragmented structure of governance. The commission has also been justifiably critical of the Union and State governments' tendency to finance spending through off-budget borrowings and via parastatals. It has done well to ask that such extra-budgetary liabilities be clearly earmarked and eliminated in a time-bound manner.

## No room for panic

The best way to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus is by raising public awareness

The Emergency Committee convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) on January 30 has declared the novel coronavirus outbreak in China as a 'public health emergency of international concern', a development that comes after its meeting for the second time in just a week. The virus, that has been infecting hundreds and killing several each day in China, is now being reported in at least 23 other countries – nearly 14,380 cases as on Sunday – since the committee last met on January 22-23. There has also been the first confirmed fatality outside China, with a death in the Philippines. As on Sunday, Chinese authorities said 45 more deaths had been recorded in Hubei province by the end of Saturday, bringing the death toll in the country to 304. All of China's provinces and territories have now reported cases. But the critical factor that prompted WHO's emergency declaration is the virus's human-to-human spread in other countries. In fact, WHO's committee reconvened to assess the situation mainly because of local transmission in other countries – a scenario for further global spread. China is also having to deal with another disease outbreak – a "highly pathogenic" strain of bird flu, or H5N1.

In Kerala, after a student who had travelled from Wuhan city, the epicentre of the current outbreak, was found to be infected, State health authorities, on Sunday, reported a second case being detected. This patient too had a history of travel from China. Besides isolating those who exhibit overt symptoms and conducting contact tracing, there is an urgent need to raise public awareness. This is essential so that they report to a hospital when symptoms show up later or in case of contact with a person who has travelled to China recently. There is evidence that those who appear to be healthy despite being infected can spread it even during the incubation period. Also, cases have been reported wherein people have not exhibited symptoms in spite of being infected. In both instances, thermal screening at airports, which is largely helpful, would fail to detect infected people – as in the case of the Kerala patients. Hence, time-tested measures which include handwashing and hand hygiene, wearing protective gear while attending to sick people and covering one's mouth and nose properly when coughing or sneezing will drastically reduce the infection risk. There is no clinical evidence whatsoever that any specific drug, either modern or of the traditional system of medicine, can prevent infection or treat infected people. And it is the novel virus transmitted through physical contact or droplets that causes the infection, and not any food items as social media claims.

# Falling short of aspirations

The economic outlook rests on government meeting investment targets and keeping promises made to stakeholders



RAM SINGH

**T**here were many expectations from the Union Budget 2020: that it would reverse the falling growth rate, reduce unemployment and rekindle the animal spirits needed to revive private investment. Does the Budget really hold out the promise on these counts? To answer the question, the Budget can be judged in terms of its effect on rural demand, investment and private sentiments – all critical elements for recovery. While the Budget offers hope on the last count, it leaves much to be desired on several other parameters.

**Skill development allocation**  
Of the Finance Minister's own accord, there is a huge, unmet demand for teachers, paramedical staff and caregivers, and skilled workers. Well-paying jobs are created in the organised services and industry but require candidates with quality education and skills. Both elude India's youth due to the poor quality of education and lack of opportunities to acquire practical skills. Still, the Finance Minister has allocated a paltry ₹3,000 crore for skill development. Skilling will require massive investment and concerted efforts. The Budget could have given tax incentives to companies to provide internships and on-site vocational training to unemployed youth. The country cannot afford to let the world's largest workforce waste this way.

The government remains very determined to present itself as being fiscally prudent. Total expen-

diture is slated to go up marginally to 13.5% GDP from 13.2% of GDP for the current fiscal (revised estimates). The fiscal deficit is pegged at 3.5% of GDP. Going by the experience with the current fiscal, the deficit level is not paramount concern for the market. Due to the 'slippage in tax collections this fiscal year combined with stepped up government expenditure, market borrowings by the government have gone up as much as 15%. Still, yields on government securities have not gone up significantly. Neither inflation nor the current account deficit have set alarm bells ringing, as feared by the government.

**On flagship welfare schemes**  
Indeed, there are plenty of private savings that the government can tap to boost growth and raise public investment. However, the Finance Minister has opted for a longer route. The Budget falls well short of expectations when it comes to boosting demand. Budgetary allocations for the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) are disappointing. The MGNREGA is allocated ₹61,500 crore, which is less than ₹71,000 crore for the current fiscal year. Going by the last year, disbursement under the PM-KISAN will also be less than budgeted, unless the beneficiary base is expanded. This is unfortunate. These two schemes are good instruments for income transfers to small and marginal farmers, landless labour who spend most of their income and generate demand for a wide range of goods and services. Higher disbursement under these schemes would have benefited most sectors of the economy. Budgetary allocations for health and education are also well below what is needed.



Focus of schemes such as micro irrigation schemes for 100 water-stressed districts is welcome and so is a modest increase in allocations for agriculture and rural development schemes. Rural roads, cold storage, and logistical chains are crucial for the growth of income and employment in rural India, as the multiplier effects of rural infrastructure investment on growth and employment are large and extensive.

The allocation of ₹1.7 lakh crore for transportation infrastructure is also a welcome step. But a lot will depend on whether the money actually gets invested or remains unspent as it has happened in the current fiscal year. If the public investment infrastructure actually materialises, it will lend credence to the government's stated commitment to revive the investment cycle – to spur job-creating growth. To pull in private investment, the public funding should be front-loaded in under-implementation projects. Small irrigation and rural road projects are also relatively easy to complete and deliver immense benefits to several sectors.

**Getting private investment**  
The Budget's main growth plank is the hope for a deluge of private infrastructure investment through public-private partnership (PPP)

and external sovereign wealth funds that have been given 100% tax exceptions in the Budget. But private investment depends on the cost of capital along with the certainty of returns.

Many projects have been mired in contractual disputes with government departments and various regulatory hurdles. All these factors make infrastructure investment unnecessarily risky and render these projects unattractive for investors.

### Bonds and startups

The fundamental problem of infrastructure finance is the asset-liability mismatch which can be addressed only by developing a vibrant 'corporate bond market'. However, the focus of the Budget is the multiple schemes for government bonds mainly through additional room for foreign portfolio investors and exchange traded funds in government bonds. These are welcome moves but are not enough. A well-developed bond market should draw upon domestic insurance funds, pension funds and mutual funds which are capable of investing in corporate bonds across different schemes.

The other leg of the "aspirational" Budget is the startups. Some relief on the tax they have to pay and on taxation of the Employee Stock Option Plans is welcome but the reluctance to abolish the angel tax that results in harassment of start-ups and their investors is unfathomable.

Another welcome feature is the scheme to allow the non-banking financial companies into the Trade Receivables Discounting System (TRDS) – an ecosystem that aims to facilitate the financing and settling of trade-related transactions of small entities with corporate and other buyers, including government departments and public sector undertakings.

To reduce the compliance burden on small retailers, traders and shopkeepers who comprise the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) sector, the threshold for audit of the accounts has been increased from ₹1 crore to ₹5 crore for those entities that carry out less than 5% of their business transactions in cash. It is also good that the Finance Minister has extended the window for restructuring of loans for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises till March 31, 2021.

However, for many products produced by these enterprises, the tax rates are higher for inputs than the final goods. In addition, many SMEs suffer from high taxes on imports of raw material and exports of intermediary services by them.

It is good that the Finance Minister has recognised the need to revive the dying spirit of the private sector. Accordingly, she has assured decriminalisation of several civil offences by firms under the Companies Act. The abolition of dividend distribution tax, and the assurance that tax-related disputes will be considered with compassion might deliver the expected results provided these promises are fulfilled in letter and spirit. The same logic applies to 'the scheme to reimburse exporters assorted duties, such as excise duty on transport fuels and electricity'.

Everything considered, the future of the economy will turn on whether the government walks the talk in terms of public investment and the promises made to different sections of society including the taxpayer and companies. When it comes to reviving private sentiments, actions will speak much louder than the budgetary promises.

Ram Singh is Professor, Delhi School of Economics

## The Budget's blurred social sector vision

Low allocations and specific policy statements point to greater privatisation and withdrawal of the state



DIPA SINHA

**F**inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman began her speech by saying that the Union Budget was "woven around three prominent themes" – aspirational India, economic development for all and building a caring society. Achieving any of these would require extraordinary efforts on the social sector front starting with allocating additional resources for health, education, nutrition, employment guarantee, and social security schemes.

Given the current state of the economy, with decelerating growth, a slump in rural demand and stagnant real wages in rural areas, an expansionary budget with a focus on the social sector would have also made economic sense. It would have meant more money flowing into the rural areas, creating jobs as well as purchasing power, while at the same time making a dent on the poor outcomes in health, nutrition and education that continue to haunt India.

Unfortunately, the allocations for the social sector this year once again fail to deliver for the country's poor and marginalised. And

this is the situation across the board.

**NREGA deserves a closer look**  
The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Public Distribution System (PDS) are two important lifelines for the rural poor: providing employment and food during times when the market fails them. The allocation in this Budget for MGNREGA is ₹61,500 crore which is ₹10,000 crore less than the revised estimate (RE) for the current year (₹71,000 crore for 2019-20) and, in real terms, even less than what was allocated last year (₹60,000 crore). It is obvious that in current times when the levels of unemployment are at their peak, the demand for employment will only increase. But MGNREGA is failing to fully play the role of filling the gap because of poor implementation and inadequate funds. There is also a need to revise the MGNREGA wages to bring them on a par with minimum wages. All of this would require much higher allocations for the scheme, which are entirely justified as the MGNREGA expenditure is also known to have high multiplier effects through boosting consumption demand in rural areas.

On the food front, excess food stocks to the tune of almost 60 million tonnes, high food inflation in recent months and reports of hunger from across the country war-

pered some announcement expanding the PDS. This could have been done by universalising ration entitlements in the poorest districts, increasing quantity given per individual, including pulses. However, what is seen in the Budget is an allocation which is not even enough to support the existing PDS under the National Food Security Act (NFSA). The food subsidy allocated for 2020-21 is only ₹11 lakh crore, which, once again, is slightly higher than the previous year's RE of ₹1.08 lakh crore. This is much less than the budget estimate (BE) of last year, of ₹1.8 lakh crore, which is closer to the actual subsidy required for meeting the costs of the grain distributed through the PDS and other welfare schemes.

Over the last few years, the government has been funding the Food Corporation of India (FCI) for this gap in funding through loans from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). As seen in the latest Economic Survey, in FY 2018-19, the total food subsidy released was ₹1.7 lakh crore which

included an NSSF loan of ₹70,000 crore to FCI – it does not get reflected in the Budget documents. Once again, this is not prudent economics, as it only increases the interest burden in the long run; what it does in the short term is that it makes it possible to artificially show a lower expenditure, and hence smaller fiscal deficit. On the other hand, such mismanagement is then made an excuse to call for the dismantling of the PDS and FCI, which is entirely unwarranted.

**Giving short shrift to health**  
Health and education also did not see any significant increases in allocations this year. The BE for the much publicised Ayushman Bharat Yojana/Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana stays at ₹6,400 crore, the same as last year (RE was 50% lower at ₹3,200 crore). The budget for the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition, or POSHAN Abhiyaan, another flagship scheme of this government, sees a meagre increase of ₹300 crore (from ₹3,400 crore to ₹3,700 crore).

The funds allocated for the maternity entitlement scheme, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana remains the same as last year – ₹2,500 crore. There is an overall increase of ₹5,000 crore-₹6000 crore each in the overall education and health budgets which are hardly sufficient to cover for inflation.

As we look at the various schemes, including social security pensions, Anganwadi services, mid-day meals and those mentioned above, the same pattern emerges – first, we see a much reduced RE for 2019-20 compared to the BE of 2019-20, indicating underspending in the current year. This means people are being left out, coverage is low and benefits are irregular; field reports suggest all of this to be true.

Second, there are some increases as seen in the BE for 2020-21 which barely bring the allocations to the same level as the previous year's Budget estimates in real terms. Considering that all these sectors are grossly underfunded in the first place, there is not much hope of seeing anything different in terms of what ultimately reaches people.

It is clear that the agenda of the present government for the social sector is for greater privatisation and withdrawal of the state. This is reflected not just in the low allocations but also policy pronouncements such as introducing the public-private partnership model for medical colleges and district hospitals or the push, in the Economic Survey, for narrowing the coverage under the PDS. This would be a worrying direction in the current context.

Dipa Sinha is faculty at the School of Liberal Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi

## 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.

### Reforming the economy

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's mega talkathon Budget did not unleash any big bang reform. It failed to address issues concerning GDP growth, private consumption, investments and manufacturing, all of which have hit record low levels. A reduction in Central funds for schemes concerning agriculture, health, education and welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was disappointing. What is more shocking is the slashing of real allocation on MGNREGS, a vital instrument to fight rural poverty. However, moves like the allocation of ₹4,400 crore for clean air; and the announcement of linking one lakh gram panchayats through BharatNet are

welcome (Front page, "Booster short," Feb. 02).  
S.S. PAUL,  
Chakdaha, Nadia, West Bengal

### Abolition of DDT

Listing of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), which has acted as a lender of last resort for many lame duck financial institutions over the years, could make it as the most valued company. Abolishing the Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT) and allowing the shareholders to pay it should be hailed. It was ludicrous to make firms pay the DDT (Taxes, "No more double taxation on dividends," Feb. 02).  
VINAYAKA M.,  
Bengaluru

### New tax regime

The new personal income tax regime announced in the Budget may not quite

really benefit taxpayers as the calculations suggest that higher income earners may find the old regime with exemptions a better option. Ms. Sitharaman has made life difficult for individual taxpayers by making tax calculations complicated. Also, the employer will find it really tough in the face of the double calculations that he will have to make for the purpose of TDS (Front page, "FinMin offers opt-in income tax scheme to boost demand," Feb. 02).  
R. SIVAKUMAR,  
Chennai

### Listing of LIC

As a policyholder, I welcome the government's move to get Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) listed in the stock exchange as this would make the company

more answerable to the investors. As of now, the policyholders' money is invested in companies without any concern for the business implications, as when LIC was made to buy shares of Coal India and ONGC. This often leads to low bonus to policyholders. Second, the policy portfolios offered are shrouded in secrecy, not revealing the large commissions paid to agents, which again impact the amount of bonus declared. It is reported that the commissions range up to 40% of the first premiums and 5% on subsequent premiums.

Converting LIC into a public limited will hopefully change the work culture and provide better yields. Employees threatening to go on strike should spare a thought for the policyholders also ("Govt. to sell part of its stake in LIC via IPO," Feb. 02).  
JAYALAKSHMI NARAYAN,  
Mangalore

■ The proposal to disinvest LIC came as a shocker. Senior citizens who have invested their hard-earned money in this prestigious public sector undertaking will surely brood over it. Privatisation may fill the government's coffers but will shatter public confidence in the company. India's status as a welfare state would be seriously compromised.  
S. RAMAKRISHNASAYEE,  
Chennai

### Funding for MGNREGS

The Food and Agriculture Organization says that 70% of India's rural households still depend primarily on



agriculture for their livelihood and 82% of the farmers are small and marginal. Given the uncertainties associated with agriculture, it is imperative to put money in the hands of the small farmers and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) can be helpful to realise this objective. That being the case, a 13% cut in funding for the scheme compared to the revised estimates is inexplicable. The government should have demonstrated an intent to revive the rural economy by not cutting down allocation. (Social sector, "Allocation for MGNREGS slashed by ₹9,500 crore," Feb. 02).  
A. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN,  
Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

# My little adventure across Wagah

This is the only crossing in the 1,500-km border but hopefully things will change



VENKI RAMAKRISHNAN



The Nobel Laureate at the Wagah border. • VENKI RAMAKRISHNAN

It was with some trepidation that I accepted the invitation to speak in Lahore. After all, I was born in India and did not know how I would be received there given recent relations between India and Pakistan. But I had always been curious to see Pakistan for myself and thought it would be a friendly gesture to go there before going to India for a lecture tour during which I would be speaking on 'My Adventures in the Ribosome'.

Leaving Lahore for Bengaluru by air meant a long journey via Dubai or Colombo. However, I noticed that Amritsar was less than 60 km away and there was a direct flight from there to Bengaluru. As a bonus, I could see the Golden Temple and Jallianwala Bagh for the first time. Reaching Amritsar by land meant crossing the border at Wagah, a bit like crossing Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin at the height of the Cold War. There was also the comically dramatic flag-lowering ceremony at the border, carried out each evening by the Indian and Pakistani border forces.

#### At the Lahore Thinkfest

My arrival in Pakistan went without a hitch – I was received warmly by everyone, from the immigration official to my hosts and fellow participants in the Lahore Thinkfest, which, like the Hay or Jaipur literary festivals, had a range of talks and panel discussions on themes ranging from current affairs to history and literature. I may have been the only science speaker.

I had intended to see some of the sights of Lahore on my penultimate day, but parts of the city were blocked off owing to an anti-U.S. demonstration against the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani. So, on the rainy and cold morning of my departure, my host Yaqoob Bangash and his friend Abraham showed me the Wazir Khan and Badshahi mosques, and the Fort. On our way to the border, we stopped to see the Shalimar Gardens, which had an eerie

quality in the rain and mist.

By this time, I was starting to worry. It was past 2 p.m. and the border closed at 4 p.m., but Yaqoob was unperturbed. As we approached the border, my passport was checked about every 50 metres before we reached the immigration checkpoint in Pakistan.

There, I was asked a series of questions by an intelligence official. Why was I in Pakistan? For how long? Where did I work? What did I do? And, oddly, why was I going to India? He wrote down all my answers, and apparently satisfied, waved me on to the actual emigration counter, where a woman with a three-year old child on her lap checked my papers and stamped my passport. I had officially "left" Pakistan, and it was time to say goodbye to my hosts and walk towards India.

#### Entering Indian territory

In front of me was a fence with a gate, behind which was an enormous stadium with a sign saying 'India' and 'India's First Line of Defence'. At the gate, a guard checked my papers and waved me through. Right away,

walk past the stadium where hordes of people had already gathered to watch the ceremony, with loud patriotic music blaring. Beyond the stadium was a small hut, where someone checked my passport and told me to board a waiting bus. It was empty and there was no sign of a driver. My watch said 3.20 p.m.

I turned on my mobile and found a frantic message from Mariam Ram, who had sponsored my tour. She had kindly arranged for Kuri Abraham, who manages the lectures, to meet me on the Indian side, and said they were all worried since it was late and there was no sign of me. I assured them I was in India, waiting for a bus to take me to the terminal. A few minutes later Kuri called to say that the immigration office was closing and I needed to get there in the next few minutes. How could this be? There were still over 30 minutes to spare. But I had completely forgotten the half-hour time difference between Pakistan and India.

Now worried, I told an official in the hut my predicament, but he blithely said, "The office will wait for the bus." The driver eventually arrived but showed no signs of moving. Finally, he looked at me dubiously – I was lugging a roll-on suitcase while wearing a fleece, sandals, and a backpack – and asked, "Are you a doctor?" I told him I was actually a scientist. He said, "Oh, you're the person I was waiting for!" It turned out that my Pakistani hosts had contacted the Indian High Commissioner, who told the immigration office to expect me.

Luckily, they were indeed expecting me, and as a courtesy, checked me

through even though it was late.

A member of the Indian intelligence who worked there kindly took us back to see the ceremony. There were two things that puzzled me, I told him. The first was that if someone left Pakistan and entered India, and the immigration office closed before they could reach it, what would happen? Why did they have it so far away? Would it not be better to have a separate gate on the side of the stadium for those crossing the border, leading directly to an immigration office? He admitted I had a point, but said if someone exited Pakistan, Indian immigration was obliged to deal with him, no matter the time.

Next I asked, what would prevent me from mingling with the hundreds of Indians gathered to watch the ceremony and simply make my way to Amritsar? Apparently, officials keep an eye on those who cross the border to make sure they board the bus, but if I managed to elude them, I would be in trouble when I leave India since there would be no entry stamp on my passport. And they would get in trouble too, for letting me slip through!

#### Hope for more crossings

The ceremony itself was every bit as comical as I had expected. The large Indian crowds dwarfed the much smaller Pakistani turnout and made such a loud din that I could not hear the Pakistani side at all – perhaps that was the point. Despite the display of jingoism, the soldiers on both sides are actually quite friendly and exchange sweets at Eid and Diwali. Wagah is the only crossing in the 1,500-km border between India and Pakistan. In contrast, France and Germany, which fought vicious wars over centuries, now have essentially invisible borders with dozens of crossings. Hopefully, there will eventually be similar mobility among the peoples of this ruptured subcontinent.

When I reached my hotel room in Amritsar, I finally relaxed. I had greatly enjoyed visiting Pakistan and meeting many people there, but it was good to be in India again.

Venki Ramakrishnan, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2009 for his work on the structure and function of the ribosome, is President of the Royal Society

# It's time for the Shaheen Bagh protests to end

Protesters are becoming pawns in an electoral game

#### MOHAMMED AYOOB

The protesters at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi have made their point. The picketers, primarily Muslim women of the area, have demonstrated their resolve to stand up not just for the rights of the Muslim minority but, more importantly, for the secular spirit of the Constitution. Waving the national flag, carrying photos of Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, and reciting the words of the Constitution's Preamble, they have challenged the government's narrative that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act was merely an attempt to fulfil Gandhi's wishes. The Shaheen Bagh protests will become a part of both the history of India's democratic movements and of the chronicle of women's empowerment.

However, there is a time when protest movements become counter-productive and the organisers and participants of such movements should have the sagacity to recognise this fact. For the Shaheen Bagh protesters that time is now. The principal reason for this conclusion is that with the Delhi Assembly elections around the corner, they have increasingly become pawns in the electoral game being played in the national capital.

**The wrong message**  
It was a fundamental mistake on the part of the protest's organisers to allow leaders of political parties to use their platform to make speeches that not only served partisan ends but also were unnecessarily provocative and sometimes uncivil. This combined with extremist pronouncements by some of the people, such as Sharjeel Imam, associated with the protests have sent the wrong message that the protests were not only undertaken for partisan reasons but had also fallen into the hands of extremist elements. The shutting down of one of the main roads in the area for a long time added to the negative image of the protests around Delhi.

Moreover, there have been two shooting incidents near the protest venue. Although no one has been killed, there is no guarantee that the next one may not inflict grave injuries or cause fatalities. While the protesters are not involved in such in-

cidents, many hold them responsible for the deteriorating law and order situation. With the U.P. Chief Minister's entry into the Delhi electoral fray and his incendiary speeches, and the Hindu Sena's threat that it will clear Shaheen Bagh by force, the situation is becoming volatile. The Shaheen Bagh protesters will be blamed if this escalating inflammatory rhetoric leads to a communal riot.

**Many negative consequences**  
The protesters must recognise that all this serves the interests of both the Congress and the BJP. For the Congress, which is in the doldrums in Delhi, the protest is an invaluable stick to beat both the BJP, which is adamant that the CAA must be implemented, and the Aam Aadmi Party, which has been talking out of both sides of its mouth regarding the Shaheen Bagh protests and the CAA. But the greatest beneficiary of the continuing protests is the BJP. The protests help the party consolidate the Hindu vote behind it and allow it to paint the AAP and the Congress as anti-Hindu. This is why the Central government has allowed the protests to continue without interference by the Delhi police.

Therefore, it is time for the protesters to recognise that their actions are leading to far more negative outcomes than positive ones. The entire exercise has outlived its usefulness. It is time for them to wind up their sit-in after issuing a statement that the protest has achieved its objective: they have squarely registered their dissent against the CAA and successfully linked the discussion of the CAA with the National Register of Citizens. They should learn from the Mahatma who did not desist from calling off protest movements when he recognised that they had outlasted their effectiveness. The termination of the Shaheen Bagh sit-in does not preclude the fact that those opposed to the CAA and NRC may continue protesting in a fresh mould free of political capture attempts after the Delhi elections are concluded.

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University

#### DATA POINT

## Will tax relief boost demand?

Amid an economic slowdown induced by a massive drop in demand, the government has proposed a new personal income tax regime with reduced rates in order to spur consumption. However, as tax payers can opt for new rates only if they give up almost all the tax exemptions and deductions, whether this goal will be achieved is yet to be seen. A dip in consumer confidence in recent months is certainly not helping the cause. By The Hindu Data Team

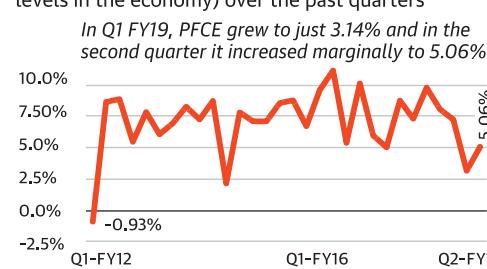
#### 1. Rate card | The new regime proposes to optionally reduce tax rates for slabs upto ₹15 lakh

Income	Current tax rates	New tax rates
5-7.5 lakh	20%	10%
7.5-10 lakh	20%	15%
10-12.5 lakh	30%	20%
12.5-15 lakh	30%	25%

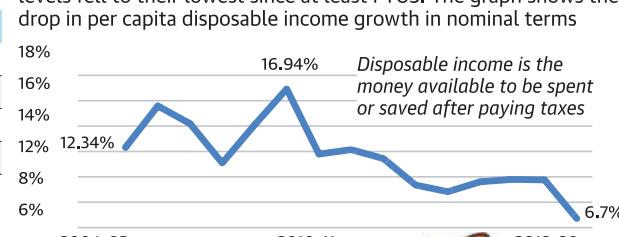
#### 2. Expenditure down | The rate cut coincides with the slowing down of Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) growth. The cut in taxes is aimed at boosting expenditure to revive demand

Period	% growth of urban MPCE
2009-10 to 2011-12	11.49%
2011-12 to 2017-18	1.98%

#### 3. Consumption crunch | Due to a high drop in expenditure, consumption growth dropped to low levels. The graph plots the growth of Private Final Consumption Expenditure (indicates consumption levels in the economy) over the past quarters



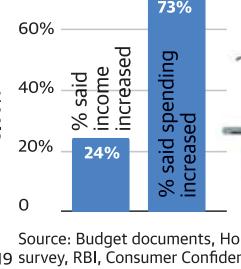
#### Income down | Consumption dropped because in FY20 income levels fell to their lowest since at least FY05. The graph shows the drop in per capita disposable income growth in nominal terms



#### Disposable income is the money available to be spent or saved after paying taxes

#### Confidence depleted

Moreover, in an RBI survey conducted in Nov. 19, about 73% of the respondents perceived that their spending increased, while just 24% perceived incomes as having increased



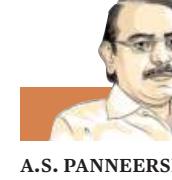
Source: Budget documents, Household expenditure

Illustration: SATHEESH VELLINAZHAI

#### FROM THE READERS EDITOR

## Differing trajectories of legacy and digital media

Citizens are becoming oblivious to the deviousness of various state institutions due to this dichotomy



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

When the Finance Minister was presenting her second Budget, we were interacting with readers in Vijayawada at an open house session.

These interactions not only provide valuable feedback to the editorial team, but also help readers understand how a newspaper works. During these interactions, we have been asked about the demands of a deadline, the changing nature of the information ecology, competitive pressures from other platforms such as social media and television, and this newspaper's emphasis on secular values, which one reader felt was a sign of bias.

#### Legacy media and digital media

I explained that the legacy media developed and honed its skills from a deep desire for change. From the journalism of Thomas Paine – an Englishman whose writing inspired the American rebellion against the British, defended the cause of revolution in France, and challenged slavery – each century witnessed pioneers across continents who yearned for free and open societies.

One issue that was discussed was of freedom of expression versus accountability. The idea of journalism is to empower people and minimise harm rather than widen the divide and fan violence. The editorial decision to not carry inflammatory content is a manifestation of this desire and cannot be termed as censorship.

Students were keen to know about the transformations caused by digitalisation. They asked what changes are being made in newsrooms to cope with these challenges. The legacy media had 300 years to define its role and refine it for the needs of citizens. The years also saw political movements such as the anti-colonial struggle, resistance to fascism, the movement for democracy, women's suffrage, the anti-apartheid struggle and labour movements that demanded less exploitative working environments.

On the other hand, the digital media revolution is less than two decades old. It started as a huge democratising venture. However,

the emergence of behemoths at Silicon Valley and the ability of the state to selectively switch on and switch off connectivity are disturbing. Journalists are trying to negotiate this reality through multiple means. The means include challenging state-imposed restrictions in the court of law, spreading media literacy, and engaging in dialogue with technology companies.

What happens when disinformation spreads fast in cyberspace? Readers will be reading this column a day before Facebook's 16th birthday. Facebook was launched on February 4, 2004, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The consolidation of technology companies in controlling the information flow has taken place in less than a

## FROM PAGE ONE

## Money earned in India by NRIs will be taxed: FM

Responding to criticism that the lower tax rates for those earning upto ₹15 lakh a year wouldn't necessarily lead to tax savings, once the withdrawal of exemptions and deductions on the existing tax rates is factored in, Ms. Sitharaman said the Ministry will issue more clarifications on the matter.

"There are a few exemptions which we allow under the new rates too. I believe that many of the calculations which have come out in the newspapers today

have probably not taken those into account," she said.

Later, officials said less than 10% of taxpayers claim deductions of over ₹2 lakh in their tax filings.

Therefore, comparing the old and new tax rates, assuming deductions in the range of ₹4 lakh to ₹5 lakh may be erroneous. In fact, a meagre 3.77 lakh out of 5.78 crore tax filers have claimed deductions exceeding ₹4 lakh in 2018-19, they pointed out.

## Second coronavirus case confirmed in Kerala

The toll from the nCoV infection has crossed 300, with 14,562 people infected across 25 countries, including India, the U.S. and the U.K.

India has so far evacuated 647 Indians and seven Maldivian citizens by special flights from coronavirus-hit Wuhan city. Air India's jumbo B747 made two flights to Wuhan city.

In the first flight on Saturday, 324 Indians were evacuated and on Sunday another 323 Indians and seven Maldivian citizens were

flown back.

Alappuzha has been placed on high alert following Sunday's confirmation of the infection. Kerala Health Minister said permission had been received for conducting tests for nCoV infection at the Alappuzha unit of the National Institute of Virology (NIV) – hitherto samples were being sent to the Pune unit of the NIV.

"We will start testing samples at the unit at the earliest. This will help us to identify positive cases without delay," Ms. Shylaja said.

## 'No call yet on quantum of LIC stake sale'

The ₹90,000-crore target factors in proceeds from LIC's initial public offer and the sale of the government's 47% residual stake in IDBI Bank, but doesn't necessarily preclude more financial entities being added to the disinvestment queue during the coming year.

"In the LIC's case, the quantum is difficult for us to say now because we have to listen to advisers, listen to LIC, look at the numbers. So it's a bit early," Mr. Pandey said.

"There could be legal hurdles to cross as well, such as the need for possi-

ble amendments to the LIC Act 1956," he added.

Asked whether the sovereign guarantee enjoyed by the LIC policyholders would persist after its listing, Ms. Sitharaman said: "We've only said it will be an IPO. We've not given the complete ownership to somebody."

The expressions of interest for BPCL will "come very soon", said Mr. Pandey, adding that the sale of three big companies – BPCL, CONCOR and Shipping Corporation of India – might be concluded by the first half of 2020-21.

## Study on Nagaland bats comes under the scanner

Being foreign entities, they would have required special permissions to undertake the exercise.

The study was investigated to find out how the scientists were allowed to access live samples of bats and bat-hunters (humans) without due permission.

The results of the study, conducted by scientists of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in the U.S. and the Duke-National University in Singapore, were published in October last in the *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases* journal, originally established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The NCBS authorities were not available for immediate response.

The U.S. Embassy and the Union Health Ministry declined to comment on the inquiry. In a written reply to questions from *The Hindu*, the U.S. Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta said it "did not commission this study and had not received any enquiries [from the Indian government] on it." An American official, however, suggested that the U.S. Department of Defense might not have coordinated the study through the CDC.

The study states that the researchers found "the presence of filovirus (e.g., ebola virus) reactive antibodies in both human and bat populations in Northeast India, a region with no historical record of Ebola virus disease."

## Centre seeks nod for Nirbhaya executions

Ms. John questioned why the Centre has woken up just yesterday to execute the death warrant when they were never a party in the proceedings before the trial court. "Union of India has superimposed themselves in this proceeding for the first time. Why have they done so, the court needs to examine," she argued.

She pointed out that the Centre has already approached the Supreme Court for a clarification on the law which dealt with executing co-convicts separately.

Justice Suresh Kait reserved the order on the plea by the Centre and Delhi government.

In its plea, the government has argued that, "The acts of the four convicts clearly shows their intention to delay the process of execution of death sentences, which is not only an abuse of process of law but also mockery of the courts and judicial process."

It also termed as erroneous, the decision of the Delhi Court staying the execution of the convicts until further orders.

## CAA votaries want divisions: Kerala CM

Pinarayi Vijayan says they are employing the colonial strategy of breaking communal amity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The movement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is also against those who stood with colonisers during the freedom movement when the people's unity was divided on communal lines, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here on Sunday. He said the movement had rekindled the spirit of the nationalist movement.

"In the past, our movement was against the colonisers. In the present, our struggle against communalism is a movement against those who stood with the colonisers. Back then, the colonisers tried to disrupt the people's unity by dividing us on



**Resolute action:** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan speaking at the Mumbai Collective on Sunday. •PTI

communal lines. Today, the communal elements are using the same strategy experienced by their previous masters," he said.

He was speaking at the fourth edition of the Mumbai Collective on "The national struggle against communalism". The session was

chaired by N. Ram, Chairman, The Hindu Group Publishing Private Ltd.

"In the face of untold economic miseries and emerging people's resistances, they seek to break the unity of workers, farmers, students, Dalits and adivasis, in the name of religion. We should be able to see through these sinister designs and defeat them," Mr. Vijayan said.

### Assembly resolution

Clarifying that the actions of the Kerala government of getting a resolution against the CAA passed in the Assembly and approaching the Supreme Court against it are constitutionally valid, Mr. Vijayan said the State Ministers took oath and had a duty to

stand by the Constitution.

"The only provision in the Constitution that limits discussion in legislature is Article 211 which curtails discussions on the conduct of judges in the Supreme and the High Courts. Apart from that, legislatures can discuss any issue that they deem fit and pass resolutions as well," he said.

The Kerala CM said the people of the country have a responsibility to ensure that the values enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution were preserved and protected. "It is in this line and with this spirit that the government of Kerala and the Assembly have taken a strong stand in defence of the secular principles intrinsic to our Constitution," he said.

## IN BRIEF



**Sonia Gandhi admitted to hospital in Delhi**

NEW DELHI Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to a hospital on Sunday evening. Though there has not been an official statement, a party source confirmed to *The Hindu* that Ms. Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital.

"She was brought to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital today evening at 7 p.m. and has been admitted for a routine check up," a hospital source said.

### India sends aid to cyclone-hit Madagascar

NEW DELHI India has sent relief supplies to cyclone-hit Madagascar using its naval ship *INS Airavat*, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Sunday. In a tweet, Mr. Jaishankar said India was an early responder to the disaster that hit the islands. "INS Airavat delivers relief supplies to cyclone-hit #Madagascar. #SAGAR Policy at work – India as an early responder," he said in a tweet. Madagascar has been hit by a cyclone which has caused heavy flooding and landslides since last month, leading to deaths and displacement.

### Four politicians released in Jammu & Kashmir

Srinagar The J&K administration released four more political leaders from a sub-jail in Srinagar on Sunday but is dragging its feet on the release of top leaders including Farooq and Omar Abdullah of the National Conference and Mehbooba Mufti of the Peoples Democratic Party, who will complete six months in jail on February 5. An official identified the four leaders under detention as Mohammad Yousuf Bhat of the PDP and Abdul Majid Larmi, Mohammad Shahi and Ghulam Nabi Bhat of the NC.

### Forum to challenge NDFB members' pardon

GUWAHATI A victims' forum of militancy in Assam has decided to go to court if members of all the factions of the extremist National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) are granted a general amnesty. Groups representing the Bodo community had raised a demand to provide general amnesty to the members of the NDFB after the Bodo Peace Accord was signed in New Delhi on January 27. The Forum for Terrorist Victim Family, Assam, said the Bodo people deserved the welfare envisaged in the accord, but pardoning extremist leaders "responsible for bloodshed" would encourage militancy and disrespect the judiciary.



**Face to face:** The police detaining people demanding the opening of a road blocked by those protesting against the new citizenship law in the Shaheen Bagh area of New Delhi on Sunday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPKAR

## Ire over Shaheen Bagh barricades

Residents say they want the road connecting Noida to Kalindi Kunj to be cleared

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A group of people staged a demonstration near the protest site at Shaheen Bagh here on Sunday, demanding removal of barricades erected on the road connecting Noida to Kalindi Kunj.

They demanded that those sitting on a dharna there for over a month in protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act should clear the stretch as commuters are facing difficulties, the police said.

Senior officers, including Joint Commissioner of Police (Southern Range) Devesh Srivastava and Deputy Com-

missioner of Police (South-East) Chimoy Biswal, rushed to the spot to bring the situation under control and prevent any untoward incident. The officers are trying to negotiate with the protesters and asking them to maintain peace. At least 52 people were detained and released after a few hours, the police said.

The protesters, including women, raised slogans like "Jai Shree Ram", "Vande Mataram" and "Khalai Karao Shaheen Bagh wali ko".

"We want the roads to be cleared. They [anti-CAA protesters] have been sitting here protesting for 50 days

We are not allowing any person to enter the protest site without being frisked

SENIOR POLICE OFFICER

now. I somehow managed to go to work crossing the area. But since yesterday, there has been strict checking and we were not allowed to pass through the stretch without showing our identity cards," Deepak Patel, a resident of Jasola said.

On Saturday, a 25-year-old man fired two rounds in the air at Shaheen Bagh and was later taken into custody. However, no one was injured in the incident.

"We are not allowing any person to enter the protest site without being frisked. Volunteers are also assisting us in the process," said a police officer.

## Harmeet's killing in Pak. was allegedly over drug money

Khalistan Liberation Force leader was wanted in 17 cases

DEEVESH K. PANDEY  
NEW DELHI



Avtar Singh, Harmeet Singh's father, speaking to the press in Amritsar. • AFP

Substances Act, and the Arms Act, have also been invoked against him," the official said.

The official said the recent spurt in trafficking of Afghan-origin heroin through traditional sea routes via Pakistan had led to generation of huge money for the syndicates that were also being used to push weapons into India for terror activities.

The CBI is pursuing a case registered in August 2016, while the NIA is probing seven cases. Provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Explosive

international market in Amritsar's Sultanwind village earlier this week have indicated that it was part of a bigger contraband consignment that landed at Mandvi in Gujarat last year.

Punjab's Special Task Force has arrested six persons, including an Afghan national, for their role in the smuggling. "The latest case also shows that Punjab has also become a destination for large-scale consumption of heroin," the official said.

The agencies have come across several instances that establish sea routes taken earlier by gold smugglers in the 1970s are now being used for the trafficking of heroin.

**Mozambique transit** While such drug seizures were recently made from Gujarat in India, and in Maldives and Sri Lanka, the latest case was reported from Mozambique, which is now said to have become a major transit point for the smuggling of Afghan-origin heroin via Pakistan to Europe.

## Nagaland Dy. CM flayed for slight

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

Less than a year after "Miya poetry" has kicked up a storm in Assam, Nagaland's Deputy Chief Minister Y. Patton has attracted criticism for referring the Nagas of a specific area as "Miya".

It is a pejorative term in the northeast meaning Bengali-speaking or Bengal-origin Muslims.

The National People's Party (NPP) on Saturday issued a statement criticising Mr. Patton for equating the people of the Ralan area of Wokha district with Miya.

The Deputy Chief Minister, also BJP Legislative Party chief, allegedly used the term while speaking at a convention of the Lotha Students' Union (LSU) at Maratchu on January 28.

"He nursed a long-held grudge for getting fewer votes from the Ralan area in the past Assembly elections, and despite being a Lotha himself, called them 'Miya jaat [race]'," NPP leader Hayithung Bill Lotha said.

He alleged that Mr. Patton had used the term "intentionally".

## Centre rejects advice on special grants for States

Finance panel report made public

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre has rejected the 15th Finance Commission's recommendation to give special grants worth ₹6,764 crore to 14 States in 2020-21 to ensure that they do not receive less than the previous year's allocation.

This was one of the few recommendations that the Centre did not accept in the commission's report made public on Sunday.

The Commission had submitted its interim report for 2020-21 to the President on December 5, 2019.

Major recommendations accepted by the Centre include the 41% share for

States out of the divisible pool of tax collections, the suggested grants-in-aid and post-devolution revenue deficit grants of ₹74,340 crore for 14 States. It also accepted recommendations for grants to local bodies, disaster-related grants and sectoral grants.

The Centre asked the Commission to reconsider the recommendation for special grants "as it introduces a new principle". These grants were suggested to ensure that in 2020-21, "no State receives in absolute terms less than what it received in 2019-20 on account of tax devolution and revenue deficit grants."



**APPEAL**  
1 year old Baby Kanish needs your support in bringing a lasting change and a new life. He suffers from Wiskott Aldrich Syndrome and has to undergo Allogenic Bone Marrow Transplantation at V.S. Hospital, Chennai. He urgently needs Rs. 25,00,000/- for his treatment. Donations can be sent through C.H.D.D. Trust (Synthetic Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/C No.60182010063310, IFSC No. SYNB006018) favouring WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE.

WWS

# I appear conservative, but I want to be realistic, says Nirmala

'In today's environment where public spending is used as an engine for pulling the economy up, my focus will be on spending to create assets'

VIKAS DHOTI  
NEW DELHI

*A day after presenting her second Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in an interaction with presspersons, said the government's focus was on pulling the economy up from its present slowdown by investing in infrastructure and asset creation that will generate jobs.*

**You said inflation is well-behaved and the economy's fundamentals are robust, but have assumed a conservative 10% nominal growth. The 15th Finance Commission had assumed an 11% nominal growth for the year. The Economic Survey also sees a more optimistic real GDP growth to rebound to 6-6.5% in 2020-21...**

**The Economic Survey gives a lot of ideas and their assessment of the growth for the coming year. The Ministry has also been conscious of the specific progress made between the last budget in**

July and now. Given today's environment where public spending is being used more as an engine for pulling the economy up, my focus will be on spending focused on creation of assets.

Infrastructure spending has a larger cascading effect. Revenue generation on the other hand, has suffered due to different circumstances. So if I look at this extreme that is not growing and that extreme which demands more for me, I will have to be realistic in the number that I can reach. Therefore, I appear conservative but I want to be realistic.

There is a fear that there will

be lower investments in insurance and equity-linked savings schemes under the new lower tax rates regime, where exemptions for those are withdrawn

**Today, in a country where you've moved out of this socialist model of governing your economy, opened up stock options, opened and proved that the bond market is also attracting retail investors, why cannot you trust the individual? It is he or she who has to take a call on, 'I have this much money in my hand, I will go buy a vehicle or I will take 50% of it for the first instalment towards buying a house.' It is up to them. This command-driven economy, where we incentivise going that route, no longer checks. I tend to believe that this incentive alone is not the reason for a person to consider insuring himself. He's got to have his priority towards insurance and that's**

his choice. So I don't think it will have a bearing. And if it does have a bearing, now the options are open, it will only go towards something else which is also going to help the economy and be a catalyst for more economic activity.

They can put it in mutual funds, buy bonds, that's triggering a lot more activity.

There is also some concern about the TDS introduced on mutual fund dividends

**Today, where you've moved out of the socialist model of economy, why can't you trust the individual? And capital gains for resident Indians.**

**First of all, TDS is reconcilable with your taxation itself, so you can offset if it can be accommodated within the fair tax that you have to eventually pay. So that's not an**

additional tax.

**During the last Budget, you had meetings with stakeholders and withdrawn the super-rich surcharge. If the market falls again on Monday (after Saturday's 2.43% fall in the Sensex), will you again meet with stakeholders to see if there is a need to withdraw something?**

**That's a very legitimate question to ask, but let us see what the markets are going to do.**

**You referred to the Harappan texts in your speech, which has led to some confusion, as people say the script has not been deciphered.**

**Deciphering of the hieroglyphs of Harappa has happened. You may want to interpret it in one particular fashion and I may want to in-**

terpret it in a different fashion, but on the deciphering, there is no dispute. The dispute may be did they come from anywhere else or are they natives to India. I'm not getting into that.

**The Survey and the Budget talk of wealth creation and trust, and you are betting on a huge infrastructure boost. Former Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had talked about a reboot of the public-private partnerships in India in his first Budget, but nothing came of that. Could this be an opportune time to revisit PPPs?**

**I don't know if you missed it. In every step that I announced, where I clearly recognise the role of the Centre and States working together or a central agency like the Railways looking at doing something more efficiently, we are all looking at PPPs models.**

**U.S. economist backs Cong. on GMI**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

*Days after the Congress said the Indian economy should be measured in terms of the Global Misery Index (GMI), Steve Hanke of Johns Hopkins University, an applied economist who popularised the GMI concept, said on Sunday that Indians would not be so "miserable" if the government focused on the economy instead of issues such as the citizenship law.*

*On Thursday, Congress leader Manish Tewari said at a press meet that India now ranked high on the GMI.*

*"I rank India a measly 44 out of 95 countries on my #MiseryIndex. If #Modi & #BJP weren't so hellbent on stirring social disarray with #CAA\_NRC\_NPR, & instead focused on the #Economy, maybe Indians wouldn't be so miserable!" Prof. Hanke said on Twitter.*

## Kerala objects to move to tax NRIs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government said on Sunday that it strongly disagreed with the Centre's move to reduce the minimum period that an Indian citizen employed or living abroad should stay in the country to claim residential status for taxation purposes.

Senior leader Manish Tewari, a member of the party's strategy group for Parliament, asked the government to spell out its policy towards public sector undertakings (PSUs).

"The Congress would strongly oppose the disinvestment plan through the initial public offer (IPO)

**Congress to protest against listing of LIC**

Party asks government to come clean on disinvestment road map for public sector undertakings



**On the boil:** CPI(M) workers staging a dharna in Vijayawada on Sunday against proposed privatisation of the LIC. ■ K.V.S. GIRI

route. It is tantamount to selling family jewels in order to fund the Budget deficit," Mr. Tewari told *The Hindu*.

He said the move also raised "legitimate suspicion"

about the financial health of the public sector insurance giant as the cash-rich LIC had been used to "finance" bailout packages of ailing companies and pick up

stakes in loss-making undertakings.

### 'Spell out policy'

"The Congress would want the government to spell out its public sector policy before it decides to hand over Air India to a favoured oligarch or demolish the likes of Coal India and LIC. We want to know what is their policy towards the public sector," he asked.

When pointed out that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance had unsuccessfully put the national airline on the block through the strategic partner sale route, Mr. Tewari responded that the incumbent government

had not even put a value to the airline. "If you read the expression of interest (EOI) document of Air India, it doesn't even have a valuation figure while Air India, with all its assets, is a ₹5 lakh crore company."

While the Congress's position on Air India's disinvestment seems to be divided, with a section of leaders including former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram favouring a sell-off than burdening the tax payers with regular bail-out packages, there is convergence with regard to the LIC that could see the government off-loading 10% of its stake in the public sector insurance giant.

**Every single number is a lie: Jayati Ghosh**

'Allocation to job-intensive sectors cut'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

"Every single number in the Budget is a lie," Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), said here on Sunday of the Union Budget.

India's current slowdown is worse than that of 1991 and 2008, and the Budget has cut allocations to all employment-intensive sectors, further adding to the mess, said Ms. Ghosh, one of the world's leading development economists. "All the most employment-intensive sectors like agriculture, employment guarantee, food, health, education, there are cuts."

Speaking at a session at Mumbai Collective, titled "Flat tyre or engine failure? The Indian economy", she said all the numbers in the Budget were false. "Every single number in the Budget is a lie. Every single item of receipts, the revised estimates for what they are spending this year and all what they have received this year is a lie. They have presented the Budget one month early. The year ends at the end of March, we have data only till the end of December, so they have to estimate what's going to happen in the next three months and that's where they lie," she said.

According to Ms. Ghosh, the economic mess started in the mid-2000, celebrated as a period of economic boom. "That is the period when a lot of these problems started. That was the growth based on inequality, and it delivered even more inequality. It was based on the segmented labour market, on the ability of employers to rely on the existing social discriminations by gender, segmented by caste, ethnic categories and locations. It allowed employers to exploit all these social differences to extract labour at the cheapest rates. And that has been a feature of the growth process."

The session was chaired by Ritu Dewan, former Director of the Department of Economics, University of Mumbai, and the first woman to hold that post.



**India's current slowdown is worse than that of 1991 and 2008**

JAYATI GHOSH  
Professor of Economics, JNU

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## Removal of DDT will boost investments: CBDT

Centre believes the new regime will encourage low-income people to invest in the capital market

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

A day after the Union Budget proposed removal of the dividend distribution tax (DDT) levied on companies, the government said on Sunday that the new regime was expected to encourage more people, especially in the low tax bracket, to invest in the capital market.

The government said that with dividend now being proposed to be taxed in the hands of the investors at their applicable slab rate, non-residents would get

some relief even as it addressed the "issue of inequity in dividend taxation".

"Single rate of taxation is always iniquitous as it favours taxpayers who are in higher tax brackets and works against those who are in lower tax brackets," says a Central Board of Direct Taxes statement. "Thus, it was a case of reverse subsidy from the poor to rich taxpayers. Further, non-residents were taxed at a higher rate than the treaty rate with the possibility of no tax credit in the home country," it said.

The government believes that the new regime, however, would encourage individu-



duals in the low-income bracket to invest in the capital market as the tax incidence would drop significantly.

"...person with an income up to ₹5 lakh will not have to pay tax on dividend income as against 20.56% paid by them indirectly. Similarly, under the new tax regime, persons with an income from ₹5 lakh to ₹7.5 lakh would pay tax at 10%

and persons with ₹7.5 lakh to ₹10 lakh would pay tax at 15%," it explained.

All these taxpayers would benefit from the abolition of the DDT as the tax to be paid by them on their dividend income would be less than what they were earlier paying indirectly through it, it added. The government believes that the proposal will make more investors look at debt mutual fund products since under the prevailing framework, the effective DDT on such products was between 38% and 50%.

## An act of walking the tightrope on fiscal deficit

Limited fiscal room for stimulus

M.M. MURUGAPPAN

While the government is walking a tightrope with respect to fiscal deficit, especially due to corporate tax cuts, despite higher receipts from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), there was a case for a fiscal stimulus expected in the Budget, as the RBI has called for in the recent policy statement.

The government acknowledged its fiscal challenges, resorting to the escape clauses in the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act) – pushing up the deficit to 3.8% in FY20 and 3.5% in FY21 – with total expenditure increase by 13% (higher increase in capex) resulting in incremental improvements.

While continuing to remain committed to the doubling of farmer's income, the government has laid out a longer term plan for the agricultural sector, detailing 16 broad initiatives that would help achieve the government's objective. The government's move to make



M.M. Murugappan

the sector market oriented through contract farming, land leases etc., provides a positive push to this sector.

The change in SARFAESI norms for debt recovery for the NBFC sector could aid in improving recoveries and help ease some of the stress in this sector. The changes made in income tax space may reduce the tax burden of a large section of the taxpayers. Overall, having taken cognisance of the challenges in the economy, the government has laid out its focus areas and policy direction. However, execution is the true measure of success.

(The writer is Executive Chairman, Murugappa Group)

## INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY

The following e-tenders are published in IREPSS website. Firms are requested to login to [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and quote against these tenders. Manual quotations will not be entertained for these tenders. Hindi translation of display advertisement available in the Website [www.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.indianrailways.gov.in). Closing and Opening time for all tenders are 14:30 hrs. and 15:00 hrs. respectively.

Sl. No.	Open Tender No.	Short description of work	Approx. Value	Date of Tender
1	EW / 1055	Service Contract for Maintenance of Crane girders & Crane rails, traverser rails.	₹ 36.14 Lakhs	24.02.2020 24.02.2020
2	EW / 1057	Service Contract for Operation and Maintenance of Industrial RO plant / Effluent Treatment Plant / Sewage wells and cleaning of Main pump house GLR & OHT-2 years	₹ 92.67 Lakhs	24.02.2020 24.02.2020
3	EW / 1058	(A) Provision of 700m length inspection Track with Pit (B) Provision of two Ballast less Track-250m (C) Creation Shed with one bay of 125m length (D) Additional 2 lines of 5 coach each inside shop-80 & 81 shed	₹ 1100.34 Lakhs	24.02.2020 24.02.2020

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EOI Notification No: NITR/PW/EOI/2020/01 Date: 01/02/2020

NIT Rourkela invites bids from reputed professional EPC agencies/contractors having valid registration with CPWD/PSUs/Autonomous Institutions/State PWD having sound financial status, machinery and experience in execution of similar jobs i.e. for carrying out HVAC(High-End-Equipment) work. The work includes S/I/T/C of chiller plant with plant room, chillers with accessories and electrical system.

Last Date of Submission of EOI : 24/02/2020 by 03:00 PM

For Details :

[https://nitrk.ac.in/OldWebsite/Jobs\\_Tenders/11Miscellaneous/Default.aspx](https://nitrk.ac.in/OldWebsite/Jobs_Tenders/11Miscellaneous/Default.aspx)

Contact :

Prof. S. Murugan, PIC[HVAC], NIT Rourkela

Email Id : [murugans@nitrk.ac.in](mailto:murugans@nitrk.ac.in); Mob: 9437140949

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The Kolkata Municipal Corporation

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# First coronavirus death outside China

The Philippines reported that a 44-year-old man from Wuhan developed severe pneumonia and died

REUTERS  
BEIJING/MANILA

China ramped up measures to contain the coronavirus epidemic and shore up an economy hit by travel curbs and business shut-downs on Sunday as the first death from the illness was reported outside the country.

The Philippine Health Department said a 44-year-old Chinese man from Wuhan, the city at the center of the crisis, was hospitalised on January 25 with a fever, cough and sore throat and died after developing severe pneumonia.

The virus outbreak is still "severe and complicated", Huber Vice-Governor Xiao Juhua told reporters.

A total of 304 people have died in China, the country's National Health Commission said on Sunday. Infections in China jumped to 14,380 as of Saturday, after their biggest daily rise, it added.

## Mounting isolation

At least another 171 cases have been reported in more than two dozen other countries and regions, including the U.S., Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong and Britain.



**Miraculous effort:** An aerial view of Huoshenshan hospital in Wuhan on Sunday as it nears completion 10 days after its construction began. The facility is set to open on Monday. AP

Beijing is facing mounting isolation as countries introduce travel restrictions, airlines suspend flights and governments evacuate their citizens, risking worsening a slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

China's central bank said it would inject a hefty 1.2 trillion yuan (\$173.8 billion) worth of liquidity into the markets via reverse repo operations as the country prepares to reopen its stock markets after an extended Lunar New Year holiday.

We can't work and have no income. I would rather work than stay at home and

it will help firms that produce vital goods resume work as soon as possible, state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing a meeting chaired by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang.

In Beijing, some malls stayed open during the extended holiday, but staff wearing surgical masks stood outside shops offering to take customers' temperatures. Many other stores and cafes remained shut.

Meanwhile, Russia introduced visa restrictions and said it will evacuate its citizens on Monday and Tuesday.

do nothing," said 32-year-old restaurant worker Wu Caixia in Beijing.

Authorities have effectively quarantined Wuhan, sealing off roads and shutting down public transport.

A plane repatriating 250 French and European nationals from Wuhan landed at a military airbase in Istres, southern France, on Sunday.

The doctors combined the anti-flu drug oseltamivir with lopinavir and ritonavir, anti-virals used to treat HIV. Dr. Kriengsak said, adding the Ministry was awaiting research results to prove the findings.

# U.K. to seek Canada-style free trade deal with EU

'Such a pact viable only if Britain brings its rules in line with EU regulations'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Two days after Brexit, British officials pushed the European Union on Sunday for a Canada-style free trade arrangement as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson geared up for a key speech to spell out his government's negotiating stance.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told Sky News that Britain will seek a deal that imposes very few tariffs even

though he said Britain will not seek to align its regulations with the EU.

"We are taking back control of our laws, so we are not going to have high alignment with the EU and legislative alignment with their rules," Mr. Raab said. "We will want to cooperate and we expect the EU to follow through on their commitments to a Canada-style free trade agreement. That's what we are pursuing. There

is a great opportunity here for win-win."

EU officials, despite offering friendly words to the British public over the weekend after the divorce that took effect on Friday night, warn that Canada only achieved largely tariff-free trade status by bringing many of its rules in line with EU regulations. EU officials fear that the U.K. could water down its environment or health and safety precautions, undermining EU businesses.

The trade talks are vital because now that Britain has officially left the bloc – the first nation ever to do so – Mr. Johnson hopes to have a wide-ranging new deal in place by the end of the year.

## Johnson's speech

After celebrating Brexit by banging on a gong in the final seconds before it took effect, Mr. Johnson plans to detail Britain's trade stance in a speech Monday.

European leaders have said that Britain will not be able to get a deal like Canada's if it breaks significantly with EU rules on food safety, environmental standards, product standards and health and safety.

## Drug cocktail shows promise against virus'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BANGKOK

A Chinese woman infected with the new coronavirus showed a dramatic improvement after she was treated with a cocktail of anti-virals used to treat flu and HIV, Thailand's Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The patient, 71, tested negative for the virus 48 hours after she was administered the combination, doctor Kriengsak Attipornwanich said.

"The lab result of positive on the coronavirus turned negative in 48 hours," Dr. Kriengsak said.

"From being exhausted before, she could sit up in bed 12 hours later."

The doctors combined the anti-flu drug oseltamivir with lopinavir and ritonavir, anti-virals used to treat HIV. Dr. Kriengsak said, adding the Ministry was awaiting research results to prove the findings.

# A crowded ballot in Iowa with Sanders and Biden in the lead

The State provides early momentum to leading candidates

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

WASHINGTON DC

More than a handful of Democrats will compete with each other and indirectly against a highly controversial President Donald Trump, riding high on his imminent acquittal by the Senate, as the U.S. election season kicks off on Monday night with the Iowa Caucuses.

Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar who had been in Washington for Mr. Trump's Senate trial dashed to Iowa for a hectic weekend of campaigning. Together with former Vice-President Joe Biden and former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, the five candidates top the long list of Democratic hopefuls.

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"From being exhausted before, she could sit up in bed 12 hours later."

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Joe Biden, left, and Bernie Sanders after a debate in Los Angeles. •REUTERS/FILE

your TV – Bernie won," Mr. Sanders' spokesperson Mike Cason said, as per Politico.

Nevertheless, if the higher voter turnout is comprised of more moderate, older voters and independents, they're more likely to choose Mr. Biden, Mr. Buttigieg or Ms. Klobuchar (and that could, in turn, benefit Mr. Biden). The Senator from Minnesota is betting on her organization across the state and making sure she hits counties that flipped from Mr. Obama to Mr. Trump.

Regardless of differences in their tactics in Iowa, Democrats' strategy is the same in one respect at least: sending out a strong message that Mr. Trump needs to be defeated and that each of them is the best person to do so. They are also being careful to not to push away any potential Democrat voter with intra-party mudslinging.

There is Democrat contention by his absence from Iowa. Michael Bloomberg, who has already spent more than \$200 million on his campaign, will enter the fray straight on March 3 or 'Super Tuesday' where a large number of states vote.

After Iowa, candidates will face off in New Hampshire, then Nevada and South Carolina. In New Hampshire, Mr. Sanders leads Mr. Biden by a solid margin (close to 10 points in RCP polling averages). Mr. Biden has a 17 point lead over Mr. Sanders in South Carolina – where he has the support of a large number of African American voters.

No matter who wins the Iowa Caucuses to contend for the Democratic nomination, they will also have to compete against Mr. Trump who has time, money – and now an acquittal – on his side.

# Police kill man in London after 'terror' stabbings

People warned to avoid the area

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

British police on Sunday shot dead a man in south London, after at least two people were stabbed in a "terrorist-related" incident.

An eye-witness described seeing a man "with a machete and silver canisters on his chest" fleeing from police before they opened fire.

The shooting, on a busy street packed with Sunday shoppers, came just over two months after a convicted terrorist was shot dead by police on London Bridge, after he killed two people.

The Metropolitan Police

said the man died at around 2:00 pm (1400 GMT) on Streatham High Road, a busy thoroughfare lined with shops in a residential neighbourhood.

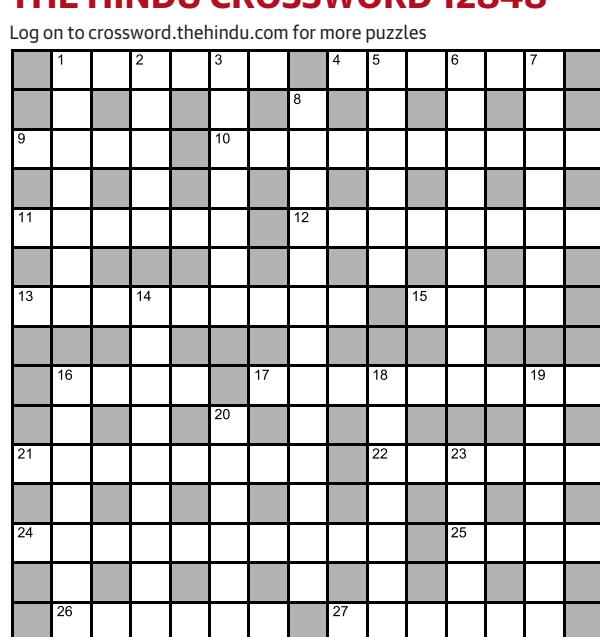
Prime Minister Boris Johnson thanked the emergency services for their response. "My thoughts are with the injured and all those affected," he said,

Interior Minister Priti Patel paid tribute to the bravery of police and emergency services and said she was being kept updated.

Police said there were two victims injured in the incident.

## THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12848

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



### ACROSS

- 1 Bound well (6)
- 4 Ruffle at the back of husband's suspender (6)
- 9 Dull Persian poet (4)
- 10 Let's cut and run away quickly (7,3)
- 11 Subtly amusing ridicule, essentially starts around its comeback (6)

(set by Hypatia)

- 12 Like those who raise sheep aren't alongside wolves (8)
- 13 Ravage Indra's gallery (9)
- 15 Nerf set to shoot (4)
- 16 Hits bugs (4)
- 17 According to Spooner, married gambler who is incontinent (9)
- 21 Terribly sinful woman contracts base disease (5,3)
- 22 Radio broadcast about new advance (6)
- 24 We hear country backed secure gadgets for lubrication (6,4)
- 25 Hop into Oriental tour? Quite the contrary (4)
- 26 Upset student switching from American to European currency (6)
- 27 Start to suddenly turn direction and veer (6)
- 28 One assists to straighten a Sultana, perhaps? (5)

### SUDOKU

8	7		9					
		10						
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Solution to puzzle 12847

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

### FAITH

#### Blessed Bali

When Vamana assumed the form of Trivikrama, He measured the world with one foot. His other foot reached Brahma Loka. Brahma washed His foot, and this water became the sacred Ganga river. Mahabali's son Namuchi held on to the Lord's foot, thinking he could bring the Lord from measuring land with His large feet. But the Lord swirled Namuchi away to the sky and continued to grow. Watching the Lord expand in height, Mahabali thought perhaps the Lord would stop once he reached one of the three lokas which Bali ruled over. But the Lord went beyond these lokas and covered seven lokas. His stamp was now on everything. When there was nothing left for the Lord to measure, He asked Mahabali where to put His foot to measure the third portion of land promised to Him. Mahabali indicated his head, and the Lord pressed Bali down to patala loka, where he was to be ruler. Mahabali was not a great sage or devotee. But what good fortune he had to have the Lord place His foot on his head! This is a blessing His bhaktas crave for, said M.A. Venkatakrishnan, in a discourse.

Mahabali usurped Indra's territory. Taking something that did not belong to him was the wrong that Mahabali committed. But he had always been generous. That is why he was banished to the netherworld, which he was to rule. Suppose a child in our family takes a toy belonging to the neighbour's child, and this leads to a row, we take the toy away from our child and return it to the neighbour's child. But we also console our child by saying that we will get it a better toy later. In the same vein, the Lord returned Indra's kingdom which Bali had taken, but He gave Bali unchallenged control over another loka. Like Aswattama and Vyasa, Mahabali too is a Chiranjeevi, that is, an immortal being.

## ASK US

AARATI KRISHNAN

**Q.** My mother retired this year and I want to invest her money in a microfinance institution (MFI). But before doing that, I need some clarification. In Manipur, there are some MFIs that offer an interest rate of about 3% per month on fixed deposits for three years. But I am a little sceptical about this very high interest rate. I want to know whether there are any banks or MFIs that offer rates that are this high and whether it is legal for them to do this?

NINGTHEMCHA RANJAN MANGANG

**A.** It is indeed creditable of you to not get taken in by the high interest rate offered by this entity and to check on the credentials of the microfinance firm offering them. Your suspicions are quite right. The MFI you mention is unlikely to be a deposit-taking entity authorised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). For one, in India, non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) are barred from accepting public deposits unless they are specifically authorised by the RBI. The list of NBFCs authorised to accept public deposits is available on the RBI website and you can run a check on this list. Two, NBFCs, which are allowed by RBI to accept deposits, cannot offer interest rates above 12.5% per annum by law. They also cannot offer deposits for periods less than 12 months or more than 60 months. As the MFI you mention is offering exceptional rates of 3% a month (over 36% a year), it is clearly violating the RBI rules. In fact, it is quite likely that the MFI you're dealing with is not even registered. You can run a check on the RBI site for the list of MFIs that are registered and authorised to operate by the regulator. Investing with an unregulated entity for high interest rates is a highly risky proposition as your principal would be at risk of default.

If your mom is a senior citizen, the Senior Citizens Savings Scheme offered by India Post, offering an interest rate of 8.6% per annum, is currently the best bet. The scheme carries a five-year lock-in period and accepts up to ₹15 lakh per individual. You can also consider the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana from LIC which offers a guaranteed pension payout for 10 years at an effective return of about 8% per annum. These schemes are sovereign guaranteed with a minimal risk to your mom's capital.

**Q.** I'm 24 years old and work in Bengaluru with a monthly income of ₹20,000. Of this, about ₹10,000 goes towards my expenses and repayment of my educational loan with the remaining amount saved every month. Kindly guide me on how to invest wisely for my future. Given the current scenario, my circle of friends tells me not to go in for stocks or bank deposits. So, what should I do?

SURIYAA A. G.

**A.** Where you should invest this money will depend on what you want to save for. If you have goals (such as a higher degree, marriage or a car purchase) coming up within the next 6-7 years, then your savings should go into debt or hybrid investments and not stock market investments or equity mutual funds. The latter can be quite risky to invest in for shorter time frames because a sudden market fall can saddle you with a capital loss.

But if you are looking to save towards long-term goals such as retirement, which are more than 6-7 years away, then you can consider investing in Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) of equity mutual funds that are carefully selected for their 10-year track record. Before you start on equity investments or SIPs, it is best that you read and understand more about them.

You can make an immediate start on fixed income investments. You should have about nine months' worth of expenses (₹90,000) in a bank fixed deposit towards emergencies such as a loss of job or career break. Bank fixed deposits and recurring deposits are quite safe provided you go with leading scheduled commercial banks and avoid co-operative banks. Sound banks currently offer interest rates of 6-7.5% on their FDs. Banks or entities, that promise higher rates, carry higher risks. Given that these rates can rise, stick to one-year deposits. Do open a Public Provident Fund account with a post office or a leading bank that can help you accumulate retirement savings. You can invest up to ₹1.5 lakh a year in PPF. If you have dependents, get pure term life insurance that can take care of their needs in your absence.

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in). Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

## LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"I asked for a cab on the app; ten bankers responded with offers of car loans on messaging!"

# Four pitfalls in home loan down payment

Borrowers must steer clear of making common mistakes while buying a dream home to avoid any adverse impact on finances

NAVEEN KUKREJA

For most people, buying a dream home will probably be their single largest big-ticket expense. With the Reserve Bank of India capping home loan LTV (loan to value) ratio at 90%, 80% and 75% for home loan amounts of up to ₹30 lakh, ₹30-75 lakh and above ₹75 lakh respectively, even the down payment requirement for home loans goes up to several lakhs.

The size of the down payment money, coupled with the urge to buy their dream home, force many to make financial mistakes, which can have an adverse impact on their financial health in the long term.

Here are some of the common mistakes that borrowers make while sourcing home loan down payment money.

**Availing personal loans**  
Home loan lenders usually prefer to lend to those with fixed obligation to income ratio (FOIR) of 50-60%. This ratio denotes the proportion of the loan applicant's monthly income used for servicing his fixed monthly obligations such as his existing EMIs, insurance premiums and the EMI for his new home loan.

If the home loan applicant avails a personal loan to finance his down payment component, the new EMI of his personal loan will further reduce his FOIR, thereby reduc-

ing his overall home loan eligibility. Additionally, applying for personal loans with multiple lenders can also reduce the credit score as any new loan application is reported to the credit bureaus who, in turn, reduce the credit score by a few points. A reduced credit score will further bring down his

home loan eligibility.

**Using emergency fund**

This fund refers to the part of your savings set aside for dealing with unforeseen expenses and meeting unavoidable expenses in case of loss of income arising out of illnesses, job loss and disability. The size

of this fund should cover the mandatory expenses of at least six months, such as your existing EMIs, daily household expenses, utility bills, children's school fee, insurance premiums, medical expenditure, etc.

If you use up your emergency fund for making the down payment, you will be forced to redeem your investments earmarked for other crucial financial goals or avail loans at high interest rates.

**Using retirement corpus**

The increasing number of nuclear families and absence of universal old-age social security have increased the importance of having adequate post-retirement corpus.

Increasing healthcare costs and rising life expectancy have also increased the risk of running out of retirement savings. However, the long time horizon available for creating retirement corpus leads most to ignore its importance. As a result, many who regularly save for their retirement corpus through regular contributions to EPF, PPF or even mutual fund end up redeeming funds from their retirement corpus. The flip side of doing so is that restarting your contribution from scratch or at depleted levels would take longer to create adequate corpus.

For example, if a 25-year old investor starts an SIP of ₹10,000 per month in an equity fund generating an annual

high-cost debt is to start building your children's education fund early on. Start early with regular investment at periodic intervals, preferably through SIPs. This will allow you to create the target corpus at much lower instalments. However, the same issue of long investment horizon can entice many to redeem their children's education corpus for arranging down payment money. As explained in the case of retirement corpus, restarting your contribution from scratch or at depleted levels would mean it would take longer to achieve the target corpus for your children's education.

**Instead of availing a personal loan or redeeming other investments, start saving early for home loan down payment by regularly investing in mutual funds****Conclusion**

Instead of availing a personal loan or redeeming your emergency fund or other investments for crucial life goals, start saving early for home loan down payment by regularly investing in mutual funds

home loan down payment, he will have a retirement corpus of just ₹3.09 crore on turning 60. The new corpus will be half of what he would have built, had he stayed invested.

**Redeeming children's education corpus**

The rising cost of higher education is worrying for both parents and children. For most parents, availing an education loan has become the only source to finance their wards' higher education cost. On the other hand, higher loan amounts can leave children with a sizeable debt burden to service which, in turn, can adversely impact their savings during the initial stages of their career.

The best way to avoid such



## JOB TRAIL: WORK FROM HOME

## Home may be where the money is

Women must consider larger financial goals and critical factors before opting to work from home

MEERA SIVA

Travel and being away from home are two impediments to a woman's job and career growth. Due to the need to stay at home, many often opt out of nine-to-five employment; they often find ways to use their skills and earn while working from home.

While any earning without going to work is viewed as good, women must look at it critically from the point of view of their larger financial goals and consider critical factors to make the most of their time.

**Flexible employment**  
One good option, if it works out, is to negotiate an arrangement with the employers to continue your existing job from home. There are three key aspects you must focus on.

One, negotiate with confidence on the salary and responsibilities, as it is common for corporates to reduce salary or assign non-critical roles to those who are not regular at the office. This can be detrimental in the long-term and you must clearly articulate your strengths and what you can contribute in order to ensure your earnings and career prospects are not compromised.

Two, you must invest in a proper working environment in

your house. For example, reliable high-speed Internet, power back-up and a space without interruptions are required to get the work done. If you must pay for help around the house, it must be done to ensure you can focus on work. These expenses will pay dividends, as your career grows uninterrupted.

Three, you must not lose focus on the long-term. For instance, ask if this arrangement is a sustainable option or not, given the nature of the job or the employer.

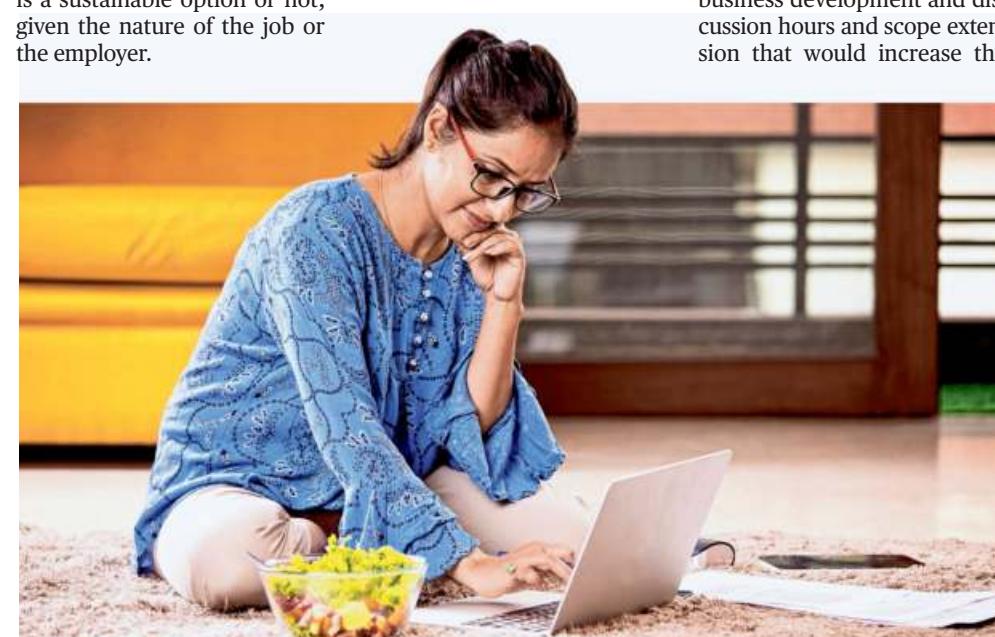
**Freelance work**  
Working on assignments, rather than be on payroll, is a popular option to consider. While there are many advantages, you must also plan for the financial

Think about career options if it may only work as a stopgap. You must also invest regularly to build a corpus while you work so that you can explore career change options.

**Optimal work**  
Working on assignments, rather than be on payroll, is a popular option to consider. While there are many advantages, you must also plan for the financial

challenges. One, you must be clear on how to price your work. For instance, if your monthly salary was ₹80,000, the hourly rate was ₹500 (40 hours per week) and you must charge 2-3 times this amount and multiply by the estimated number of hours for an assignment.

The premium covers at least three things – intermittent nature of work, overheads such as business development and discussion hours and scope extension that would increase the



Reliable high-speed internet, power back-up and space without interruptions are a must for working from home. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

things you can do with your time.

**Providing service**

You can also use your skills and experience to offer services from home; for example, art or music lessons, coaching for exams, academic subject teaching, tax, legal or financial consulting and content work such as blogs, technical work such as cloud services support or some such options. These services are typically better defined, and it is easier to fix your fee.

+

+

There may be some overheads such as a good phone/Internet connection and a space to offer the service. However, you are likely to have repeat customers with less need for networking and marketing. Your monthly earnings are also somewhat predictable.

In this case, you must look at ways to maximise your earning potential. For example, besides in-person sessions, you can reach more people through online tools such as Zoom or Skype. There are also platforms that you can be a part of to get more clients.

Also, one cost that is not factored in is the time value of the person doing the business. You must track the hours you spend and realistically project how much the business can scale, to weigh if there may be better

By also standardising your work, you can save time by doing it once and reusing, to earn more within the limited hours.

*(The author is an independent financial consultant)*

## Life insurance term plan premium

Age: 30 Years, Sum insured- Rs. 1 crore, Cover upto- 70 Years

Insurance company	Plan name	Maximum cover	Annual premium (Rs.) (Male)
Aditya Birla Capital	Ultima Term	85	10,270
Aegon Life	iTerm Insurance Plan	100	9,114
Aviva Life	iTerm Smart	80	9,007
Bajaj Allianz	Smart Protect Goal	99	8010
Bharti AXA	Flexi Term Plan	85	9,440
Canara HSBC OBC Life	iSelect Term Plan	80	9,491
DHFL Pramerica Life	Flexi e-Term	75	9,403
Edelweiss Tokio Life	Zindagi+ Term Insurance Plan	80	9,309
Exide Life	Smart Term Plan	75	12411*
Future Generali	Flexi Online Term Plan	75	9,427
HDFC Life	Click2Protect 3D Plus	100	12,478
ICICI Prudential	iProtect Smart	99	12,502
IDBI Federal Life	iSurance Flexi Term	80	12,402
India First Life	e-Term Plan	80	8,260
Kotak Life I	Kotak e-Term Plan	75	9,558
Max Life i	Online Term Plan Plus	85	10,148
PNB Met Life	Mera Term Plan	99	10,148
Reliance Nippon Life	Digi Term	80	11,012
SBI Life	eShield	80	15,070
TATA AIA Life	Sampoorna Raksha	100	9,912

## Health insurance premium

Insurer name	Key features	Plan names	Premium(Rs.)
Religare Health	Day Care Treatments Family Floater option Health Checkups Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage	NCB Super Premium Care Care with unlimited recharge	8,675 7,887 8,478
Max Bupa Health	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Alternate Medicine	NCB Super Premium with UAR Health Companion with Health Recharge	9,267 8,764
Star Health	Family Floater option Restoration of cover Wellness Benefits	Medi Classic Star Comprehensive	9,661 11,476
Apollo Munich Health	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility	Optima Restore Easy Health Individual Standard	11,024 9,613
Aditya Birla Health	Day Care Treatments Restoration of cover Family Floater Option	Easy Health Individual Exclusive Easy Health Individual Premium Energy Gold Energy Silver Energy Gold with Co pay Energy Silver with Co pay Health wallet	12,067 14,945 20,036 14,136 17,216 11,316 22,908
HDFC Ergo General	Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	My:health Suraksha Gold Smart	13,886
Raheja QBE	Day Care Treatments Restoration of Cover Hospital Room Eligibility	Activ assure Diamond Activ Health Enhance Activ Health Enhance (Diabetes ) Activ Health Enhance ( Asthma ) Activ Health Enhance ( Hypertension ) Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB Activ assure Diamond with Unlimited Reload Activ assure Diamond with Super NCB and Unlimited Reload	7,938 9,801 38,148 16,818 32,616 8,732 8,494 9,287
Edelweiss General	Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Alternate Medicine	Hospitalization at Home Hospital Room Eligibility Health QuBE Basic Health QuBE SuperSaver Health QuBE Comprehensive	11,337 11,569 4,711 3,820 5,511
Oriental	Pre and Post Hospitalisation Coverage Day Care Treatments Hospitalization at Home	Edelweiss Health Insurance-Gold (Health 241 Add-on) Edelweiss Health Insurance Gold	10,398 8,318

Acknowledging, understanding and resolving the current challenges faced by Indian universities will help create impactful higher educational institutions

■ SANDEEP SANCHETI

The challenges posed by globalisation and revolution in information technology worldwide are impacting everyone, and higher educational institutions are no exception. The very talk of challenges faced by universities, especially in India, is a positive sign as it makes academics and administrators look at ways to re-invent the scheme of things in classrooms and beyond.

In the current era of rapidly-changing knowledge, it is undoubtedly important to keep pace with the goings-on, but institutions are finding it difficult, for different reasons. 'New knowledge' requires research, an area that universities are not properly equipped, either by way of faculty or proper infrastructure. This is critical as fruits of research will have to be delivered to students and the masses in a timely manner.

#### Financing

Finance is an area that has always been a challenge and especially so for a developing country like India and educational institutions in the country face this situation more as subsidised education comes with a price. Although self-financing institutions are trying to do their best, they also ultimately depend on the government for support. There is the element of government funding that comes with checks and controls but the quantum of funding to private

**Challenges faced by universities, especially in India, is a positive sign as it makes academics and administrators look at ways to re-invent the scheme of things in classrooms and beyond.**



plines as opposed to a uni-dimensional or a traditional way of looking at problems. Institutions of higher learning will have to come to terms with courses cutting across disciplines, not just from the perspective of job marketability but in the widening of intellectual horizons.

#### Governance

Many a times, there is a complaint that universities are not given enough autonomy to do the job they are supposed to. To be fair, autonomy or the framework for governance is adequate, only that institutional leadership has not used it effectively or purposefully. An argument can be made that there has been less adequate grooming for senior-level administrators, many of whom think that they can get to the top by relying only on academic credentials.

#### Ranking

One other obsession we seem to have developed in recent times is about international rankings. Every time we do not figure high in such a list, questions are raised about our standards even for top Indian institutions. It is well-known that these institutions, at least at the undergraduate level, are producing competitive graduates who are highly sought after internationally, both for jobs and higher education. Therefore, such a self-defeating approach towards ranking should be avoided, and we should focus more on enhancing quality and ratings rather than rankings.

#### Regulations

Regulations are required, but in many instances, they are complicated by various agencies and councils. Some of the external regulations are good, but in an overall context they seem to erode the effectiveness of a university's culture – some councils and accrediting agencies demand several facilities such as separate land, faculty, library, infrastructure, and hostel, just to mention a few. All this fuss in the name of signing off on requirements for approvals to operate eventually end up making universities less universal.

The writer is Vice-Chancellor, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai.

## Making universities MORE UNIVERSAL

institutions is negligible as much of the funds are diverted to central institutions and a few hand-picked institutions. There is a limit to the deep pockets of private institutions as they have to constantly pump money into infrastructure so as to stay relevant in the market. The negligible industrial involvement or investment, as well as the fact that India does not yet have a big legacy to speak

of by way of support from alumni, adds to this.

#### Faculty

Perhaps, the biggest challenge to universities is that of recruitment and retention of faculty as a large number of young graduates, including those with postgraduate and doctoral degrees, avoid teaching as a profession. What

then happens is that the available pool of teachers is not geared to perform routine tasks with the needed finesse. In effect, a large fraction of the fraternity is teachers by chance, not by choice. Administrators of higher educational institutions are looking for ways to deal with this issue; only then, universities can thrive academically and intellectually.

#### Inter-disciplinary

There is no doubt that we live in a highly competitive world where investments in new developments are high and hence comes the need to focus on multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches to seek answers for local problems and requirements. New knowledge is developed more easily in overlapping legions of different disci-

## Strike a balance

A conditioned atmosphere makes one wait for instructions and we are often lost when we don't get any. It is time to learn to act independently sometimes



#### BACKPACKER'S GUIDE

USHA RAMAN

Telling us what to do, and when and how to do it. So, as we grow up, there's this constant tussle in our heads between when we should wait for instructions and when we should act on our own.

#### At crossroads

At a recent event, I was confounded by a group of volunteers who had gone without lunch because they hadn't received formal instructions on when and where to go eat (and hadn't been given the obligatory meal coupons that most others had received). In their own college campuses, this would have been a no-brainer; they would have gone to one of the numerous *addas* to find food, and taken *chai* breaks whenever they wanted. But here, where they were following the directions set by the event managers, they were rendered helpless, waiting to be told what to do. So, in the absence of

"lunch" in their instructions, they didn't know where or how to find relief from hunger pangs. To make it clear, this was not an authoritarian situation – there was nothing preventing them from taking a break to find food at one of the many stalls at the event. But they had in some strange way been rendered incapable of taking that decision.

Now this may seem as a trivial example, but I found it worth telling. It made me wonder about the balance between the ability to understand and follow instructions, and the ability to act independently when needed. We all need to do both, all the time. We need to follow traffic rules, and facilitate orderly movement of vehicles, but we also need to be able to stop for a pedestrian crossing at the wrong place, even if that stops the cars behind us. Team work requires us to follow a common structure, but we also need to find ways to build our own structure if needed. It is about embedding ourselves in society, but it's also about doing things differently when that societal norm is unjust or restrictive.

It is about finding that lunch when it isn't given to you!

The writer teaches at the University of Hyderabad and edits Teacher Plus. usha.bpg@gmail.com



Online employment-oriented service providers have been failing at bridging various gaps at both the employers' and the applicants' level. A number of problems including unreliable endorsements of skills, failure to connect the right profiles to the organisations, and spamming, have made such applications appear unwelcoming. However, Youth4work, an online application for students and professionals, has navigated its path by emphasising on enhancing skills and building a good profile.

#### Profile building

The application is useful for college-goers, and has tie-ups with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and University Grants Commission (UGC). An eminent mastermind with a decade's experience in the field, Rachit Jain, Founder, and CEO of Youth4work sheds more light.



Rachit Jain

the job market is mediocre and unskilled. Since these underachievers are not properly equipped to survive in an already diminishing job market, they face trouble finding the right jobs, and end up contributing to the worsening unemployment rate. Thus, the requirement has always been for skills.

How does Youth4work cater better to users' needs? We prepare the youth to identify and make the right career decisions for themselves. We have mock tests, practice and skill-based tests for all kinds of jobs, and our online portal measures the potential of each aspirant individually and suggests where improvements can be made. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) model on which the website works allows us to evaluate user performances

in the most optimal manner and this, in turn, helps us to cater to them even better.

#### What are the practice tests that are available?

There are more than 5,000 online 'ytests' (mock tests for practice) and more than 800 prep tests (preparation tests for the purpose of clearing competitive government/private exams such as SSC, CAT, and so on). Each test is unique and the AI algorithms decide how hard or easy the next question in the test should be.

#### How are the tests conducted?

Once the test starts, all other screens become inaccessible, other than the test screen itself; so, one cannot take Google's help. Each question of the online mock test has a time limit attached to it depending upon the difficulty level. It is so to bring efficiency in answering.

#### How long does the process of connecting youngsters to an organisation take?

It happens within hours, depending upon what sort of opportunities are being sought by the youth. Scores are calculated immediately after the test ends and 'rank' is generated based on the individual's performance. More than 33,000 recruiters refer to the rank board.

**The Artificial Intelligence (AI) model on which the website works, allows us to evaluate user performances in the most optimal manner.**

#### INNOVATION



#### ETCETERA

#### PE distance-learning degrees

R. SUJATHA

Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Education Academy, a unit of Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre has proposed to launch a learner support centre under the school for distance education of the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University from the academic year 2020-21.

A unique graduate and postgraduate diploma programme in physical education, sports and allied fields has been proposed.

Working professionals may also pursue the courses as contact classes will be held mostly during weekends as per the University schedule. Lab exercises, assignments and case studies would enable candidates to gain learning experience. They will also get an opportunity to directly learn from the faculty members of Dr. Mohan's Academy and experienced professionals. The candidates need not take a career break to earn a TNPES degree.

The PG diploma courses, which is for a year's duration requires a candidate to have a degree under the 10+2+3 pattern. The courses offered include - counselling; fitness and nutrition; fitness and wellness management; gym/fitness instructor; obesity and weight management; yoga; and yoga therapy.

The eligibility for undergraduate (Bachelor's) degree programme is 10+2 or Class X and two years of ITI/diploma for a duration of two years.

#### UG and PG courses

Rishihood University, Sonepat, has begun admissions for the first batch of students looking to apply for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Entrepreneurship, Healthcare, Education and Creativity. First phase of the courses is slated to begin in the third week of July. For more details, call 1800 120 6631 or visit [https://rishihood.edu.in/](http://rishihood.edu.in/)

#### Pradhan Mantri Rashtria Bal Puraskar 2020

Chirag Falor and Parikul Bhardwaj, won the prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtria Bal Puraskar 2020 conferred upon them by the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind at a ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Chirag was awarded for his excellence in the field of scholastics, while Parikul was honoured for her work in the social sector.

#### Smart Sports in India

Global Indian International School, launched the first-of-its-kind sports performance enhancing technology – SPEDAS in India at its SMART Campus in Balewadi, Pune. SPEDAS uses advanced sensors, which records techniques statistically that can later be analysed by the coach to help improve the performance in subsequent games.

# Even experts have doubts

Don't be misled by overconfidence



THINK  
ARUNA SANKARANARAYANAN

Most people respect the assurance that a confident leader exudes. But like all good things, confidence also has to be measured. While too little is indicative of insecurity, an overdose can also spell trouble, especially for leaders. In an article in *Scientific American Mind*, management consultant Khatera Sahibzada, gives us pointers to avoid getting sucked in by the persuasive pull of overconfident people. Be aware that we often conflate confidence with competence. Haven't we all felt safer in the hands of a doctor who comes up with a pat diagnosis instead of dithering over several possibilities? Don't we prefer professors who answer our ques-

tions instead of those who hem and haw saying they need to think about them? According to psychologist Maria Konnikova, this is because humans prefer certainty over ambiguity. To avoid a sense of unease, we may buy into the definitive assertions of confident people. However, confidence is not a proxy for accuracy. Instead, if we learn to tolerate ambivalence, we are more open to other possibilities and thus less likely to fall under the spell of overconfidence.

We also need to identify and appreciate what Sahibzada calls "intellectual humility." While expertise in any domain is always welcome, remember that even experts too have their doubts and limits. Those with hubris are unlikely to reveal their vulnerabilities as they do not want their reputation tainted. Besides, as noted Nobel laureate, Daniel Kah-

neman, says experts, including doctors, "who acknowledge the full extent of their ignorance" don't necessarily impress their clients.

## Gather the facts

Another telltale sign of overconfidence is when people fail to pay

heed to their subordinates, even if their juniors are more knowledgeable in certain areas. Leaders, who seldom take advice from others, can be blinded by their egos and may fail to avert avoidable crises. Be it a CFO or a senior surgeon, watch out for those who dismiss the concerns of a junior offhandedly.

(The writer is Director, PRAYATNA. Email: arunasanka@gmail.com)

contemplate, consider, pause, say 'no',

### Guiding words:

I intend to, I listen, I matter, I feel, I will create, I belong, I feel connected to, I think, I wonder (instead of I know), I am thankful.

### Notes:

Love, balance, intention, grace, gratefulness, generosity, magnificence, Carpe Diem.

And while you enlist your words of intent, select the ones that bring you closest to you, those that in a moment of disarray guide you to reason, calm and connect. In this process, you will also look in vain for words that elude the imperfect gap in emotions that no word can replace. The trick is not to forget the gap; the gaps are merely placeholders until words appear in an inspired moment. Just make sure to tune-in.

Because, simply put, we need words of belonging that move us towards each other, not from each other; ways of being human that open up the possibilities of experiencing together; ways of navigating our differences that deepen our curiosity, our friendship, our capacity to disagree and the arguments of living on this planet. This is what we need. This is the work each of us needs to do for an extraordinary experience of life.

first step here is to overhaul our daily speech. For instance, some lazy, insincere, convenient expressions that abound – 'I will try', 'this is nice' or 'let's catch up soon' – spoken to substitute the straightforward 'no'.

### Need for rigour words

As we speak mindfully, the words we choose induce response and reflection, make us pause, uplift and connect us and foster sincere relationships. I share a partial list of my own rigour words:

### Action-words:

Thrive (not win), strive (not try), nourish, accept,

The writer is a life coach, blogger, who simplifies the patterns and archetypes she encounters at work and in life. nivedita@lifealigncoaching.com

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You also need to be skeptical of bold claims that overconfident people make. Ask for data that backs up their assertions. If they avoid giving you concrete evidence or fail to specify sources to support their stance, your antennae should be raised. When someone, especially in a position of power, is unwilling to field questions, then you are possibly smelling a rat.

In an article in *Harvard Business Review*, Elizabeth Tenney, Nathan Meikle and David Hunsaker, observe that overconfidence is expressed through two channels. When people make assertions like, "I am 99% certain," their claims can usually be tested against "actual performance and outcomes." Hence, we are more likely to spot instances of overconfidence. A more subtle, but nevertheless, forceful manner in which overconfidence is communicated is using non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and gestures. When confidence is signalled non-verbally, we may be swayed without necessarily being aware. Thus, the authors coax us to watch out for behaviours like "standing tall, speaking loudly, and dominating conversation." If you feel a person is exhibiting overconfidence, you can ask questions or gather data to verify their claims.

(The writer is Director, PRAYATNA. Email: arunasanka@gmail.com)

## EAR SHOT

ASHOK RAJAGOPALAN



# Wield the RIGHT WORDS

sonance – simple words made of sincerity and brevity. Because, it is true that 'the words you speak become the house you live in'.

We speak and hear differently. In between the cracks of our differences are recurring feelings, familiar emotions and reflexes that are bridged with words that can potentially blur the differences, deepen our arguments and engender honest participation. To respond at a level of harmony, we will need to conclusively switch from lazy words to words that are mindful, that require the rigour of choosing. The

first step here is to overhaul our daily speech. For instance, some lazy, insincere, convenient expressions that abound – 'I will try', 'this is nice' or 'let's catch up soon' – spoken to substitute the straightforward 'no'.

### Need for rigour words

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The writer is a life coach, blogger, who simplifies the patterns and archetypes she encounters at work and in life. nivedita@lifealigncoaching.com

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If food can be divisive on Twitter, at Shaheen Bagh, and other places across India, shared meals strengthen bonds, and communities

SWEET AKUNDI, ANKUR BIPLAV AND MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

The smell of freshly brewed tea is in the air at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh. An old man pushes a cart of guavas past us. "₹10 a kilo," he announces. Surprised by the low price, we buy a batch and pay him a little more. He shakes his head and returns the excess cash – this isn't all about business.

This is about solidarity. Unity is the overriding sentiment here, solidified through shared meals of omelettes, *biryani*, *puri-sabzi* and tea.

For nearly two months, the women of Shaheen Bagh have been sitting inside a tent at one end of G. D. Birla Marg, in protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The protesters – men, women and children – occupy most of the highway, their numbers extending up to 10,000 or more on certain days. Feeding this mighty crowd is not an easy task, but this community-led agitation has organised itself for the purpose.

"Every day, we have well-wishers coming up to the stage, and asking us what the situation is like for tonight's dinner, or tomorrow's lunch, and then we tell them how many plates we need, and how many have been arranged so far," says Hena Ahmed, a volunteer. People from the area arrange these meals, either preparing small batches in their households, or mostly, coordinating with restaurants.

Some women are fasting as a way of protest, and they break their fast in the



## Fuelling a protest with tea

evening with samosas and chai. Meal-times are hectic for the volunteers, they move in and out of the tent, making sure everyone has had something to eat. Outside, men line up to receive plates of *puri* and *aloo*.

"One person can't feed everyone here, so we have mixed items – some get *biryani*, some *pulao*. Our Sikh brothers have also set up a *langar* here," says Humera Sayad, another volunteer. The *langar* was set up by a farmer's union from Punjab.

"All of us take up different responsibilities, but it's not like one person will permanently be doing one job. If I get tired, somebody else will take over," says Humera.

There is an unofficial 'kitchen de-

partment' to arrange for the food, "but if there are packets of biscuits or such smaller items, whoever is around will distribute them."

The self-sustaining, grassroots nature of the protests at Shaheen Bagh has caught the nation's imagination, and when people from Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab, West Bengal and other states come here, they often bring food. So much so that on stage, a volunteer has to explain to the protesters, "If you want to get food, please inform us first so that we can arrange for its distribution!"

### Silent helpers

It is 6 p.m. on a Thursday in Mumbai's Nagpada area. The women hold up pla-



any organisation," says Sayeed Sultan, a volunteer.

These include businessmen like Aarif Khan and Mahesh Solanki, who are unable to participate in the protest, and hence do their bit by donating sandwiches, fruitcake, samosas and water bottles in bulk. "Most of the people who donate food to the protesters do not wish to be named," says Sultan.

Another homemaker, who only identifies herself as a resident of Wadala, brought 25 packets of biscuits for the protesters.

"I have three children who go to a primary school and my husband works as an auto rickshaw driver. It is difficult for me to manage household chores, but keeping this alive is very important," she says on condition of anonymity. She adds that her children accompany her here post-school, and she helps them with their homework there.

### Household support

At Lucknow's iconic Husainabad Clock Tower aka Ghanta Ghar, the crowd primarily comprises homemakers shuttling between their familial duties and this venue.

**Moment to share** Tea and fruit being distributed at a protest in Delhi and Mumbai ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, EMMANUEL YOGINI

Numbers swell to about 5,000 between noon and 10 p.m. each day. At least 150-odd protesters stay the night, dividing themselves in batches so that the women can take turns staying at home with their families.

The people who want to make the time to be there but cannot, get hold of *baawarchis* to cook fresh food like *puri-chole* in bulk for those sitting in. This is usually done by about eight to 10 neighbourhood households joining hands – and funds – at a time, says social worker Sumaiya Rana.

"It is not just homemakers and families who help. On most nights, some hotels and restaurants nearby [who prefer to remain unnamed] pack whatever food is left at the end of their day and send it over."

This usually ranges from Lucknowi *biryani* to *keema* and *shami* kebab, in whatever quantity these restaurateurs can muster for the day. "Sometimes, there is *matar pulao* for the vegetarians. And every evening, without fail, someone or the other manages to bring samosas and tea for about 2,000 people," adds Rana.

There is a reason the food is prepared elsewhere – the clock tower is a historic monument, under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. Cooking within the premises is prohibited, as is the consumption of open, unpacked food.

"So the food is usually brought in packets: about two or three *puris* in each pack, along with some *sabzi* or *chole*," she says.

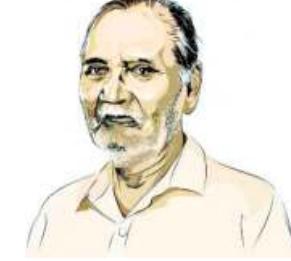
Since many of the protesters are mothers who cannot leave their little ones at home, there are chocolate bars and biscuit packets for the children. However, it is the tea that comes in most handy, particularly at night when temperatures drop to about two or three degrees Celsius.

"The days, thankfully, are getting sunnier," says Rana.

### DOWN MEMORY LANE

## In the light of the moon

How two very different marble buildings have a common inheritance, not known to most



R. V. SMITH

It is remarkable how often monuments spring up at places associated with great personages. Take the Mata Sundari Gurdwara near Rouse Avenue in New Delhi. It marks the site of the house where Guru Gobind Singh lived in the 18th century. Mata Sundari, the guru's wife and Mata Sahib Devi, considered the Mother of the Khalsa, survived the 10th and last guru. They also resided for some time near Ajmeri Gate in Kucha Diwali Singh during the decadent years of the Mughal empire, when Mohammad Shah was on the throne, but luckily did not live to see the sack of Delhi by Nadir Shah.

After the death of Aurangzeb, when the war of succession broke out between Prince Muazzam and Prince Azam, the former sought the help of Gobind Singh who sent a token force to help his friend at the Battle of Jajua, near Agra, in June 1707. But the guru camped nearby and when the need arose for reinforcements, he rushed in to Muazzam's aid. Azam was fatally wounded and his elder brother ascended the throne as Shah Alam, Bahadur Shah I.

When Guru Gobind Singh wanted to felicitate the emperor, he shot an arrow into the walls of the Red Fort and Bahadur Shah knew that his friend had arrived. After the death of the guru and successive rulers came and went, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi were not unduly disturbed, except when the heroic Sikh warrior Banda Singh Bahadur was ex-



**The hallowed precincts** A view of the Mata Sundari Gurdwara ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

cuted in 1716 and then in June 1725 when they had to leave Delhi and live in Mathura for two years.

They continued to guide the *panth* (community) from Mata Sundari haveli, sending *hukumnamas* (encycyclics) to followers as far away as Kabul in the north and Dhabka in the east, rallying the Sikhs and prevailing upon them not to accept those who were trying to set up an 11th guru.

Their abode, built in 1727, is now a gurdwara, and there is a college and road too named after Mata Sundari. Those who come to worship at this shrine remember the venerable ladies who, despite the loss of four sons early in life, left an indelible mark on Delhi when it was passing through some of its most troublesome times.

The two travelled on camel carts, bullock carts and in palanquins to propagate the message they had imbibed. Not far from Mata Sundari Gurdwara is what was once the bungalow of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber and has, over the centuries, become the Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. The Delhi palace of Jai Singh, General of Emperor Aurangzeb, was surrounded by a

beautiful garden with pleasure walks and a *sarovar* (pool) in the centre. During Diwali the bungalow used to glitter in the light of thousands of lamps.

Raja Jai Singh was a man of taste, even though he was one of the greatest warlords of his time. He owned some of the best horses and his armoury was the envy of every man who wielded the sword.

He was a busy man who did not stay put in Delhi. Most of the time he was fighting wars at the head of the Mughal army or quelling rebellions. It was his help that Aurangzeb took in dealing with the Marathas and the Sikhs, both of whom had been alienated by the emperor.

Even a peaceful Guru like Har Rai, who had succeeded Guru Hargovind, drew the emperor's ire for the alleged help he gave to the fugitive Dara Shikoh during the war of succession that followed Shah Jahan's illness. Guru Har Rai sent his elder son Ram Rai to talk things over with the emperor and later his younger son, Harkrishan, brought to the court with the help of Jai Singh.

Harkrishan, who had succeeded his father as the child Guru, lived at the palace of

Jai Singh about the year 1664 and held discussions there with the Mughal heir apparent, Prince Muazzam (later Bahadur Shah I). But the Guru died soon after under mysterious circumstances. Some say he was a victim of smallpox, but the general belief is that he was done away with on the orders of Aurangzeb.

The palace of Jai Singh became the headquarters of his descendant, Jai Singh II, while the latter was building the Jantar Mantar (1724-25). It was eventually acquired by the Sikh *panth* and converted into a gurdwara.

The building which has come up as Bangla Sahib makes one wonder how history repeats itself. It was at the site of the pleasure garden of Raja Man Singh, Akbar's general, passed on to Raja Jai Singh, that the Taj Mahal was built because it was found to be the most suitable place in Agra.

The Rajput connection links the Taj Mahal and the Bangla Sahib as the full moon sheds its lustre on them on *purnima* (full moon) nights.

*The writer is a veteran chronicler of Delhi*



**Fact to fiction** Kangana Ranaut as J Jayalalithaa on the set of *Thalaivi* ■ PRADEEP KUMAR AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## 'I share similarities with Jayalalithaa'

...says actor Kangana Ranaut, who was in Chennai for the filming of her biopic, *Thalaivi*

PRADEEP KUMAR

Kangana Ranaut seldom breaks character. It does not matter if she does or does not have a camera trained on her.

We find an ornate Kangana, who was recently conferred with Padma Shri by the Government of India, sitting on a plastic chair on the set of her upcoming trilingual, *Thalaivi*. The crew has taken a break to re-organise camera positions in time for the next shot. Kangana, with an assistant for company, opts not to walk back to her vanity van, like most artistes, and instead stays put. She is consumed in a world of her own; her hands gliding around in symmetrical rhythm as she traces back the steps she had just learnt from the dance choreographer, Gayathri Raguram.

### Portraying an icon

It is unusual to find the Bollywood star in Chennai, but *Thalaivi* documents the life and times of the late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa – chronicling her transition from movie star to politician.

So, Kangana has no better place to be than in Chennai as she hopes to bring the political icon back to life on screen.

On this day, though, the crew are filming a dance performance, the kind which requires the not-a-natural-at-dancing Kangana to step out of her comfort zone, but she appears well prepared.

"I've researched a lot [to play Jayalalithaa]," says the actor with a smile, as she sits down for this mid-take conversation.

A few months ago, Kangana underwent training in classical dance to help her prepare for this moment. It is one of those instances when an actor goes all out to fine-tune their craft, even if it is for something that will barely take a couple of minutes of the film's run time. It is perhaps why Vijay, when asked about her, tells us that Kangana is "a director's actor".

"I think, on the set, the director is my

best friend. I don't feel like I have to be driven around like cattle. Most actors, they need to be brought out of the [vanity] van, but I'm not that. I make myself available at the director's disposal, and that is why I look like a completely involved person," she remarks.

Her involvement, as it pertains to *Thalaivi*, goes beyond that. She has considerably brushed up on her knowledge of Jayalalithaa.

"When she was humiliated in the State Assembly, and she said that she would come back as a Chief Minister... I think that was an extremely powerful moment in her life. Until then, she was under MGR's shadow, and she never revealed her own political aspirations. But that was a very decisive moment for her. For her to show the kind of strength of character under those circumstances... it is very powerful," she adds.

### Drawing parallels

When the offer to play Jayalalithaa arose, Kangana says she felt that "it was intimidating".

"She [Jayalalithaa] was a different kind of actor. She was not like me. She was a more glamorous star... somebody like an Aishwarya Rai. It was a very big challenge to fill those shoes because I'm not known as a glamorous star," she says. There is one common thread, though. "I do feel that there are similarities. She was a very reluctant actor. It is the same with me. I never wanted to be an actor, and that is why we became very unusual actors. I think she always felt that she was worth much more than just being a glam doll [in films], and she became a politician – like how I became a filmmaker. So, I think there are parallels," she notes.

### Longing for family

There is one aspect, she thinks, which goes beyond being just a parallel in their lives. "I think like every woman, she [Jayalalithaa] longed for a family, and she longed for a child. I think there was a time in my life also when I longed for a family. I think some of the married people took advantage of that... especially married actors... I will not reveal whom."

There are scenes [in this film] with an actor who is married, and who promises marriage and then goes back on his word. She has to face a lot of humiliation. I think this is what happens to a lot of young actresses. It is not something that only we share," she says.

*Thalaivi* marks her return to Tamil cinema after a gap of 12 years, after working on *Dhaam Dhoon* (2008) with Jayam Ravi. Is she open to more Tamil films? "I want to do the kind of scripts I do in Hollywood in Tamil. But I don't want to play second fiddle to heroes. It is very prevalent in the South, and even in Mumbai," she says, adding "If I do another Tamil film, it has to be an exciting character."



# Delivering babies in icy climes

Dr. Tsering Landol, Ladakh's first gynaecologist, and recent Padma Bhushan awardee, says we need to move from parachuting NGOs to training local doctors

SWETA AKUNDI

Over the phone from her house in Changspa, Leh, Dr. Tsering Landol's voice is tender, almost frail. It is difficult to imagine that she has delivered babies in freezing temperatures, fought cultural myths surrounding menstruation, and pioneered advancements in women's health in the icy region. For her efforts, the 75-year-old was recently awarded the Padma Bhushan.

Back in 1979, when she joined Leh's Sonam Nurboo Memorial Hospital, she was the first and only practising gynaecologist from the region. S.N. Memorial was the only major district hospital then, and Dr. Landol soon rose to become the head obstetrician until she quit in 2003. Three years later, the Government recognised her efforts and she received the Padma Shri.

Today, every Thursday, she conducts a voluntary clinic with the Ladakh Heart Foundation. "I may have retired, but I'm still physically and mentally fit. So even though I'm too old for emergency cases, I still want to offer whatever I can to my patients. It is very much needed in this region," she says.

There is evident pride in Dr. Landol's voice as she lists the extensive department of SN Memorial Hospital: "We now have pathologists, ophthalmologists, dermatologists, psychiatrists..."

This is vastly different from the time she practised ("asman aur zameen ka farak," as she puts it). To get even central heating for the hospital was a challenge. "It is essential for us to keep an optimal temperature of 30 degrees while delivering the baby. We would improvise and use the Kashmiri hamam system (that involves dry hot air baths) to keep the mother warm," she says.

The lack of oxygen at birth was another major problem: "There would not always be enough stock of oxygen cylinders, which could be dangerous in cases of prolonged labour or asphyxiated babies. Tran-

sporting these cylinders was also not easy."

Her field emergencies, in case of irregular deliveries, and medical camps would take her to remote areas, where she would meet women, interact with them, and advise them about their diets and hygiene.

Here she observes another change, other than technological progress. "There used to be so many myths regarding women's reproductive health," she says, adding that there is better awareness now.

As a child, she remembers noticing how her mother was treated as an untouchable after her delivery, and given food in separate vessels. "I innately felt there was something wrong with that, but couldn't say anything. As I grew up, I understood things better," she says.

While in college, she decided that having a woman doctor, who could understand women's problems, with whom women could put aside their shyness and speak freely, was the need of the hour. "Around me, I would see issues like mothers who died while giving birth, abortions, UTIs, anaemia, and so on."

At 13, she met doctors at a school function, and it only strengthened this desire to be one. "With their stethoscopes around their necks, they were always so impressive!" she says, her voice rising slightly.

**Train local**  
To bring about these changes required



**Serving humanity** In her four decades of experience, Dr. Landol has found communication with patients the most important part of the job  
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



having honest and dedicated conversations with women. In her four decades of experience, Dr. Landol has found communication with patients the most important part of the job.

Ladakh, now a union territory, spans over 59,000 square kilometres and is yet very sparsely populated. "The population is scattered and you have to understand the background of each person you are speaking to: their family situation, their economic class..."

Which is why she believes that it is very important to have dedicated local doctors. "It is because I am a Ladakhi that I was able to identify with the issues the women were facing, speak to them in Ladakhi, encourage them to open up about their problems and convince them about the solutions."

Dr. Landol herself graduated from Srinagar, and went on to train, for four months in the U.K., sponsored by the British Council, and in Del-

hi. Two of her friends from the UK are currently volunteering to bring cervical screening to SN Memorial Hospital, and have donated equipment for this.

While she is thankful for the work foreign and national NGOs have done so far – for doctors from abroad, like the UK and Singapore, conducting camps in areas that are difficult to access – she emphasises that the need to train local doctors is more important.

This idea of self-sustainability was instilled in her at quite a young age. Having grown up in an agrarian family, she says, "We don't belong to a big city... So we were taught everything about how to sustain yourself – gardening, farming, sewing, knitting, everything."

She carries this philosophy into her personal life as well. She lives in a joint family with her three brothers and their children. "I am not married, that is why I am independent, enjoying my life," she laughs.



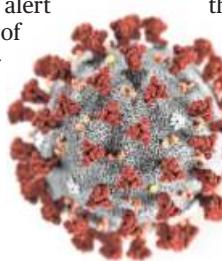
**Safety first** It is important to understand how the disease spreads, contain fear through awareness and strengthen our body's defence against the infection ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

## Your pet pals and the coronavirus

The coronavirus is zoonotic, and though veterinarians say there has been no detection in pets in India, taking care of them is important

SOMA BASU

The World Health Organization has declared an international public health emergency over the coronavirus (CoV) outbreak. With all attention focussed on human transmission, the fact that CoV is zoonotic (meaning the disease starts in animals before spreading to humans) cannot be overlooked. Veterinarians say there are no epidemiological (spread) signs to alert them yet, but taking care of your pets is equally important. Dr. Chiro Priyo Mitra, the founder of Gurugram Pet Clinic and Dr. Suresh Christopher, the Joint Director (Animal Husbandry) in Madurai, clear a few doubts.



**Surveys carried out have shown high prevalences of CoV in animals. How vulnerable are my pet dogs and cats?**

• While there have been feline and canine CoVs reported, they were not in India. "When people bring in animals from other countries, they are compulsorily quarantined in ports and airports here first," says Dr. Christopher. When pets fall ill, Dr. Mitra says they don't spread the infection, because they're mostly indoors.

**Can my pet dog be a carrier?**

• Technically speaking, yes, though again, since there's no reported case, there's no need to worry. Dr. Mitra says that CoV infections spread not only via the air and the respiratory tract, but also if contaminated faecal matter comes in contact with another creature's mouth. And if your pet is on the road for a walk, at dog farms or kennels or even inside condominiums for a poop, there is the risk of infection, but again, since the virus has not been seen as yet in animals in India, there is no reason to panic. Also, Dr. Christopher says CoV infections in dogs and cats are less severe.

**Can I get it from my pet?**

• The Wuhan crisis is suspected to have started from the seafood market there. While human beings are not the hosts for the CoV, the intermediary host is yet to be known, says Dr. Christopher. He explains that,

"The Corona group of viruses requires a lot of hard work to go through passages of one primate to the other. However, the simplicity of their structure makes them strong. They evolve, and after genetic mutation, they change strains and the primary host may or may not survive."

**If I have the CoV infection, can my pet get it from me?**

• Dr. Christopher says there's been no reported case of reverse transmission.

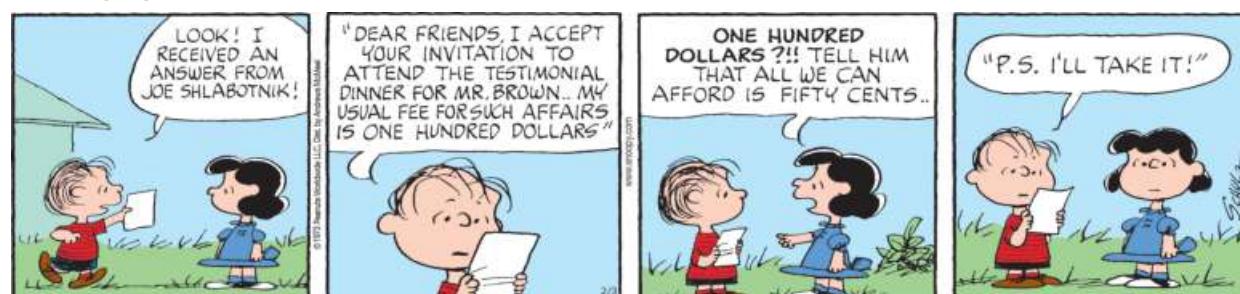
**How can I keep my pet safe?**

• Dr. Mitra recommends getting the vaccination. So far, a prophylactic vaccine is available to prevent CoV infection only in dogs and it has been used since the outbreak of SARS in 2003. "Like polio drops given to children before the age of five, the CCV (Canine Coronavirus Vaccine) can be administered in dogs as per their age, breed and health in a schedule suggested by the vet. It can also be included in combination vaccines to protect dogs from other viruses," he says.

### POOCH CAFE



### PEANUTS



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



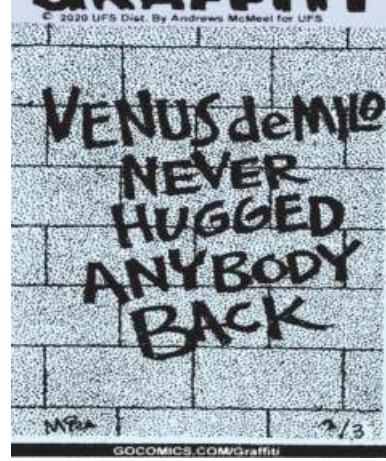
### CALVIN AND HOBBES



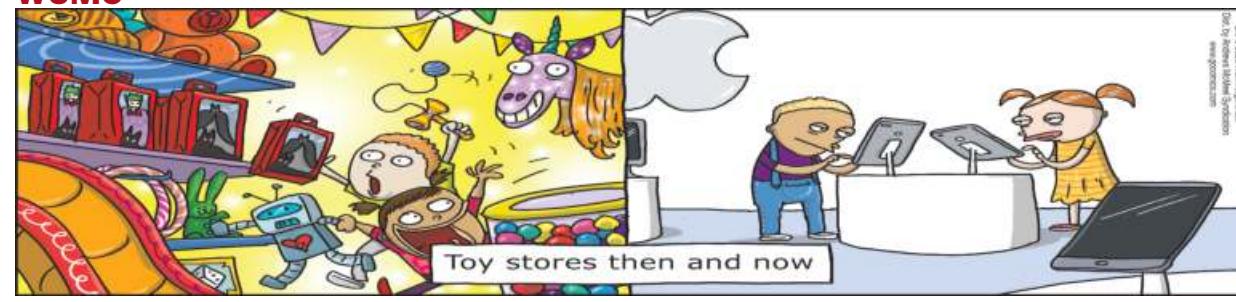
### TIGER



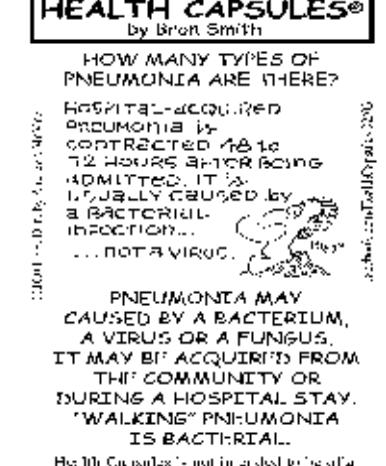
### GRAFFITI



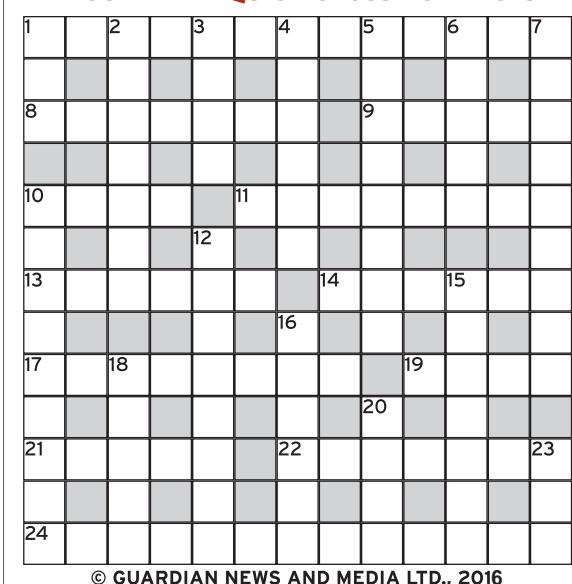
### WUMO



### HEALTH CAPSULES



### THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13292



To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, The Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

branches? (4,5)

10 Night club

performance (5,4)

12 River joining the Mississippi south of St Louis (8)

15 Breathtaking (7)

16 Dull (6)

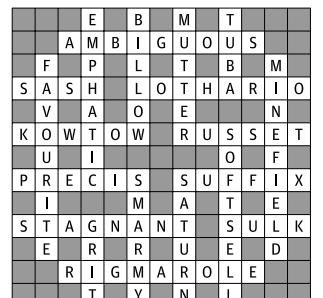
18 Obscene gesture (1-4)

20 Beckoning sound (4)

23 Expression of surprise (3)

The solution will appear on February 4, 2020.

Solution No. 13291



### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



A ND-NDE

# Men in Blue pull off a rare T20I series whitewash

New Zealand loses the script after looking set for a consolation win; Bumrah continues to be a conundrum for the Kiwis

## INDIA IN NZ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MOUNT MAUNGANUI

India choked New Zealand yet again to turn the match around and post a seven-run win in the fifth T20 International and a rare 5-0 T20 series whitewash on Sunday.

The Indian pacers, led by the ever-reliable Jasprit Bumrah, shared seven wickets for 25 runs in match-swinging 7.2 overs to restrict the Kiwis to 156 for nine while defending 163 for three.

### Deadly death bowling

Bumrah conceded just 12 runs in his four overs and got rid of three batsmen, bowling yorkers in the death overs.

India's total was built around stand-in skipper Rohit Sharma's 60 after electing to bat. Tim Seifert (50) and Ross Taylor (53) kept the Black Caps in the hunt for a consolation win, but the hosts again fell near the finish line.

New Zealand got off to a poor start and was reduced to 17 for three in the fourth over. Bumrah had Martin Guptill lbw, and Washington Sundar bowled Colin Munro (15). Tom Bruce's run-out didn't help either.

Taylor and Seifert came together at that juncture, putting on 99 for the fourth wicket.



**Unplayable!** Daryl Mitchell, as most of the New Zealanders on Sunday, has no clue to this one from Jasprit Bumrah. ■ AFP

They took 34 runs off Shivan Dube in the 10th over, after which K.L. Rahul, who took over the reins with Rohit Sharma off the field injured, had to take corrective measures.

He brought back his frontline pacers and they both struck. Navdeep Saini dismissed Seifert and then Bumrah bowled Daryl Mitchell with a searing yorker.

New Zealand's chase was all but over when Mitchell Santner (6) holed out off Shardul Thakur and Manish Pandey held a fine running

catch at long-on. Ish Sodhi smacked 16 off 10 balls to provide some fireworks at the end but it was not enough. Earlier, Rohit, batting at number three, retired hurt after injuring his left calf whilst hitting a six and walked off the field in dis-

## STAT SPHERE

1 The Rohit-Rahul pair is the quickest (18 mins) to cross 1000 runs in T20Is -- Runs: 1019; Avg: 59.94; RR: 10.16; Century stands: 3; Fifty stands: 5

1 Rahul (224, 5 inns) aggregated the most runs by an Indian in a bilateral T20I series, surpassing Kohli's 199 (3 games) against Australia down under (2016)

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## TV PICKS

**PBL:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), 6.45 p.m.  
**Tata Open Maharashtra:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 3.10 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



## Davis gets Lakers back to winning ways

Anthony Davis scored a team-high 21 points as Los Angeles Lakers put the emotions of the Kobe Bryant tribute night behind with a 129-113 victory over Sacramento Kings on Saturday. The Lakers won their first game since Bryant died in a helicopter crash after losing to Portland Trail Blazers on Friday. **The results:** Celtics 116 bt 76ers 95; Spurs 114 bt Hornets 90; Cavaliers 112 lost to Warriors 131; Wizards 113 bt Nets 107; Trail Blazers 124 bt Jazz 107; Mavericks 123 bt Hawks 100; Kings 113 lost to Lakers 129; Pacers 85 lost to Knicks 92; Magic 89 lost to Heat 102; Clippers 118 bt Timberwolves 106. **AP**



## Joshna gets past Au, meets Nour El Tayeb

OHIO India's squash ace Joshna Chinappa, seeded fifth, stormed into the semifinals of the Cleveland Classic, a PSA World tour bronze event, on Sunday. She beat Annie Au of Hong Kong, seeded four, 3-11, 11-6, 6-11, 11-8, 11-6 in 54 minutes. Joshna will take on the top seed Nour El Tayeb of Egypt for a place in the final.

## Navjot guides Barnes to win

NEW DELHI: Navjot Singh Sandhu scored three goals in guiding Barnes to a 4-3 victory over Peace Stead in the Rianjal Sanawar exhibition polo match at the Jaipur polo ground here on Sunday. The spring polo season will start with RMRM Gold Vase 8-goal tournament from February 4. It will be followed by DGRVS Cup, SMS Gold Vase, Sujan Northern Indian polo championship, Rao Raja Hanut Singh Cup, Maharaja Jiwaji Rao Scindia Gold Cup, Royal Koas Gen. Sparrow Cup, Army polo championship, IPA National junior polo championship and Gen. Thimayya Cup. **The results:** Barnes 4 (Navjot Singh Sandhu 3, Harsh Preenja) bt Peace Stead 3 (Sunjay Kapur 3).

## Elkabbani pips topseed Abhishek

SPORTS BUREAU JAIPUR Ibrahim Elkabbani of Egypt beat top seed Abhishek Pradhan 12-10, 11-3, 4-11, 11-5 in the men's final of the HCL PSA Challenger squash tournament at the Sawai Man Singh Stadium on Sunday. **The results (finals): Men:** Ibrahim Elkabbani (Egy) bt Abhishek Pradhan 12-10, 11-3, 4-11, 11-5. **Women:** Jana Shihab (Egy) bt Salma Eltayeb (Egy) 11-8, 9-11, 11-9, 11-7.

## Sandhiya stars for Sethu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT BENALGURU KRYPHSA demolished BBK DAV 4-0 in the in the Hero IWL here on Sunday. Ratanbala Devi scored a brace while Anju Tamang and Sweety Devi also found the net to help the team lead Group A (12 points). **The results:** BBK DAV 0 lost to KRYPHSA 4 (Anju Tamang 18, Ratanbala Devi 62, 85, Sweety Devi 90+4); Sethu FC 3 (Sandhiya 12, 90, Sumithra 39) bt Kickstart FC 0.

## Harmeet tames Manav for maiden title

Suthirtha breezes past Krittika Sinha Roy to regain crown with ease

## NATIONAL TT

**RAKESH RAO**  
HYDERABAD

In a befitting finale, Harmeet Desai produced timely answers to all the questions posed by a spirited Manav Thakkar in a seven-set thriller.

Before this first all-Gujarat final in the history of National table tennis championship, top seed Suthirtha Mukherjee walked away with her second women singles title by brushing away Krittika Sinha Roy 11-4, 11-5, 11-8, 11-4. Thakkar, the conqueror of an error-prone top seed G. Sathiyan in the semifinals, bounced back three times to force the decider but Desai was not denied a 11-4, 11-13, 14-12, 9-11, 11-8, 5-11, 11-5 triumph. To Thakkar's credit, he rallied from 5-9 in the fourth set to brighten his prospects.

Desai, clearly better prepared having lost for the first time to Thakkar in Kolkata this season, changed gears in the deciding set to open a big, early lead and crossed the line without being threatened.

After winning his semifinal against Soumyajit Ghosh



**Cornering glory:** Harmeet Desai and Suthirtha Mukherjee with their prized possession. ■ G. RAMAKRISHNA

— the man who ousted Sha-  
rat Kamal on Saturday evening — Desai was wary of Thakkar's abilities.

"Manav had just beaten Sathiyan and, to be honest, I was ready to accept defeat, given the way he was playing."

"I was expecting him to return every ball. It was only

in the decider that I got away," confessed the champion, who finished runner-up to Sanil Shetty in 2014 at Patna in his only previous title-clash.

Thakkar was gracious in defeat.

"I think he played really well, especially in the decider and I could do very little.

for Haryana in the team championship, Suthirtha also won the women doubles and finished runner-up in mixed doubles.

Recently-married Jubin Kumar won his fifth men's doubles title partnering Ghosh.

**The results: Men's singles (final):** Harmeet Desai (Pet) bt Manav Thakkar (Pet) 11-4, 11-13, 14-12, 9-11, 11-8, 5-11, 11-5; **(semifinals):** Thakkar bt G. Sathiyan (Pet) 11-9, 16-14, 7-11, 15-13, 11-6, 11-9; Desai bt Soumyajit Ghosh (Har) 11-9, 11-7, 11-4, 8-11, 14-12.

**Men's doubles (final):** Jubin Kumar and Soumyajit Ghosh (Har) bt Manush Shah and Ishaaan Hingorani (Guj) 11-7, 8-11, 11-3, 11-7.

**Women's singles (final):** Suthirtha Mukherjee (Har) bt Krittika Sinha Roy (Pet) 11-4, 11-5, 11-8, 11-4; **(semifinals):** Suthirtha bt Ankita Das (Ben 'B') 12-10, 8-11, 11-9, 11-5; Krittika bt Aythika Das (RBI) 11-9, 11-6, 15-13, 11-7.

**Women's doubles (final):** Suthirtha Mukherjee and Riti Shanmukh (Har) bt Surbhi Patwari and Poymanteer Baisya (Ben 'A') 11-7, 11-7, 8-11, 11-8.

**Mixed doubles (final):** Ronit Bhanya and Mousumi Paul (Ben 'A') bt Suthirtha Mukherjee and Sourav Saha (Har) 15-13, 8-11, 12-10, 13-11.

crum and feeding well from the middle but unable to find a gap in the tight AI defence.

## Opening up space

The goal opened up space and the attack from either side. In an attempt to find the equaliser, AI kept moving ahead but the defence left much to be desired.

D'Souza had a bad day on the field, saving a few but repeatedly finding himself out of place. Two quick goals towards the end of the quarter saw Services take the upper hand.

AI tried its best to fight back, creating three PCs in the final quarter and getting half chances and managing to reduce the margin when Vishnu Singh finally tapped in a rebound but it was too little too late.

**The results: Final:** SSCB 3 (Ajinkya Jadhav, Rahul Rajbhar, Jobanpreet Singh) bt Air India 1 (Vishnu Singh); **Third place play-off:** PSPB 3 (Roshan Minz, Armaan Qureshi, Tushar Khander) bt PSB 1 (Parvinder Singh).

**Individual awards: Best goal-keeper:** Adrian D'Souza (Air India); **Best defender:** Jugraj Singh (SSCB); **Best midfielder:** Gurmail Singh (PSB); **Best forward:** Mohd. Raheel (Air India); **Player of the tournament:** Jugraj Singh (SSCB).

## SSCB has it easy

## HOCKEY

**UTHRA GANESAN**  
JHANSI

A quarter is a long time in modern hockey. It took just one period of 15 minutes for Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) to turn an evenly-matched game into a one-sided competition, winning 3-1 against Air India to clinch its maiden National title here on Sunday.

With both teams testing waters early on, there were little scoring chances for either through the first 30 minutes of play. Both teams wasted a penalty corner and with occasional forays into the opposition circle resulting in shooting wide or over, the game was largely restricted to the midfield.

With almost half of its team made up of junior India campers, Air India managed to keep pace with the young Services side resulting in a fast game and numerous turnovers.

Tied goalless at half time, it finally took a defensive lapse from Air India for Rahul Rajbhar to wrong foot goalkeeper Adrian D'Souza and break the deadlock.

Services had been desperately trying till then, Ashis Topno being the ful-

## Krishna's twin strike floors Jamshedpur

## TATA OPEN

**N. SUDARSHAN**  
PUNE

striker intercepted, charged towards the goal and slotted past Subrata Paul with ease.

Paul was next in line to err while trying to play out from the back. The goalkeeper tried to take a touch and kick the ball after collecting a back-pass from Memo but hit straight to Krishna. This time, though, the striker sent his effort straight back at the keeper.

It was one-way traffic in the first half as ATK continued to threaten the Jamshedpur goal. In the 26th minute, Edu outfoxed his marker and got into a one-on-one against Paul but the veteran custodian charged off his line and produced a crucial save.

With 15 minutes left in the game, Krishna sealed three points for his team. Prabir Das forwarded a pass to Edu Garcia who released a terrific through ball for Krishna who gave Paul no chance to make a save.

Benoit Paire is a much-loved man in these parts. The Frenchman's thrill-a-minute persona, a combination of some outrageous shot-making and his spontaneously combustible nature, have routinely kept Indian tennis fans on the edge of their seats.

But until such a time the showman is on show — not until Wednesday — it will be the turn of a bunch of Indians led by Prajesh Gunneswaran and Sumit Nagal to shine in the limelight as the Tata Open Maharashtra gets underway at the Balewadi Stadium here from Monday.

Five of them will be in action over the next two days, including wild cards Ramkumar Ramanathan, Sasi Kumar Mukund and Arjun Kadhe.

"I got in as a lucky loser but I obviously put myself in that position; ranked high enough and being in the final round [of qualifying]."

"I think I should have played better. But things are getting better. And I think my tennis is there. I'm constantly improving and once things

particular, the tournament will be an important marker. Prajesh entered last year's edition as India's top-ranked player (107) and has done modestly well to retain that position and a ranking in the vicinity (123 as on Sunday).

But having scaled a high of 75 last April, the 30-year-old will no doubt want more.

"The goal is to climb as fast as possible and then eventually go back to the ATP tour like the tournament here," said Prajesh.

"Since the second half of last year, I wasn't at 100%. But it is what it is and I still had a pretty decent Australian Open.

"I got in as a lucky loser but I obviously put myself in that position; ranked high enough and being in the final round [of qualifying]."

"I think I should have played better. But things are getting better. And I think my tennis is there. I'm constantly improving and once things

## A chance for Indians to hold centrestage

Frenchman Paire, the biggest star, will not be on show until Wednesday



**To prove a point:** Ramkumar Ramanathan would like to use the Tata Open to show that he is no spent force. ■ R. RAGU

fall into place, I will start getting results again."

## Measuring stick

For Nagal, the show court meeting on Monday with the accomplished Serbian Viktor Troicki, who came through the qualifying, will be a good measuring stick after the high of last year when he pinched a set off Roger Fe-

derer at the US Open. Breaching the top-100 and qualifying for the French Open on his beloved clay are his immediate targets.

"The goal is to break into the top hundred as soon as possible," said the 22-year-old. "French Open is the first goal and then it's going to be the Olympics. I can't put too much pressure on myself."

## War Hammer(s) the Derby field



From Left: Trainer of Derby winner War Hammer Prasanna Kumar with his daughter, second from left Apana Subaiya, B.S. Manjunath with trophy, Dr. C.A. Prashanth, jockey Suraj Narredu, Gautham Bassappa and breeder Dr. Dinesh. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

3/4, Nk, Im 36, 47s, ₹ 35 (w), 25 and 13 (p). SHP: 33, EXW: 2,767, FP: 102, Q: 41, Tanala: 598 and 541. Favourite: Cosmic Ray. Owner: Mr. K.H. Vachha. Trainer: Imtiaz Sait.

3 EBCO WORKSMART BREEERS' PRODUCE STAKES (Gr.3) 1,400m, 3-y-o only: FOREST FLAME (David Egan) 1, Rubin Star (O'Donoghue) 2, Super Girl (Paramar) 3 and Monarchos (Trevor) 4. 9/4, 2 1/2, 6, Sh. Im 37.95s. ₹ 41 (w), 14, 19 and 16 (p). SHP: 20,924, EXP: 1,197, FP: 272, Q: 87, Tanala: 1,652 and 983. Favourite: Pissarro. Owners: Mrs. B.E. Saldhana , Mr. Mark Saldhana. Trainer: S. Attaullah.

3 SANDHES JOIN THE 1000 CLUB Jockey A. Sandesh also stole the limelight as he joined the 1000 club by winning his 1000th winner on Flying Visit in the Risi Patel Trophy. Sandesh who started his riding career in 2009 won his first winner through Pepe Junior in 2009-10 Mumbai season.

Salaazar set new course record for 2000 metres by winning the race by Im 59.90s.

DR. M.M. RAMASWAMY 1 MULTI-MILLION (1,600m, Maiden, 3-y-o only: GOLDEN STAR (David Egan) 1, Taimur (O'Donoghue) 2, Wind Whistler (Nicky Mackay) 3 and Melisandre (Trevor) 4. 2 1/2, 6, Sh. Im 37.95s. ₹ 41 (w), 14, 19 and 16 (p). SHP: 24,216, EXP: 1,197, FP: 272, Q: 87, Tanala: 1,652 and 983. Favourite: Pissarro. Owners: Mrs. B.E. Saldhana , Mr. Mark Saldhana. Trainer: S. Attaullah.

4 S.M.SHAH ECLIPSE STAKES OF INDIA (Gr.2, 2,000m), 4-y-o & over: SALAZAAR (Suraj Narredu) 1, Tasawur (Sandesh) 2, Trule Epic (Imran Chisty) 3 and Sacred Roman (Leigh Roche) 4. Nose, 1/2, 3/4, 1/4, Im 59.90s. ₹ 40 (w), 13, 13 and 12 (p). SHP: 44, EXP: 8,745, FP: 433, FB: 216, Q: 55, Tanala: 879 and 548. Favourite: Roberta. Owners: Mr. Niraj Tyagi and Mr. Vikas Sachdeva. Trainer: Irfan Ghatala.

5 B.K.RATTONSEY MEMORIAL MAIDEN MULTI-MILLION (1,200m), 3-y-o only: GOLDEN OAKS (David Egan) 1, El Capitan (Trevor) 2, Joaquin (Srinath) 3 and Isle of Skye (David Egan) 4. Not run. Birkin Blower: 2-1/2, 4, 3-1/2, 1/4, 2/4, SHP: 55, EXP: 7,143, FP: 206, FB: 76, Q: 25, Tanala: 935 and 322. Favourite: Golden Oaks. Owners: Mr. Yohan Z. Poonawalla, Mrs. Michelle A. Poonawalla & Mrs. Behroze Z. Poonawalla rep. Poonawalla Racing & Brdg Pvt Ltd, Mr. Mukul Sonawala & Mr. D.R.Thacker rep. DT Racing & Breeders LLP & Mr. Chaduranga Kantharaj Urs. Trainer: S. Attaullah.

6 KINGFISHER ULTRA INDIAN DERBY (Gr.1) (2,400m), 4-y-o only: WAR HAMMER (Air Support - Soviet Lake) Suraj Narredu, TROUVILLE (Surfrider - Highly Fashionable) Nicky Mackay 2, Wizard Of Stocks (Speaking Of Which - Margarita Rita) Leigh Roche 3 and Juliette (Musketier - Gimmesugar) Colm O'Donoghue 4. 7/3/4, 2, Snk, 2m 28.40s. ₹ 31 (w), II, 26 and 41 (p). SHP: 68, EXP: 5,791, FP: 258, FB: 28

# Alex – zero to hero, literally!

He comes up with the right plans and strategies, says doting daughter

## AUSTRALIAN OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MELBOURNE

It wasn't so long ago that Sofia Kenin's father was driving New York taxis. He spoke English so poorly he didn't know where he was supposed to be going.

These days, however, Alex Kenin, despite starting with close to zero tennis knowledge, is coaching a Grand Slam champion.

### Crazy-smart

Russia-born Alex, an unassuming, grey-haired man with a receding hairline, introduced Sofia to tennis, brought her up around the game and pushed her to achieve the extraordinary – crowned by her victory at the Australian Open on Saturday.

Sofia said her "crazy-smart" father had no prior experience of the game, but simply picked it up by observing those around him.

"He's seen how all the other coaches have been coaching their players, but he knows everything," Sofia said.

said, after stunning Garbine Muguruza in her first Grand Slam final. "He knows what he's talking about, he really knows it and he comes up with the right plans, the right strategies."

If Sofia's achievement is remarkable, it owes a great deal to her father, who was ever-present courtside during her increasingly impressive run through the Melbourne women's draw.

Teenage prodigy Coco Gauff, world number one Ashleigh Barty and, in the final, two-time Major-winner Muguruza all fell victim to tough-as-boots Sofia, who was following strategies drawn up by her wily father.

He joins a long list of tennis dads who have produced champions, including Richard Williams, father of Venus and Serena, Mike Agassi (Andre) and Yuri Sharapova (Maria).

**Affectionate**  
But unlike some other fathers, whose influence has been resented or even negative, Alex and Sofia, 21, remain close and affectionate.

Alex arrived in New York from what was then the Soviet Union in 1987 with his wife, Lena, and a few hundred dollars in his pocket, searching for the 'American Dream'.

He drove a taxi by night and went to English and computer school during the day, a period he describes as "very, very tough".

"I had to work at night, go to school in the morning. Driving in New York, speaking English on the (taxi) radio. I had no idea what they were saying," he said. "But it's amazing the things you do to survive. (Sofia) knows about that and I think it made her tough."

### Talent

Sofia clearly had talent from a young age, but they remained outsiders and making it on the tennis circuit was never easy.

"People overlooked me. I wasn't the tallest kid when I was little. People said, 'What are you talking about? She's so small. What are you doing? This is a joke,'" Sofia said.

"We didn't have the best things said about me but my dad's been there and he believed in me, didn't listen to that. He could have easily said, okay, and I could have done something (else)."

Sofia represented America at the 2014 Youth Olympics, made her Grand Slam debut as a wild-card at the 2015 US Open and broke into the top 100 in March 2018.

Her career really took off last year, when she won three singles titles and rose to a world ranking of 12. But despite her recent success, nobody predicted her victory in Melbourne.

### Tough cookie

During Saturday's final, Alex could barely watch as Sofia closed on the win, and he filmed her winner's speech – which was beamed live worldwide – on his mobile phone.

"He was so happy. I was so happy. We shared this together. He was like, 'What just happened?'" Sofia said. "I'm also just on cloud nine. He's just proud of me. I'm a tough cookie, but I did it."



The hand that guides: Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin says she owes a great deal to her father, who was ever-present courtside during her Melbourne run. ■ REUTERS

## National c'ships from today

IWLF puts in place strict anti-doping measures

## WEIGHTLIFTING

Y.B. SARANGI  
KOLKATA

With stricter measures to curb doping, the National weightlifting championship begins at the Khudiram Anusilan Kendra here on Monday.

The positive test of at least 16 weightlifters – mostly from outside the National camp – at the last edition in Visakhapatnam was a major embarrassment for the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLF).

For this edition, the IWLF has formulated a 'whereabouts' rule – modelled on the practice followed by various anti-doping agencies and international federations – to avoid recurrence of such an episode.

"The lifters have to provide information as to where and when they are training, under whom they are training in the last three months. We send these details to the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA).

Those who do not provide the details cannot take part in the National championships," said IWLF secretary Sahdev Yadav.

Some of the lifters who tested positive at Visakhapatnam had claimed they were not aware of a sub-

stance, SARM, being on the 2019 prohibited list. Asked about their claim, Yadav said, "We hold seminars. Everything is available on websites and everyone is aware of the changes."

On the competition front, the event will feature Olympic aspirants, including former World champion S. Mirabai Chanu (49kg) and former Youth Olympics gold medallist Jeremy Lalrinnunga (67kg).

All top lifters, including Mirabai, Jeremy, Achinta Sheuli and Rakhi Halder, will compete to see how their training is progressing. Those who have a serious chance at the Olympics are training at 90 per cent now. The idea is to peak at the right time," said chief National coach Vijay Sharma.

Sharma said Mirabai, who is a medal contender in the Olympics, had done a total of 201kg and would like to improve her performance in the coming months.

The return of Railways' Sanjita Chanu, who tested positive in the 2017 World championships, in women's 49kg is another highlight. She became eligible to compete after the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) revoked her provisional suspension in January last year.

## GENERAL

VIJAY LOKAPALLY  
NEW DELHI

The 2020 sports budget is aimed at giving a boost to India's ambitions at the international level. According to Union Sports Secretary Radhey Shyam Julaniya, "The budget meets our present needs and future aspirations.

"After 60% increase over last year, the big increase would come in 2021-22, as there is a time gap between talent identification and hiring of high performance coaches to increased number of trainee athletes."

### 60% increase

A day after the budget, Julia-

niya told *The Hindu*, "The (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports) expenditure last year was ₹723.01 crore. This year the budget is ₹2776.92 crore. Thus, there is an increase of more than 60% (₹1053.91 crore) compared to previous year."

### Past liabilities

Julaniya emphasised, "We have cleared past liabilities this year and rationalised the budget accounting with one budget head for one program/activity."

All training programs now would be funded under Khelo India only. This required reduced allocation for NSFs (National Sports Federations) and SAI (Sports

### Authority of India

"Identification of talent for increase of athletes for training takes time. Similarly, getting high performance coaches and trainers take time."

"We aim to accelerate with quality. Our focus is to train larger number of athletes with high quality so as to increase use of available infrastructure. After 60% increase over last year, another jump would take place now after a year."

On the Ministry's plans, he added, "We're developing a National Centre of Excellence for SAI regional centres and other expert necessities. The capacity will be minimum 10,000 athletes who

will get high performance training in 15 disciplines. The

focus is to use available infrastructure. This infrastructure should be used three to four times more than now. These disciplines have been identified keeping in mind the 2024 and 2028 Olympics."

### Denies drop in funds

Denying that there was a drop in funds, Julaniya said, "Not at all. On the contrary we are restructuring SAI

which came into existence before 1984. Things have changed, especially in terms of sports science and number of events. We are creating 50 positions for High Performance Managers and 100

chief coaches.

"Best coaches will be hired from within the country or outside the country. Training quality will improve because we are concentrating on regular training and not the concept of camps. There is no scarcity of funds but efficient utilisation of resources and facilities is the focus."

### Khelo India's role

Julaniya also highlighted the part Khelo India would have. "We are restructuring Khelo India too so that we can use facilities in the States for regular competitions. In Bhopal, we will concentrate on developing facilities in disciplines other than shooting

and rowing."

"In Bhuvaneswar, we won't be investing in hockey infrastructure. We have close to 15000 athletes in SAI, of which 10000 are getting residential training. We want quality training for them. We will attach them with schools. They will get admission in schools in sports quota."

"These schools will have residential facilities and this will be done at the district level to ensure that the best athletes compete against the best athletes. Sports should also be organised at the State level in one particular month at all levels so that the academic schedule of the athletes is not disturbed."

## Sergio Lobera will be a tough act to emulate for FC Goa

### ISL

NANDAKUMAR MARAR  
MUMBAI

FC Goa's reputation for continuity took a blow when, for the first time since its entry into the Indian Super League, the chief coach headed for the exit door as the competition approaches the knockout phase.

Sergio Lobera being asked to leave is strange, going by the Goa franchise management's style of giving the carefully-chosen professional manager enough room to run the show, from player recruitment to choosing sup-

port staff to football operations.

Zico called the shots from 2014-2016 as the first coach, drafting World Cup defender Lucio into the side as marquee player/captain and moulding the team as per his vision. Andre Santos, Leo Moura, and Jonathan Lucca were the other Brazilians contracted by the franchise. They finally made way for a Spaniard with a lower profile.

The new-look FCG then achieved twin objectives from 2017 to 2019 – success on the pitch and popularity with the fans.

In the absence of an off-



Sergio Lobera.  
■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

eye-catching, effective football had won over the fans. After the ups and downs (season one semifinalist, season two finalist, and season three last team in the league) under Zico, matching the highs under Lobera will be a tough act to emulate.

Zico in the dugout and Brazilians in the line-up revived Goan interest in football watching. Lobera's team then got them hooked with a brand of playing close to Goan hearts. The Gaus wove passing patterns on the pitch, mastered one-touch play, scored goals in plenty and qualified for the semifinal and the final in consecutive seasons.

With three games left in ISL season six and a semifinal berth confirmed, the next coach faces a tough task in matching Zico and Lobera's feat of developing Goan footballers.

call-up after his displays with FCG last season.

Other Goans emerging as competent performers in the line-up – defender Seriton Fernandes, attacking midfielders Brandon Fernandes and Lenny Rodrigues. The Spaniard and his support team (assistant coach Jesus Tato from Spain) deserve credit for bringing out the best in a group of hard-working Indians and hand-picked foreigners. Together, they brought back the crowds to Nehru stadium, Margao, the Gaus' home base.

### The rise of Mandar

Mandar Dessai's rise from an attacking option on the left wing under the Brazilian, to promotion as captain in a new role as overlapping left wing-back is a huge step taken by the Spaniard. The Goan – with ball-playing skills and armed with a lethal left-foot – earned an India

## Little nuggets from Sunil Subramanian's diary

The former India administrative manager recounts dressing room anecdotes

### DOWN MEMORY LANE

S. DINAKAR

How many of you knew about M.S. Dhoni's passion for Hindi film music and his ability to sing them in a clear, crisp and nuanced manner?

Sunil Subramanian, the Indian team administrative manager from August 2017 to September 2019, recalled several nuggets from his tenure during a conversation with *The Hindu* here on Wednesday.

Sunil travelled back to a memorable night that stretched well into the early hours of the morning.

It was December 2017 and India, reduced to 29 for seven, had been given a hiding by Sri Lanka in the Dharamsala ODI.

It was biting cold in those parts then, and the team sat around a bonfire around 8 p.m. to keep themselves warm and lighten the mood.

Sunil remembered, "Gradually, we started to play anatakshari of Hindi film songs,

Dhoni... impressive voice.

where a new song had to be sung from the last letter of the previous song."

And the anatakshari went on and on. And Dhoni, as he does so often on the field of play, assumed centrestage.

**Astonishing**  
Sunil said, "Dhoni's knowledge of Hindi film music was astonishing. He sang songs from the 60s, 70s, 80s and the 90s. In fact, he even rendered a few numbers from the 50s. Kishore Kumar, Mohammed Rafi, Mukesh, you name it."

The former Tamil Nadu and South Zone left-arm

spinner added, "His voice was profound and stood out. He sang with passion and heart. Dhoni sang very well."

The anatakshari was so engrossing, that it went on till 2 a.m. Mentally, the pain of defeat had been erased. The Indian team was fresh again, and went on to win the series.

And Sunil, during his two-year tenure, recalled many instances when coach Ravi Shastri lifted the morale of the team on his shoulders."

And Sunil said Rishabh Pant's laugh should be patented. "It is unique. It is shrill with a tune."

Those were the days and times that would forever be etched in Sunil's memory.

## Three-in-a-row for Anjali Saraogi

Sabina Khatun steals limelight in women's half-marathon

### KOLKATA MARATHON

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Local girl Anjali Saraogi took the top honour for the third consecutive year in the IDBI Federal Life Insurance Kolkata marathon here on Sunday.

The 46-year-old timed 3:24.02 to win the women's competition in the marathon, flagged off by legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar.

Sunmul Rahman, also from Kolkata, bagged second place with a timing of 3:44.12. Meghalaya's Snora Lyngkhon was third with 3:46.48.

Lucknow's Awadh Narayan Yadav finished atop the men's podium with a time of 2:30:30. Tlading Wahlang of Meghalaya clocked 2:30:51 and his statemate Batsrang Sangma

timed 2:31:43 for second and third places respectively.

In half-marathon, Hari Singh (1:09:00) beat L.R. Luther by 11 seconds to win the men's race. Kresstarjune Pathaw (1:09:55) was third.



Selfie time: Sachin Tendulkar poses with the half-marathon finishers – Sabina Khatun, centre, Dateibankymaw Marwein and Anita Das. ■ PTI

In the women's section, Sabina Khatun stole the limelight, winning the gold medal with a time