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NEARBY



'Alternative routes to
Shaheen Bagh shut'

NEW DELHI
Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Azad and India's first Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah have told the Supreme Court that alternative routes through Shaheen Bagh have been deliberately shut to disrupt traffic to and from Delhi, Noida and Faridabad. They argued that the Delhi police had blocked the alternative routes on the instructions of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

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Pak. jails Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed for terror financing

Found guilty of being part of a terrorist outfit and for possessing illegal property

MEHMAL SARFRAZ

LAHORE

Hafiz Saeed, the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks that killed 166 people and injured hundreds more, has been sentenced to jail in Pakistan for five-and-a-half years on terror finance charges.

Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist and head of the Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), was found guilty of "being part of a banned terrorist outfit" and for "having illegal property" by an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore.

The ATC sentenced him and his close aide Zafar Iqbal to five-and-a-half years each and imposed a fine of ₹5,000 in each case. A total of 11 years sentence will run concurrently.

The FIR against Saeed and

Case files

This is the first time Jamaat-ud-Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed has been charged and convicted in a terror case. However, he has been detained multiple times in the last 2 decades

support and meetings related to a banned outfit

■ **Section 11-H to Section 11-K:** Charges linked to fundraising for terrorism and money laundering

Number of cases: 23 cases of terror financing were registered by Pakistan's Counter-Terrorism Department in July last year

Charges: Anti-Terrorism Act: Section 11-F (2): Membership,

his associates was registered last July on charges of terror financing at the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Gujranwala.

Saeed, Abdul Ghaffar, Haiz Masood, Armeen Hamza and Iqbal were indicted in December 2019.

This is the first time that

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Saeed, who has a \$10 million bounty on his head by the U.S. government, has been formally convicted of an offence.

Legal experts say Saeed can appeal the verdict but he will be sent to jail immediately. He is currently lodged at Lahore's high-security Kot Lakhpat jail. The government prosecutor, Abdul Rauf Wattou, confirmed the news of Saeed's conviction to the media.

The sentencing comes days ahead of a crucial meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental organisation combating money laundering and terror financing, that has put Pakistan on its grey list.

Mr. Kejriwal was elected leader of the AAP Legislative Party on Wednesday, senior party leader Manish Sisodia said at a press conference.

Mr. Kejriwal called on Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal earlier in the day. The party also sent a letter to the L-G, staking claim to form the government, a party insider said. "The party has decided to repeat the Cabinet, as it considers the mandate as a vote for continuity," the party insider added.

AAP won 62 of the 70 seats in Delhi Assembly. In 2015, it had won 67 seats.

Talking about the swearing-in ceremony, Mr. Sisodia said, "...I appeal to the people of Delhi to reach [the venue] in large numbers and give him [Kejriwal] your love and blessings. I want to appeal to people of Delhi to take a pledge, along with Arvind Kejriwal, that we will together take the city above politics of hatred and make it a model of development, where education, health, water and electricity will form the core of politics."

He said a membership campaign would be conducted across the country.

Addressing reporters, par-

Kejriwal to take oath as CM on Sunday

Party has decided to repeat Cabinet'

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI



Arvind Kejriwal

ty spokesperson Jasmine Shah said AAP had received five lakh missed calls on a number announced on Tuesday for the people to be a part of the party for "nation-building".

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MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGE 3

Puducherry House passes resolution against CAA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY

After Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal, the Puducherry Assembly on Wednesday adopted a resolution urging the Centre to repeal the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

The ruling Congress went a step ahead, adopting another resolution condemning the "BJP government's attempts to destroy India's secular fabric".

At a special session, Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy moved the resolutions and said the CAA, along with the plan to prepare a pan-India National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR), would destroy India's unity and secular character.

Dividing people'
Terming the CAA "discriminatory and unconstitutional", the Chief Minister said that by excluding Muslims from the purview of the Act, the Centre was preparing the ground for a "Hindu Rashtra", as envisaged by the RSS. The aim was to whip up communal passions and divide people on religious lines to reap political dividends, he said.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

25 Ambassadors reach Srinagar on two-day visit

They meet locals, traders and politicians, seek inputs on measures required to move ahead

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

Twenty-five foreign Ambassadors arrived here on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir to assess the situation after the Centre's August 5 decision to revoke the erstwhile State's special status.

They sought inputs from

locals, including select politicians, elected grass-roots representatives, editors, traders and members of the civil society, on the measures required to move ahead.

Around 100 local delegates formed separate groups and met the envoys, including 10 from the Euro-

pean Union (EU). They were the same who met the Members of the European Parliament in October last and 17 foreign envoys in January this year.

No politician from the regional parties, such as the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic

Party (PDP), figured on the list of delegates drafted by the administration.

Significance of visit

The visit assumes significance because of U.S. President Donald Trump's upcoming visit to India, and the EU's plan to discuss the Citi-

zenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and reading down Article 370 in the European Parliament in March.

Because of the inclement weather, the delegation cancelled its visit to Baramulla in north Kashmir.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Runaway couple to reunite on V-Day eve

HC allows man to meet wife, newborn child lodged at shelter home since last year

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

On Valentine's Day eve, a runaway couple, who were separated following a complaint by girl's father, will be reunited for the first time since May last year when the man was arrested. His wife, in the meantime, gave birth to their daughter at a women's shelter home here.

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday allowed 27-year-old Ankit Kumar to meet his wife and four-month-old daughter during "reasonable hours" at Nirmal Chhaya home for women here.

A Bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and I.S. Mehta also asked the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) to decide on the plea made by Mr. Kumar seeking the release of his wife and daughter within five working days.

"In the meantime, Superintendent, Nirmal Chhaya Complex, where the moth-

er-daughter are currently lodged, is directed to permit the petitioner, Ankit Kumar, to interact with them at all reasonable hours, in accordance with law and the rules," the Bench said.

Mr. Kumar, a Delhi resident, had moved a habeas corpus petition before the High Court urging that his wife and daughter be produced before the court and seeking permission to take them home.

Advocate Amresh Anand,

who represented Mr. Kumar, submitted before the court that to date his client "has not even seen his child, forget about caressing her". Mr. Anand urged the "kind indulgence" of the High Court in reuniting the small family.

He said that Mr. Kumar and his wife had known each other for the past few years as they were residing in the same area. Over a period of time they became very close and fell in love.

Fled after marriage
When the girl turned 18, Mr. Kumar and she secretly solemnised their marriage at Birla Mandir here on February 18 last year. A week later, fearing that her father had come to know about their marriage, the girl ran away with Mr. Kumar, said the advocate. The couple rented a flat in Noida and started living there as husband and wife.

Mr. Kumar wrote to the CWC and also to Nirmal Chhaya seeking the release of his wife and daughter in December last year. When his plea remained unanswered for about two months, he moved the High Court.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

The girl's father lodged a police complaint saying his daughter was less than 18 years old and had been kidnapped. Based on the FIR, Mr. Kumar was arrested and his wife was sent to the shelter home.

After about seven months of legal proceedings, Mr. Kumar was acquitted of all charges by a local court here. Immediately after the release he tried to speak to his wife, but was denied permission.

Mr. Anand said the mother-daughter are not allowed to go outside the shelter home and she cannot even make any calls.

Mr. Kumar wrote to the CWC and also to Nirmal Chhaya seeking the release of his wife and daughter in December last year. When his plea remained unanswered for about two months, he moved the High Court.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 12

Awareness drill



Ready to protect: NDRF personnel conducting a drill near a replica of Sun temple near the Ramchandi beach in Konark, Odisha, on Wednesday as part of the BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise. Representatives from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India are taking part in the three-day event aimed at safety of heritage sites at the time of disasters. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

Kerala imposes ₹13 price cap on bottled water

Government views current prices as exploitation of consumers, makes it an essential commodity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Bottled drinking water has come under a price cap in Kerala, with the State making it an essential commodity and fixing a ceiling of ₹13 per litre. The current retail price is ₹20.

The State government on Wednesday announced the price reduction after Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan signed the Food Department proposal.

Including bottled water in the list of essential commodities enables price control. Food Minister P. Thilothaman told *The Hindu* that the notification on the new price would be issued soon. He said the government had also

decided to make BIS standards mandatory for all brands of bottled water. This would force unauthorised manufacturers to shut shop.

In 2018, the government convened a meeting of bottled water manufacturers at which it was decided to bring down the price to ₹12. But the decision was not implemented in the face of opposition from traders and some manufacturers.

Eminently feasible
The Minister said some companies had insisted on a minimum price of ₹15. "We understood that manufacturers could afford to sell bottled water at much less. Traders were also fleecing buyers, extracting a



huge margin. The government cannot close its eyes to such exploitation," he said.

The Kerala Bottled Water Manufacturers' Association welcomed the decision to reduce the price. Its

industry players, over commercial concerns.

The State government sells a litre of bottled water at ₹10, through a subsidiary of the Kerala Water Authority, he said. The move by the State government would help the industry in the long run. The public felt that bottled water manufacturers were fleecing customers.

There are around 200 bottled water manufacturers in Kerala, as per a rough estimate. But the Association has less than a hundred members. Most manufacturers sell around 300 to 500 cases of bottled water a day, a case consisting of 12 one-litre bottles.

Rohingya can't be kept in jail after serving term: HC

They have to be taken to a safe place'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Once Rohingya refugees complete their jail term after being caught as illegal immigrants, they cannot be kept in prison, the Calcutta High Court has said.

The refugees will have to be taken to a safe place, said the lawyer of four Rohingya petitioners who completed their jail term in 2018.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice T.B. Radhakrishnan and Justice Arijit Bandopadhyay said that once the jail term of a convicted person was over, he could not be kept in prison.

Continued monitoring
The government could shift them to a safe place and

continue to monitor them, but jail was not the place to lodge them, Sudip Ghosh Chowdhury, counsel for the Rohingya refugees, said quoting from the court's observation.

Mr. Ghosh Chowdhury had moved the court on behalf of an organisation that filed a *habeas corpus* petition to produce the arrested Rohingya refugees.

The petition said the refugees, who were arrested in 2016

IN BRIEF



Dalai Lama congratulates Kejriwal for AAP's victory

NEW DELHI

Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, has congratulated Aam Aadmi Party's national convener Arvind Kejriwal for his party's victory in the Delhi Assembly polls, saying that the people of Delhi will continue to benefit from his leadership. Mr. Kejriwal thanked him through a tweet on Wednesday.

'AAP to focus on next civic body polls now'

NEW DELHI

After scripting a scintillating win in the recently concluded Delhi Assembly elections, Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party is now likely to focus on the next municipal elections, sources said on Wednesday. "The party will further strengthen organisational structure in view of the next civic polls," a source said. PTI

MLAs with criminal cases have nearly doubled from 2015: ADR

61% of newly elected MLAs declared criminal cases as opposed to 34% in 2015

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The seventh Delhi Assembly, which was elected on Tuesday, will have almost double the number of MLAs who have declared criminal cases against them compared to the sixth Assembly that was elected in 2015.

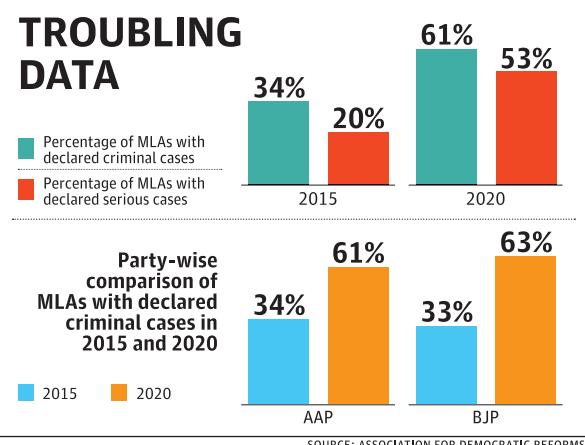
The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won 62 out of the 70 seats while the BJP won the remaining eight seats. In 2015, AAP had won 67 seats and the BJP had got three.

According to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), 43 out of the 70 newly elected MLAs, or 61%, have declared criminal cases.

After the 2015 Assembly elections, 34, or 24 out of 70 MLAs, had declared criminal cases, stated the report by the ADR.

The number of MLAs who declared serious criminal cases, including crimes

TROUBLING DATA



against women, murder, assault and corruption, has jumped from 14, or 20% of the total, in 2015, to 37, or 53%, in the newly-elected Assembly, the ADR added.

Of the 62 AAP MLAs, 38, or 61%, have declared criminal cases against themselves in their election affidavits.

Five of the eight BJP

MLAs, or 63%, declared cri-

minal cases against them-

selves, the ADR added.

Nine of the newly elected

Delhi MLAs declared con-

victions in various cases.

Rich legislators

In terms of their financial backgrounds, 74% of the newly elected MLAs declared assets of over ₹1 crore, an increase from 63%

in 2015. This time, 73% of AAP MLAs and 88% of BJP MLAs declared assets of over ₹1 crore. The average assets of MLAs increased from ₹6.29 crore in 2015 to ₹14.29 crore now.

Three AAP MLAs were the ones with the highest assets, with Mundka MLA Dharampal Lakra declaring assets worth ₹292 crore, fol-

lowed by R.K. Puram MLA Parmila Tokas, who de-

clared ₹80 crore in assets,

and Patel Nagar MLA Raaj

Kumar Anand who declared ₹78 crore in assets, the ADR

report stated.

A total of 42 out of 70

MLAs, or 60%, declared

educational qualification of

graduation and above; and

56%, or 39 out of 70 candi-

dates, are aged between 25

and 50 years.

Eight women have been

elected to the Delhi Assem-

bly this time, while in 2015,

the figure stood at six.

'Tiwari offered to step down but party told him to wait'

State BJP chief contacted senior leadership of the party on Tuesday evening, claim sources

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State unit chief Manoj Tiwari has offered to step down in the wake of the drubbing received by it in the Delhi Assembly polls, but has been asked by its national leadership to hang on, party insiders said on Wednesday.

The North East Delhi MP, who met the eight BJP legislators who managed to win the elections, had contacted the party's senior leader-



Manoj Tiwari met newly elected BJP MLAs in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ PTI

ship on Tuesday evening, said sources. "Mr. Tiwari has offered his resignation but was asked to hang on for

the moment," said a party insider privy to the development.

Tiwari contradicts

Mr. Tiwari, however, told PTI: "Neither have I been asked to resign nor have I offered my resignation."

"The party's State unit will be overhauled as part of a national exercise soon. Sunil Yadav, who contested against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and Ravinder Singh Negi, who fought a tough election against De-

puty Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, are likely to get responsibilities as part of a national team," claimed another source in the party.

Meanwhile, the newly elected BJP MLAs held a meeting with Mr. Tiwari at the State unit headquarters.

Congratulating all the newly elected MLAs on their victory, Mr. Tiwari said that the party respected the mandate given by the people of Delhi and hoped that those who have got the chance to run the govern-

ment "meet the expectations of the people".

"During the Assembly

elections, BJP workers worked hard due to which the BJP has won more seats and the vote percentage has also increased. The people of Delhi have given a mandate to the party to play the role of Opposition. We will strongly raise the problems of Delhi in the House and play the role of a responsible Opposition," Mr. Tiwari added.

(With PTI inputs)

Now, host parties in Noida metro coaches

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Noida Metro Rail Corporation on Wednesday announced a "non-farebox" initiative by which it will allow people to throw birthday parties and pre-wedding celebrations by booking a metro coach.

"The aim behind the policy is to develop the NMRC as a unique destination for birthday and pre-wedding celebrations for residents of Noida and Greater Noida. Interested applicants can request for one or more coaches to a maximum of four coaches in a train," the NMRC said.

Those wanting to book the coach will be able to have the coach decorated and have the option of hosting the celebration on a running metro or a static metro according to the time of the function. The NMRC said that the policy will be accessed from its website.

Women lead the way



Protesters sitting on a dharna against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens, at Chand Bagh in Karawal Nagar on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Pleas in High Court challenge Central Vista project

Court issues notice to Centre and Delhi Development Authority seeking their response within 2 weeks

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

In a first major legal hurdle to the redevelopment of the Central Vista project, the Delhi High Court has taken cognisance of two separate petitions which raised common issues on the changes, including land-use, proposed by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

Justice Rajiv Shukla issued notices to the Centre and the DDA and sought their response within two weeks. The court also directed the DDA to approach it before taking a decision to notify the proposed changes in Master Plan Delhi 2020-21.

Eight new government of-



A view of the Central Vista on a winter morning. ■ PHOTO

ice buildings, a new Parlia-

ment House and a residential complex near the South Block that could house the homes of the Prime Minister and the Vice-President are among the projects under consideration for the redevelopment of the Central Vista.

One of the petitioners, Rajeet Suri, has asserted that there is change in land-use in

as much as the green areas which is described as "recreational". District Park is proposed to house the new government house. Mr. Suri's plea claimed that the DDA has relied upon 2001 Zonal Development Plan in respect of the proposed changes. His plea contended that the alterations which

are proposed will involve the change of land-use and standards of population density.

"Such a change in land use will deprive Delhi of its most iconic Central Vista, steeped in historicity and known for pomp and pageantry of the Republic of India," the plea said, claiming that the DDA is not vested with the requisite power to bring about such changes.

The second petition by Lt. Col. Anuj Srivastava (Retd.) and others challenges the public hearing which was held subsequently terming it as "merely formality". The DDA had invited comments or objections for the change of land use for the project. In the petition, he argued that

about 1,292 objections were submitted to the DDA out of which 200 objections were dealt with summarily.

The plea pointed out that "extremely short notice" was issued to the parties for the public hearing.

"A one-day notice for public hearing does not allow people to make arrangements to be present at the public hearing," the plea said. It said about 1,292 people were called for hearing within a few hours over just two days during the middle of the week. It submitted that 200 people were called within time slots of just an hour, rendering any public hearing completely "meaningless and impractical".

Congress appoints interim Delhi in-charge; Chacko, Chopra resign

They had taken responsibility for party's dismal performance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Congress was busy capturing Congress whereas other parties were capturing India. If we are to survive, [it's] time to come out of exalted echo chambers

SHARMISTHA MUKHERJEE
Delhi Mahila Congress president

ter had tweeted: "AAP won, bluff and bluster lost. The people of Delhi, who are from all parts of India, have defeated the polarising, divisive and dangerous agenda of the BJP. I salute the people of Delhi who have set an example to other states that will hold their elections in 2021 and 2022 [sic]."

Ms. Mukherjee has been vocal since the party's defeat on Tuesday, saying that the time for introspection was over and it was time for action. "BJP playing divisive politics, Kejriwal playing 'smart politics' and what're we doing? Can we honestly say that we've done all to put our house in order?" Ms. Mukherjee said, adding that the Congress was busy capturing Congress whereas other parties were capturing India.

"If we are to survive, time to come out of exalted echo chambers!" she added.

The Congress failed to win any seat in the Delhi Assembly election for the second time and its vote share fell to 4.26% from 9.7% in 2013.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, in a tweet, said: "The Delhi results are disappointing for Congress but there are consolations: the BJP's divisive politics has been repudiated with their rout; AAP's development message is what has prevailed over identity politics; and 8 months after sweeping the LS polls the winners have been rebuked [sic]."

Two arrested with fake passports at IGI Airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Gujarat-based man and a woman were apprehended by the CISF at the IGI Airport here for allegedly using fake passports for travelling to Canada, officials said on Wednesday. Mehlul K. Praja-

pati and Sonalben Patel, both residents of Gujarat's Mehsana, were allegedly carrying passports in the name of Zahir Ahmed and Ayesha Bano Tippu.

They have been handed over to immigration authorities for further probe.

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Chawla to be extradited from U.K. today over match-fixing

This will be the first high-profile extradition of its kind to India

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI
Sanjeev Chawla, who was allegedly involved in a cricket betting scandal, will be extradited to India from London on Thursday.

A police officer confirmed that the London Police will handover Chawla to the Delhi Police at the Heathrow airport on Wednesday night. He is expected to arrive at the Delhi airport at 11.30 a.m.

This would mark the first high-profile extradition of its kind to India and will add a feather in the cap of Delhi Police.

An officer in the rank of Deputy Commissioner of Police and an Inspector-rank officer, who is also the investigating officer in the case, left for London on Tuesday night.

Legal formalities over

"The paperwork and other legal formalities have been completed and he will be handed over to Delhi Police on Wednesday late night," said the officer.

The officer added that Chawla will be taken to Tihar jail and will be kept as per the Indian government's assurances to the U.K. court.

Tihar jail authorities said that Chawla will be treated as any other prisoner and the concerns raised by him will be addressed. He will be kept in a separate cell as he had prominently raised concerns over his safety and security in the India jail.

Chawla was allegedly involved in a match-fixing scandal that was busted by Delhi Police in 2000, and involved former South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje. After his Indian passport was revoked in 2000, he obtained a U.K. passport in 2005 and became a British citizen.

Family of five found dead at their home

Bodies were badly decomposed and sent for post-mortem; police register case of murder

SAURABH TRIVEDI
NEW DELHI

Decomposed bodies of an e-rickshaw driver, his wife and three children were found inside their house in north-east Delhi's Bhajanpura area under mysterious circumstances on Wednesday morning, police said.

The deceased have been identified as Shambhu Chaudhary (43), Sunita (37), Shivam (17), Sachin (14) and Komal (12).

Ved Prakash Surya, DCP (North East), said the bodies have decomposed so badly that injuries, if any, are not visible. "We have registered an FIR under Section 302 (murder) of the IPC at Bhajanpura police station. The case



A scene outside the house in Bhajanpura on Wednesday where five members of a family were found dead. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

is under investigation. We have requested a medical board to conduct post-mortem examination," he said.

Police said they received information at 11.16 a.m. from neighbours, who complained

of a foul smell emanating from the house. A police team reached the location and found the door locked from outside. The team broke open the door and found the five decomposed bodies.

"The bodies of the husband and wife were in one room and those of the three children in the other. The family used to live in two rooms located on the ground floor of the house. The building has two entrances. The main entrance was locked from outside while the door of the other was bolted from inside," said a police officer.

Joint Commissioner of Police (East) Alok Kumar said it is too early to pinpoint the reason of death. "The cause of death will be ascertained after the autopsy," he said.

A forensic team is inspecting the rooms. Mr. Kumar said the police are trying to recover the mobile phone used by Shambhu. "He was

Man held for robbing ₹1.5L from bank

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
In a daylight robbery, a masked man entered a public sector bank in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar on Wednesday and robbed ₹1.5 lakh at gunpoint. However, he was arrested a few hours after the incident, said the police.

The accused, Pankaj Na- rang, is a resident of Tilak Nagar, they said.

When the bank opened for regular business, the masked man, wearing a black jacket, entered the building and overpowered the security guard. He took away his gun, threatened the bank staff and demanded ₹1.5 lakh. Fearing for his life, cashier Jaiprakash gave him the money. He escaped from the spot in a scooter with the gun, a police officer said.

"Upon checking the passengers' baggage, high volume of foreign currencies were found concealed in cooked mutton pieces, peanuts, biscuit packets and other eatables," CISF spokesperson Assistant Inspector General Hemendra Singh said.



CISF personnel cracked peanuts and opened sealed biscuit packets to extract foreign currencies. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Foreign currencies worth ₹45L seized from Dubai-bound flier

It was concealed in cooked meat pieces, peanuts and eatables

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) officials have seized foreign currencies worth ₹45 lakh hidden in cooked meat pieces, peanuts and biscuit packets from a passenger at the Delhi airport, officials said on Wednesday.

The unique modus operandi of currency smuggling came to light on Tuesday evening when the security personnel intercepted a passenger, Murad Ali, at Terminal-3 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport over his "suspicious" behaviour. He was there to board an Air India flight to Dubai.

"Upon checking the passengers' baggage, high volume of foreign currencies were found concealed in

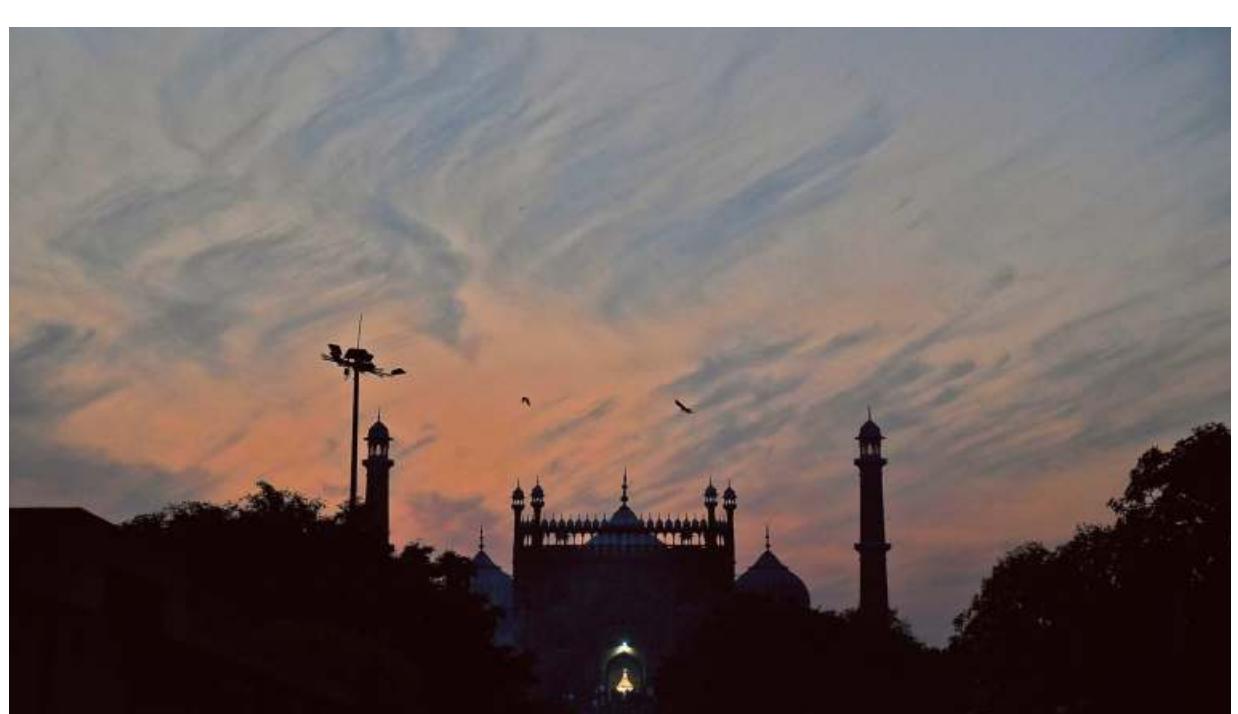
peanut pieces, peanuts, biscuit packets and other eatables," CISF spokesperson Assistant Inspector General Hemendra Singh said.

A video of the interception provided by the force showed the security personnel cracking peanuts, unzipping sealed biscuit packets and digging into oily meat pieces to extract an assort-

ment of Saudi Riyal, Qatari Riyal, Kuwaiti Dinar, Omani Riyal and Euro rolled and wrapped neatly inside.

The estimated worth of the seized cache is ₹45 lakh and the passenger has been handed over to the customs authorities for further investigation, the CISF spokesperson said.

Cloudscape



The skyline over Jama Masjid as the sun takes leave for the day. The city witnessed pleasant weather on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Executive Engineer, Integrated Unit (P.W.) Division, Fort, Mumbai-400 001.
Email : integmtedmumbai.ee@mahapwd.com

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Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimate Cost Rs.
1	Construction of Allied works (Sewage treatment plant+Best station, Underground Water Tank, Compound wall and Internal Road) for Metropolitan Magistrate court Building (Stilt+17) Stories on CTS No.372 at Mazgaon Mumbai.	11,58,09,235/-

(Total 01 Works included in this Notice)

Tender Available : Date Date 11/02/2020 at 10.30 hrs. to Date 07/03/2020 at 14.00 hrs.

Pre-Bid date : Date 27/02/2020 at 03.00 hrs. (Noon)
Office of the Chief Engineer,
Mumbai (P.W) Region, 4th floor,
Bandhkam Bhavan, 25th Marzban Road,
Fort, Mumbai-400 001

Opening Date (If possible) : Date 09/03/2020 at 15.05 hrs.

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Executive Engineer,
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DGIPR/2019/2020/4954

Protest after vandalism of statue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GAZIABAD
A few members of the Kashyap community staged a protest here on Wednesday against the vandalising of Maharsi Kashyap's statue.

The statue at Shradha Upvan park in Arya Nagar area was defaced by miscreants on Monday.

A memorandum has been handed over to Gaziabad District Magistrate demanding installation of a new statue and ensuring stringent action against the miscreants, said a BSP worker.

Member of U.P. Legislative Council Suresh Kashyap said an FIR has been lodged at Sihani Gate police station in this regard.

High Court dismisses petition seeking voting rights for prisoners

Court says right to vote was only provided by a statute

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court has rejected a petition seeking voting rights for prisoners noting that the right to cast vote was neither a fundamental right nor a common law right and was only provided by a statute.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice C. Hari Shankar remarked that the facility was provided under the law and it can be taken away by law as held by the Supreme Court.

The decision came on a plea by three law students – Praveen Kumar Chaudhary, Atul Kumar Dubey and Prerna Singh – seeking voting rights for all persons



lodged in jails across the country.

The three law students contended in their plea that a blanket ban on the prisoners right to vote was a violation of the spirit and soul enshrined in the Constitution and the basic principle of equality.

They challenged the constitutionality of Section 62 (5) of the RP Act, which deprives prisoners of their right to vote.

Earlier, the Election Commission of India (ECI) had informed the High Court that prisoners do not have voting rights under the Representation of People Act.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, FEB. 13
RISE 07:02 SET 18:10
RISE 22:42 SET 09:58
FRIDAY, FEB. 14
RISE 07:01 SET 18:10
RISE 23:47 SET 10:36
SATURDAY, FEB. 15
RISE 07:00 SET 18:11
RISE 00:00 SET 11:16

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	24	08
Safdarjung	24	08
Palam	24	09

Delhi Palam Today
22°C Rise in temperature is expected. The night will be very cool. A windy day is likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
20°C Moderate winds are likely to blow leading to improvement in pollution level. Dry and comfortable weather to continue.

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THE HINDU

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Difficult to revive AAP fortunes in Punjab, says ex-party leader

Sukhpal Khaira praises AAP's resounding win in Delhi but rules out rejoining party

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH

Former Aam Aadmi Party leader Sukhpal Singh Khaira on Wednesday said the party deserved praise for the victory in the Delhi Assembly polls but claimed that it was difficult to revive its fortunes in Punjab.

He alleged that the party was never "sincere" towards Punjab, resulting in the loss of the golden opportunity in the 2017 State Assembly polls, when it bagged 20 seats.

Replying to a question, Mr. Khaira, who was elected on the AAP symbol from Bholath constituency in 2017, ruled out the possibility of rejoining the party with "conditions".

AAP won 62 out of 70 seats in the Delhi Assembly.

"It is a huge victory and they deserve praise for it,"



If one thinks that whatever has happened in Delhi could suddenly happen in Punjab, it does not appear so because their conduct towards the State had not been sincere

SUKHPAL SINGH KHAIRA
Former AAP Leader

said Mr. Khaira.

"If one says they could win the Punjab polls by improving conditions of hospitals and schools, Punjab has complicated and multifarious political issues," he said.

The former AAP leader said the circumstances in Punjab were different from the national capital, which was "flush with funds and has got huge revenue".

portunity which they lost it and won just 20 seats," said Mr. Khaira, claiming that the party didn't go for course correction.

"The party never bothered to review the poll results and fixed the responsibility," he alleged.

Removed from post

Mr. Khaira, who had joined AAP in 2015, was removed from the post of the leader of the opposition in the State Assembly in July 2018. Six months later, he quit AAP and floated his Punjab Ekta Party.

Mr. Khaira had resigned as MLA in April last year and contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Bathinda, which he failed to win.

AAP had won four Lok Sabha seats in Punjab in the 2014 polls and one in the 2019 elections.

Punjab govt. cancels leave of key staff

Coronavirus surveillance should not be affected: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Punjab government on Wednesday issued instructions to cancel the leaves of all the key staff engaged in reporting and management of coronavirus.

22,236 passengers have been screened so far at airports in the State, no cases reported.

BALBIR SINGH SIDHU
Punjab Health Minister

check post in Gurdaspur district.

The Minister said of the 1,517 passengers, who had travelled to China or had transit stay at airports, 35 samples were collected for testing and all these samples have been reported negative by the National Institute of Virology.

A total of 1,109 passengers have crossed the observation period of 14 days so far and the remaining passengers have been kept in home isolation and under observation of the health department.

Hooda hits out at BJP-JJP govt. in Haryana

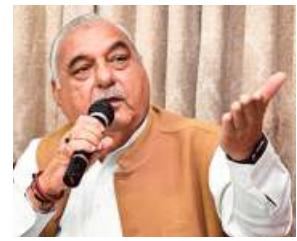
Former CM demands White Paper on 'worsening' economic crisis in the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Wednesday hit out at the ruling BJP-JJP alliance government, accusing it of bringing development work to a standstill in the State.

Demanding a White Paper on the 'worsening' economic situation in the State, Mr. Hooda said that Haryana's debt had increased from ₹61,000 crore to ₹1.8 lakh crore under the BJP regime.

"The government has put the State under a mountain



Bhupinder Singh Hooda

conference here.

Mr. Hooda said the current government was refusing to come to the work mode, even after assuming office for over three months now. "This government is citing its speeches as its achievements, nothing is happening on the ground. It's a non-functional government," he said.

Matters have reached a point where every child born in the State is burdened with a debt of ₹72,000 and the situation is getting worse. We demand that the State government issue a White Paper on the issue," he said, addressing a press conference.

any relief, the government continues to raise input prices and continues to collect several lakhs from the farmers in the name of tubewell connections. Farmers had to pay ₹10,000 for a tubewell connection under the Congress rule, but now have to pay ₹2 lakh," said Mr. Hooda.

SYL issue
On the controversial Sutlej Yamuna Link canal, Mr. Hooda alleged that the State government has been twiddling its thumbs over the issue even after the Supreme Court has already given a decision.

Teacher held for rape of minor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR

A government school teacher was arrested in Rajasthan's Alwar district for allegedly raping a minor girl and two others held for their involvement in kidnapping her, police said on Wednesday.

All the three accused were sent on three-day police remand. According to police, a private tutor Surendra Jatav who knew the girl had dropped her in Alwar on bike where government school teacher Subhash Mahlawat raped her.

Rajasthan seeks higher Central assistance for water scheme

State has only 1% of country's surface water: Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

The Congress government in Rajasthan has sought changes in the norms for Central assistance for the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), which envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household by 2024, in order to reduce the financial burden on the States. The flagship Central scheme at present stipulates the share in 50:50 ratio.

New action plans

Rajasthan, where only 12% households are currently getting piped water supply, has formulated new action plans for implementing JJM by rejuvenating the sources of water to provide connections to about 98 lakh households. The JJM is being implemented under the State Water and



Rajasthan Minister B.D. Kalla

that the State, which had only 1.01% of the country's surface water, had been trying hard to supply drinking water to geographically difficult areas and expected more assistance from the Centre to achieve the targets of JJM. Unless the steps were taken to increase surface water, the dark zones would expand across the State, he said.

Mr. Kalla said in the State Assembly on Tuesday that the Opposition should also urge the Centre to consider increasing its share in the JJM by changing the norms. He affirmed that the linking of Brahmani river with the Bisalpur dam, built on Banas river in Tonk district, would ensure inflow of more water, facilitating the water supply to Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, Ajmer, Jaipur and Nagaur districts.

Sanitation Mission, which is already functional, and different sources, including rainwater harvesting, have been tapped.

The Union Ministry of Jal Shakti is holding discussions with all the States in five phases for their action plans under the JJM. Officers from Rajasthan's Public Health Engineering Department held deliberations at a workshop in Odisha's Puri.

Public Health Engineering Minister B.D. Kalla said here

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3 firemen killed in Jammu building collapse

They were trying to put out a blaze when the structure suddenly caved in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU

Three firemen were killed and six persons injured when a three-storey building collapsed in Jammu city on Wednesday when fire department personnel were trying to put out a blaze, officials said.

Director General of Fire and Emergency Services, V.K. Singh said the building in Golepura area of Tallab Tillo, housing a saw mill on the ground floor, collapsed during the fire fighting operation.

"We lost three personnel in the incident, while six persons - four civilians and two firemen - were rescued in an injured condition and were evacuated to a hospital," Mr. Singh who supervised the rescue operation, told PTI.

Soon after the incident,



Rescue workers at the building collapse site in Jammu. ■ PTI

collapsed at 5.30 a.m. "We have rescued four trapped civilians in the morning while two of our personnel suffered injuries. All the rescued persons were evacuated and taken to a hospital," Mr. Singh said, adding that while one of the firemen is being treated for serious burn injuries, the other is undergoing treatment for head injuries.

Cylinder explosion
"There was a huge stock of timber in the saw mill and a gas cylinder also exploded during the fire as a result of which the building collapsed due to intense heat," the D-G said.

He said the NDRF team was mobilized from Pathankot to assist in the rescue operation.

After hectic efforts, the bodies of the three trapped fire-fighters identified as Vimal

Aishe Ghosh to campaign against CAA in Bengal

She will participate in roadshows and campaign for SFI in Jadavpur University students' union polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA
In an attempt to infuse fresh energy to its campaign against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has roped in Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union president and Students' Federation of India leader Aishe Ghosh.



JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh. ■ FILE PHOTO

For the next few days, Ms. Ghosh is likely to address a number of seminars, participate in roadshows and even campaign for the SFI for the Jadavpur University students' union elections.

'An inspiration'
"Aishe is Bengali and can connect with the people of the State. Her struggle is an inspiration not only for the students but also for all the people," State SFI secretary Srijan Bhattacharya told *The Hindu*.

Ms. Ghosh hails from Durgapur, an industrial township in south Bengal, and this is her first visit to her home town since she was attacked by masked goons inside JNU campus on January 5.

However, her first public rally in the State did not get police permission.

On a day when Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed a rally against the CAA-NRC in Durgapur, the rally led by Ms. Ghosh was denied permission in town by local police authorities. While the CPI(M) and other Left parties held rallies and processions against the CAA, they could not hog the lime-

light like the protests organised by the Chief Minister. A section of Left leadership feels that Ms. Ghosh's presence can add some spark to their campaign.

Ms. Ghosh will address two conventions on autonomy of educational institutions inside the campus of Calcutta University and Presidency University. She will also lead a rally under the banner of Students Against Fascism in north Kolkata from Calcutta University to Shyambazar on Thursday and campaign for the SFI at Jadavpur University on Friday.

CPI(M)'s leadership crisis
She is also likely to meet the protesters at Park Circus who have been camping at the site drawing inspiration from the Shaheen Bagh in Delhi.

The CPI(M) has been try-

ing to bring in young faces as leaders and also given tickets to youth leaders from the SFI. However, the party is still grappling with a leadership crisis. Senior CPI(M) leader and Labour Minister in the Left Front government, Anadi Sahu, admitted that the protests by students against CAA "is creating a sensation in the country".

"We will be joining the rally led by Aishe Ghosh. We want new leadership to emerge. These are the students who are not only leading from the front but they are also withstanding attacks," he said.

Mr. Sahu, who is also the general secretary of the trade union arm of the party, said that the CPI(M)'s national campaign against the CAA will culminate on March 23, the day of martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev.

Banks, post offices being used to collect CAA-NRC data: Mamata

'Surveys are being done without State govt's permission'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA BANKURA (W.B.)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday alleged that nationalised banks and post offices were being "used" by the Centre in the State to collect data in order to "manipulate" the CAA-NRC-NPR.

Ms. Banerjee, addressing an administrative meeting here, said such survey by the Central government undertakings must "stop immediately", without elaborating where and when such an exercise happened, officials said.

She added surveys are being done without the State government's permission.

"The banks and post offices are doing this without taking the name of BJP... they



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee greeting students in Durgapur in West Bengal on Wednesday. ■ PTI

are visiting houses to conduct the survey. They cannot do this without the State government's permission... do not give any information to anyone. We will not allow this. We have to strongly handle this," she told top State officials at the meeting.

She also cited the incident of a group of BJP workers vis-

iting a jewellery shop in Habra in North 24 Parganas district and asking for documents allegedly connected to the CAA and NRC, and asked people to drive away any such people.

Meanwhile, an FIR has been registered with the Habra police station in connection with the incident.

9 temples make way for hospital

Club houses on govt. land to be pulled down in Cuttack

CORRESPONDENT CUTTACK

Resuming its ongoing demolition drive to renovate and expand the SCB Medical College and Hospital here, the district administration on Wednesday pulled down at least nine temples and six club houses built illegally on government land adjacent to the roads on either sides of the Taladanda canal.

The authorities have iden-

tified to pull down another temple and a club house located on these two roads leading from Ranhat Bridge to the teaching hospital as part of the eviction drive for the hospital expansion, said Deputy Commissioner of Cuttack Municipal Commissioner A.C. Rout.

Wednesday's eviction was the third phase of the ongoing drive and the authorities were very conscious and

concerned, for it involved places of worship. However, the demolition drive went off peacefully without any untoward incident.

Tension built up inside the hospital campus as employees resented the one-month notice given to them to vacate their houses. Hundreds of Class III and Class IV employees protested in front of the hospital superintendent's office.

Odisha sets up panel for backward classes

Former Orissa HC judge to head the five-member commission

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha government on Wednesday constituted Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes (OSCBC) under the chairmanship of Justice Raghunath Biswal, former judge of the Orissa High Court.

The other members of the Commission are Navneeta Rath, Mitali Chinara and Prasanna Kumar Patra.

Veer Vikram Yadav, IAS, has been nominated as Member Secretary of the Commission.

The State government constituted the Commission in accordance with the provisions contained in the Odisha State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993, according to the CMO.

Justice Biswal had also served as president of the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission from November 2012 to March 2017.

Prof. Rath is a distinguished social scientist who has conducted studies on backward classes, while Prof. Chinara is well known in the field of applied and analytical economics, and Dr. Patra is a renowned anthropologist.

Waking up to the need to

protect the interests of backward classes, the Odisha Cabinet had recently resolved that a socio-economic caste survey be conducted simultaneously along with the general census, either by inserting a suitable column in the census format or by prescribing a separate format for a simultaneous enumeration of socially and educationally backward classes and other backward classes/castes.

Live-streaming of case hearing allowed by HC

It involves a woman from Parsi community

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA
The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday allowed live-streaming of a hearing in a case of a Parsi woman, saying the proceedings would have ramifications for the community across the country.

The woman had moved the Calcutta High Court seeking an order permitting her children to enter the Fire Temple, the Zoroastrian community's place of worship.

The woman's children were not being allowed to enter the Temple as she had married outside the community.

Along with the petitioner, her mother is also a co-applicant in the case filed against late Ervad Dhunjibhoy Byramjee Mehta's Zoroastrian Anjuman Atash Adaram Trust and the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Kolkatta, told journalists.

As per the arrangement suggested by the court, two cameras will be installed. These will be integrated for live-streaming on YouTube.

Mr. Edulji said that it is the first instance of live-streaming of a hearing being allowed in Bengal.

The main petition will be heard by the court of Justice Debangshu Basak.

TIRUPATI SMART CITY CORPORATION LIMITED C/o. TIRUPATI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, 13-29-M9-1-00, Tilak Road, East Tirupati, Pin Code - 517501, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh, India. Email : tscctirupati@gmail.com

Managing Director, Tirupati Smart City Corporation Limited, Tirupati invites Bids / Tenders on e-Procurement platform from the "eligible contractors" for the following works:

NIT Number: TSCL/NIT/35, Dated : February 12th, 2020

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

On behalf of Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency, Joint Director invites e-tenders for the work of design, manufacture, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of Solar PV Power Plants on turn-key basis in various Government installations in the State of Tripura vide DNle-T No. F(6/259)/TREDA/NCES/19/3157, dated 11/02/2020. The tender papers may be downloaded from e-procurement portal <http://tripurarenewable.gov.in> and the deadline for submission of online e-bid is 04/03/2020 upto 3:30 PM.

(D S DAS)
Joint Director

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE



Mrs. PREMA PARTHASARATHY
wife of Late R.T. Parthasarathy attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on the evening of 12th February at Salem. Last rites will be performed in Salem. Mourned by family and friends.

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05/TSCCL/Projects/TO/2019-20, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Request for Proposal for "Selection of Architectural, Engineering and Service Consultant for Mixed Use development of Multi Level Parking facility" under Implementation of the Smart City Mission in Tirupati - [01 st Call]	
06/TSCCL/Projects/TO/2019-20, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Request for Proposal for "Design, Built, Operate and Maintenance of Toilets cum Restrooms and Dorm Rooms Facility" under Implementation of the Smart City Mission in Tirupati - [01 st Call]	
11/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Retrofitting MCT Schools as Smart Campus Under Implementation of Smart City Mission in Tirupati - MCPS in SD Road (Ward No - 36) - [01 st Call]	Rs. 53,94,352/-
12/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Retrofitting MCT Schools as Smart Campus Under Implementation of Smart City Mission in Tirupati - MCPS in Manchala Street (Ward No - 36) - [01 st Call]	Rs. 28,47,632/-
13/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Retrofitting MCT Schools as Smart Campus Under Implementation of Smart City Mission in Tirupati - MCPS in Singalagunta (Ward No - 38) [01 st Call]	Rs. 26,18,827/-
14/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Retrofitting MCT Schools as Smart Campus Under Implementation of Smart City Mission in Tirupati - MCPS in Marri Chenna Reddy Colony (Ward No - 41) [01 st Call]	Rs. 73,79,542/-
15/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Retrofitting MCT Schools as Smart Campus Under Implementation of Smart City Mission in Tirupati - MCPS in Vinayaka Nagar (Ward No - 40) - [01 st Call]	Rs. 45,75,582/-
16/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	"Solid Waste Management Project - Design, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Automatic Electronic Flap Barriers with Facial / Bio-Metric Recognition and RFID / EM Card Based access Control System with integrated Billing Management System under implementation of the Smart City Mission in Tirupati - [01 st Call]"	Rs.17,76,000/-
17/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Automatic Electronic Flap Barriers with Facial / Bio-Metric Recognition and RFID / EM Card Based access Control System with integrated Billing Management System under implementation of the Smart City Mission in Tirupati - [01 st Call] - Short Tender Notice	Rs. 35,48,882/-
18/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	"Solid Waste Management Project - Proposed construction of platform for windrow composting in Thukivakam" under implementation of the Smart City Mission in Tirupati - [01 st Call]	Rs. 95,33,690/-
19/19-20/Smart City/ TO, Dated: February 12 th , 2020	Tender Document for "Construction of CC Road at Thukivakam" under implementation of the Smart City Mission in Tirupati - [01 st Call]	Rs. 34,11,777/-

Tirupati Smart City Corporation Limited hereby issued this notice for inviting Tenders / Bids for the attention of all potential bidders for the above said Tenders / RFPs to participate and for other particulars please contact Executive Engineer during office working hours and above said detailed Tenders / RFPs can be downloaded from the e-procurement market place at <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in>

Sd/- P.S. GIRISHA, I.A.S., Managing Director
Tirupati Smart City Corporation Limited

The court said as the case will have ramifications across India, it should be streamed live

LAWYER
sion Bench of Justices Sanjib Banerjee and Kaushik Chandra.

Cost of live-streaming

"The court said as the case will have ramifications across India, it should be streamed live. The court also said that the Association, which wants it to be live-streamed, will bear the entire cost," Phiroze Edulji, the lawyer represented the Parsi Zoroastrian Association of Kolkatta, told journalists.

As per the arrangement suggested by the court, two cameras will be installed. These will be integrated for live-streaming on YouTube.

Mr. Edulji said that it is the first instance of live-streaming of a hearing being allowed in Bengal.

The main petition will be heard by the court of Justice Debangshu Basak.

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Five-day work week for govt. employees from month-end

State Cabinet decides to increase working hours by 45 minutes on weekdays

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

In a bid to increase efficiency and reduce costs, the State government has decided to implement a five-day work week for its employees from the month-end. The State Cabinet on Wednesday also decided to increase the working hours by 45 minutes on weekdays.

According to Central government guidelines, the five-day work week has so far been implemented in States such as Rajasthan, Bihar, Punjab, Delhi, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. Maharashtra's five-day work week proposal will help the government save on electricity, water, diesel vehicles and petrol. It will also allow government employees to raise their living standards by spending more time with their families.

"This proposal has been pending for a long time. We



Family time: The new schedule will allow State government employees to spend more time with their families. • FILE PHOTO

are happy the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government has implemented it," said Cabinet Minister and Sena leader Eknath Shinde.

Under the new schedule, government employees will have to work for eight hours a day, 176 hours a month, 2,112 hours a year. A government official said, "Current-

ly, the average working days in a year is 288. The work hours are seven hours 15 minutes per day, excluding 30 minutes of meal time. This leads to 174 working hours a month and 2,088 working hours a year. The extra work time will make up for the loss of working hours on Saturday and Sunday."

Exempted services

Other essential services include water resources workshops in Dapodi, Satara, Wardha, Akola, Ahmednagar, Ashti, Khadakwasla, Nashik and Nanded; regular establishment of regional works and projects under Central Resources and Water Resources and Public Departments in Nagpur and Bhandara; and regional workers on permanent and temporary employment.

Plan to cut Mumbai-Delhi travel time to 12 hours

WR's ₹4,011-crore Mission Raftar to convert the line into semi-high speed corridor

AJEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

The Western Railway (WR) would be executing works worth ₹4,011 crore to convert the Mumbai-Delhi line into a semi-high speed corridor allowing trains to run at speeds of up to 160 km per hour. The 1,384-km corridor now takes 15.5 hours to cover and Mission Raftar aims to reduce it to 12 hours.

"The detailed estimate for the work on the WR portion is ₹4,011 crore. This includes upgrading tracks, bridges, signalling and overhead equipment installations and the removal of some permanent speed restrictions. A combined estimate for the entire project is being prepared and will be finalised soon," Ravinder Bhakar, chief public relations officer, WR, said.

In the WR's proposal, civil works amount to ₹1,933 crore, of which ₹660 crore will go towards building boundary walls and fencing of the corridor. "A semi-high speed rail network needs a high factor of safety from trespassing and cattle being



The Mumbai Rajdhani takes 15.5 hours to cover the 1,384-km distance between Mumbai Central and New Delhi. • FILE PHOTO

run over. Not only the life of people trespassing or livestock but also the passengers aboard the train are put at risk," a railway official said.

The other major civil work includes closing of level crossing gates by providing road overbridges and subways, which would cost around ₹4,400 crore and will be financed under a separate budgetary head. The bridge over Vaitarna creek in Palghar will be replaced at a cost of ₹330 crore.

trains," a senior railway official said. The other costs would be to upgrade the signalling systems across the corridor to facilitate semi-high speeds.

WR officials, however, said speeds in the suburban sections of Mumbai would continue to run at the current maximum speed of 110 km per hour due to operational constraints. "Since long-distance trains share space with local trains, it is not feasible to run them at these speeds," a senior railway official said.

Coordinating zone

The entire project is expected to cost ₹10,070 crore for which the Railway Board has allocated ₹1,000 for 2020-21. The project is expected to be financed through extra budgetary resources. There are four railways zones involved in the project – Northern Railway, North Central Railway, West Central Railway and WR.

The Railway Board has nominated WR as the coordinating zone for getting the combined cost sanctioned.

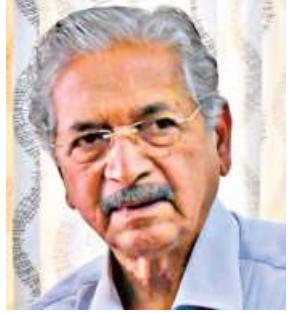
State to introduce Bill to make Marathi mandatory in schools

No action against motorists who get Marathi number plates

SHARAD VYAS
MUMBAI

The Maha Vikas Aghadi government will introduce a Bill in the upcoming budget session of the Assembly to make teaching Marathi mandatory in all schools up to Class X irrespective of the board they are affiliated to, Minister for Marathi Language Subhash Desai said on Wednesday.

Mr. Desai said the draft of the Bill is being prepared and the proposed legislation will be introduced in the budget session, which starts on February 24. Speaking to reporters, he said, "There are 25,000 schools in Maharashtra that do not teach Marathi. [Once the Bill is passed] it will be mandatory for all schools here to teach the Marathi language as part of their curriculum. The draft is being finalised. We are working on its intricacies," said Mr. Desai. Besides schools affiliated to the Maharashtra State Board of Se-



C Marathi is the local language and there is no harm in promoting the language in various ways possible

SUBHASH DESAI
Minister for Marathi Language

condary & Higher Secondary Education, there are a number of schools that follow the syllabus prescribed by education boards like ICSE, CBSE and IGCSE.

Mr. Desai also announced that no action will be taken against motorists who get number plates of vehicles

converted to Marathi. Though the Central government has time and again turned down the Maharashtra government's request of making the changes in the existing law to allow number plates in Marathi, Mr. Desai said there was nothing wrong in using the State language. "Marathi is the local language and there is no harm in promoting the language in various ways possible," he said.

The Minister said he has already written a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah urging him to ensure implementation of the three language formula. He said the Central government must ensure that Marathi as a language is promoted in Central offices, banks and post offices. "This has been a longstanding demand which has not been implemented by the Centre in the past decades. I have now written to the Union Minister to look into it," said the Minister.

Fashion designer Wendell Rodricks dies at 59 in Goa

He was also an author, gay rights activist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Renowned fashion designer Wendell Rodricks (59) died at his residence in Colvale village in Goa on Wednesday, a police official said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mapusa, Gajanan Prabhudesai confirmed the death of Rodricks. "The cause of his death is being ascertained and a police team has rushed to his residence for investigation," Mr. Prabhudesai said. A Padma Shri awardee, Rodricks was also an author, environmentalist and gay rights activist.

Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane tweeted, "Deeply saddened to hear about the sudden demise of my very good friend and designer, Wendell Rodricks. His excellency in his work and skills are irreplaceable and shall always be cherished." Mr. Rane added in his tweet, "We will truly miss him. My heartfelt condolences to his family and dear ones."

Rodricks was also accorded



Wendell Rodricks

the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts Et Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture in 2015. As a designer he has been credited with reviving the Kunbi saree, worn by the indigenous Kunbi tribal women of Goa. He was in the process of setting up a museum, Moda Goa Museum and Research Centre, which Rodricks had dedicated to clothes and fashion in Goa through the ages.

According to family sources, the funeral is scheduled for Thursday.

Seven FIRs lodged against 12 officials in irrigation project

ACB probing irregularities in awarding tenders to contractors

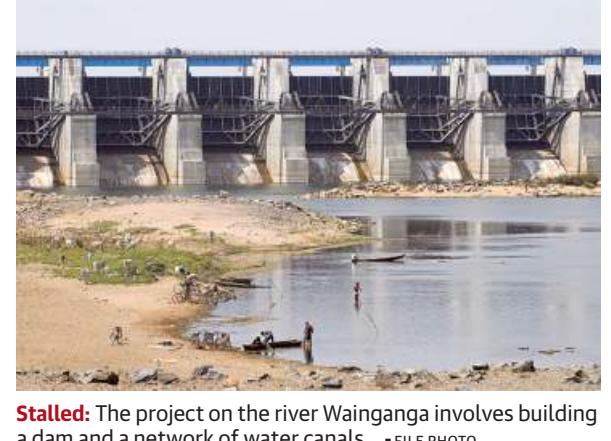
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NAGPUR

Maharashtra's Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Wednesday filed seven FIRs against 12 senior officers of the Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation (VIDC) for alleged irregularities in the award of tenders for the Gosekhurdh irrigation project, an official said.

A special team of the ACB Nagpur had been investigating the alleged irregularities in award of seven tenders to contractors in the irrigation project at Gosekhurdh in Bhandara district of Vidarbha region, the official said.

The ACB found that 12 senior officers, who were with the VIDC at that time, had committed irregularities in the award of the tenders.

Following this, the anti-graft agency on Tuesday lodged a complaint at Sadar police station in Nagpur and got the FIRs registered against the officers under the Prevention of Corrup-



Stalled: The project on the river Wainganga involves building a dam and a network of water canals. • FILE PHOTO

tion Act on Wednesday, the official said. Most of the officers named in the FIRs worked in engineering and accounts departments.

In the past, too, the ACB, which has been probing alleged irregularities in execution of the project, has filed multiple FIRs. The project on the river Wainganga, coming under the VIDC's jurisdiction, involves construction of a dam and a net-

work of water canals.

Irregularities were found in Mokhaburdi, Osalamaha, Nerla (Paghora), Gosekhurdh left canal, Gosekhurdh right canal and Ghodajari canal segments, the official said. The irrigation project was approved in March 1983 at an estimated cost of ₹372.22 crore and was expected to be completed by March 1990. However, it still remains incomplete.

Five killed in pickup van accident

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MEHSANA

Five people, including a minor, were killed and 12 others injured when a pickup van ferrying labourers rammed into a tree in Gujarat's Mehsana district on Wednesday, police said.

About 20 labourers were travelling in the van when the driver lost control of the vehicle and rammed into a tree near Kheralu on Malekpur-Siddhpur road around 3 a.m., an official from Kheralu police station said. The injured were taken to hospitals in Vadnagar and Kheralu.

Section 144 imposed in North Goa after intelligence on terror threat

Law will be in effect for 60 days, from February 11 to April 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), banning unlawful assembly of people, has been imposed in North Goa district following intelligence inputs about a possible terror threat along the western coast.

North Goa District Magistrate R. Menaka, in a notification issued on Monday, said the order imposing CrPC Section 144 will be in effect for 60 days, from February 11 to April 10, unless withdrawn earlier.

The notification said Sec-

to take speedy measures to prevent danger to human life, and thwart and prevent any type of terrorist activities which may affect the security of the State and create disturbance of public order and tranquillity," Ms. Menaka said in the notification.

The district magistrate has ordered that the owners of houses, buildings, hotels, lodgings, private guest houses, and paying guest accommodations of religious bodies strictly verify the antecedents of all persons before letting out their premises on lease or rent.

"It is absolutely necessary

Expressing outrage



Irate: Members of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad take out a rally demanding justice for the 24-year-old lecturer who was set ablaze at Hinganghat, in Nagpur on Wednesday. • SUDARSHAN

MNS activists attack stalkers outside school

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NASHIK

Activists of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) beat up youths outside a school for harassing girls in Nashik city.

According to sources in the MNS and the local police, the incident occurred on Tuesday afternoon outside the school in Shalmal area of the city. No police complaint has been filed in the case. Sources said the youths were passing comments at girls coming out of the school.

Poorer sections of society will benefit from move: economist

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AURANGABAD

Even as two senior ministers in the Maharashtra government have expressed divergent views on providing free electricity to people who consume up to 100 units of power, city-based economist H.M. Desarda on Wednesday supported the feasibility of such a measure on the lines of the one in Delhi.

State Power Minister Nitin Raut had last week said the Maharashtra government was considering a proposal to provide free electricity to domestic users whose

monthly consumption is up to 100 units.

The proposal is on the lines of the 100% subsidy being given to domestic consumers in power tariff up to 200 units by the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi.

However, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar later said such a plan might not be feasible in Maharashtra at present. "Power usage up to 100 units can be made free for domestic consumers if we follow the Delhi government pattern. The move will help save their efforts and an automatic controller can curb malpractices," Mr. Desarda said.

Goa CM to meet Archbishop who sought rollback of 'divisive' CAA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PANAJI

Days after the Archbishop of Goa and Daman, Rev. Filipe Neri Ferrao, urged the Centre to revoke the "divisive and discriminatory" Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday said he would meet Rev. Ferrao in a couple of days.

Asked if the meeting would be over the issue of the new citizenship law, Mr. Sawant said, "I am going to meet him, that's what it is." The Archbishop had recently urged the Central government to "immediately and unconditionally" revoke the "divisive and discriminatory" CAA and stop quashing the "right to dissent".

Rev. Ferrao also appealed to the government not to implement the proposed nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR).

However, BJP State general secretary and former Lok Sabha member Narendra Sawaikar on Monday termed Rev. Ferrao's statement against the CAA "divisive". Mr. Sawaikar asked why the Archbishop was not objecting to Article 30 of the Constitution which gives minorities the right to establish educational institutions in the country.

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TTD lifts restrictions on sale of big laddus

TIRUMALA
The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has resolved to lift restrictions on the sale of big laddus and make them easily available to devotees at its counters. TTD additional EO A.V. Dhama Reddy said on Wednesday that the big laddus (popularly known as Kalyanotsavam laddus) were in great demand and hence were sold at exorbitant rates in the black market. Devotees can now buy the desired number of laddus at ₹200 each.

Customer cheats Amazon of ₹1.5 lakh

BENGALURU
The police are on the lookout for a man who allegedly duped Amazon by replacing the products he had purchased with fake items and then claiming a refund. In this manner, the accused, Clifford Navis, duped the retail giant of ₹1.5 lakh in the last one month, the Kadugodi police said. The case came to light when the in-charge of the sales department was checking inventory. The accused bought a branded wristwatch, expensive electronics items, and jeans.

Zaheerabad rape accused dies in road accident

SANGAREDDY
Somachary, one of the accused in the rape of a petty trader near Zaheerabad, died while fleeing from the police on Wednesday. The Zaheerabad police rushed to Bidar to nab three of the suspects staying at a lodge there. The police nabbed Pawan, while brothers Somachary and Brahmachary escaped in a car. The car, driven at a high speed, skidded and a fell into a field. Somachary died on the spot and Brahmachary was injured.

CAG faults fiscal probity of Kerala police in procurement

Police Chief violated guidelines, 25 INSAS rifles not accounted for, says report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, General and Social Sector, has faulted Kerala's State Police Chief (SPC) Loknath Behera for violating the statutory guidelines established to ensure fiscal probity in the procurement of equipment for modernising the force.

The CAG report for the year ended March 2018, which was tabled in the Assembly on Wednesday, also flagged the "shortage of 25 numbers of 5.56 mm INSAS rifle and 12,061 live cartridges".

The finding created a sensation in the media and prompted the Opposition to highlight the implications for national security.

NIA probe sought
Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala demanded a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into the "missing ordnance". He said the CAG report also necessitated a CBI inquiry

Damning findings by CAG

■ 25 assault rifles, 12,061 rounds not accounted for	■ Police attempt cover-up using dummy ammunition	■ Luxury cars for officers instead of hardy vehicles for police work
■ Unauthorised purchase of bulletproof vehicles for VVIP use	■ Deficit of station vehicles delays police response	■ Use of obsolete weapons due to lack of modern firearms
■ Lack of digital communication impedes anti-Maoist operations	■ Shortage of staff in forensic labs	■ No separate account for Modernisation of Police Force (MOPF) scheme
■ Violation of CVC norms and store purchase guidelines in procurement	■ Luxury villas for SPC, ADGPs using fund to build quarters for subordinate officers	■ Proceeds from vehicle auction not accounted

against Mr. Behera.

The State Police said it would answer the points raised by the CAG to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), which has the final word on audit findings.

The CAG said the SPC had "persistently" violated Modernisation of Police Force (MOPF) guidelines by purchasing bulletproof luxury

vehicles for VVIP use instead of vans for law enforcement.

Auditors found that 15% of the vehicles purchased by the police were luxury cars for the exclusive use of "high-level officers and non-operational units" like the CB-CID.

Ideally, the SPC should have used the funds to make up for the dire deficit of vehicles for VVIP use instead of vans for law enforcement.

icles in police stations. The CAG found that the police headquarters had diverted funds meant for construction of staff quarters to subordinate officers to build villas for the "SPC and ADGPs."

Auditors said the Police Department had repeatedly violated Store Purchase Manual norms and guidelines issued by the Chief Vigilance Commissioner in the procurement of a wide range of costly equipment. The CAG also said the lack of state-of-the-art digital "mobile radios" had hobbled anti-Maoist operations.

CM defends police

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan did not comment on the CAG's report, but had dismissed similar allegations raised against Mr. Behera by Congress legislator P.T. Thomas in the Assembly on Tuesday. In the wake of the findings in the report, KPCC president Mullappally Ramachandran, demanded a probe into the references to Mr. Behera.

Don't demolish Secretariat, court tells Telangana govt.

Present building strong enough, say petitioners

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

The existing Secretariat building should not be disturbed until the State government takes a final decision on construction of a new Secretariat, the Telangana High Court said.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Raghvendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy passed this order after hearing a couple of PIL petitions challenging the government's decision to demolish the existing Secretariat building. The Bench said the petitioners were at liberty to approach it if the Cabinet took a decision to demolish the Secretariat building.

The petitions were filed separately by Congress Malakgiri MP A. Revanth Reddy and professor P.L. Vishweshwar Rao seeking an order to restrain the government from bringing down the Secretariat building. They contended that the present Secretariat building was strong enough to last several more years.

Presenting arguments on



File photo of Telangana CM K. Chandrasekhar Rao laying the foundation stone for the new Secretariat buildings.

behalf of the State, Additional Advocate General J. Ramchander Rao told the Bench that the government had not yet taken any specific decision on demolition of Secretariat building and construction of a new one. The matter was at the conceptual stage and the government invited designs from national and international consultants for a new Secretariat.

Some proposals had

come and some were yet to be received, the AAG said. The matter was in "premature stage" and hence the court could not review the government's action, the AAG submitted to the court. A process was involved in taking a final call on the matter and beginning to work on the new building. In this interregnum period, the courts cannot review the government's proposals and the petitions would not sustain, Mr. Rao said.

Recalling the order it had passed during the previous hearing on January 27 seeking information about the proposed new Secretariat building's design and spaces to be made available to different departments, the Bench said the government was bound to provide clear details on the matter. Why the government had planned earlier for demolition of the existing Secretariat building when the designs for the new Secretariat were not finalised, the bench sought to know.

A.P. Chief Minister apprises Modi of three-capital plan



STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday apprised Prime Minister Narendra Modi of the proposal to develop Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool as the Legislative, Executive and Judicial capitals respectively.

It had been approved by the State Cabinet, and the Assembly had passed the

A.P Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020, Mr. Reddy told Mr. Modi at their long-pending meeting that lasted about one-and-a-half hour. He also requested Mr. Modi to grant Special Category Status to the State.

Mr. Reddy said the State government had conceived the three-capital plan to facilitate balanced development.

Baby dies after dinner at star hotel

Parents and brother admitted to hospital; police collect food samples

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

A 23-month-old boy died under suspicious circumstances at Begumpet here on Tuesday. The infant, his brother and parents developed adverse health reactions after four to nine hours of having food at a star hotel they were staying in.

Apart from this possibility, the Begumpet police are investigating if they had food at any other place.

Ravi Narayana and Sri Viya, native of Khammam, work as software engineers in Bengaluru. Apart from the infant, the couple has a seven-year-old son. They came to Hyderabad on Monday to process work related to visa stamping at the U.S. Consulate in Begumpet. The family members checked into a star hotel in the same locality.

Begumpet police inspector P. Srinivasa Rao said the family had breakfast, lunch

and dinner at the hotel on Monday. For dinner, they had Indian sorted bread and paneer curry. They went out in the evening. The police are trying to find out if they had food outside the hotel.

"Mr. Narayana started to vomit around 1 a.m. on Tuesday. As he felt uneasy, he went to KIMS Hospitals. Family members told the police that all of them experienced a similar adverse reaction later. When he was

at the hospital, Mr. Narayana received a call that his younger son's body had turned cold," Mr. Rao said.

Viscera samples from the infant's body were sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory.

Police collected food samples from the hotel. They spoke to people who had the same dinner and found that their condition was stable.

The couple are stable and have been discharged.

Karnataka BJP MLAs meet central leaders

Katti and Yogeshwar seek berths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Two senior MLAs of the Bharatiya Janata Party, disappointed over not getting Cabinet berths, separately took their case to central leaders in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Former Minister and MLA Umesh Katti, whose name is believed to have been part of the list of probable Ministers, went to Delhi along with his brother. He met BJP president J.P. Nadda and reportedly sought the intervention of the central leadership to set right the "injustice" meted out to him. Speculation is rife that he sought Rajya Sabha seat for his brother.

Mr. Katti is said to be upset over not getting Cabinet berth even in the second chance. The appointment of several other MLAs from his

home district of Belagavi as Ministers despite their being juniors to him has reportedly angered Mr. Katti.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa did not induct any of the senior BJP MLAs during the recent expansion. The exercise was confined to inducting only the newly elected MLAs who migrated from other parties. He has, however, said Mr. Katti would be eventually inducted.

Former Minister C.P. Yogeshwar, who too was reportedly among the ministerial probables, camped in Delhi for a few days to take up his case with the central leaders. According to sources, he met central leaders and expressed anguish over not getting ministerial opportunity despite playing a key role in wooing MLAs from rival parties.

Ethnic products a big hit among Amazon shoppers

Kerala's SC & ST department has launched about 240 products on the e-commerce platform

C.P. SAJIT

Amazon has been witnessing a crowd of online shoppers for ethnic products ever since 'Gadhika' products were launched on the e-commerce platform by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe Development Department of Kerala in December last year.

Gadhika products – natural forest produce and eco-friendly handicraft made from bamboo, coconut and coconut shell, and ornaments, food products, clothes, Wayanad turmeric, honey, pickles, puttu kuttu, etc. – have been hand-crafted by artisans and others belonging to various

tribes and the Scheduled Castes. Though the list of products has been uploaded on Amazon for six months now, it was officially launched only in December and within a month the sale touched over ₹1 lakh, says Renjith Balaji, administrator, hand-holding cell of the department.

Slow pace
“We are moving at a slow pace as it is important to have enough stock of products, considering the huge response we have received within a month,” he told *The Hindu*. Besides, coordinating and bringing the artisans under a single umbrella is necessary to increase the production and improve quality.

As many as 240 products have been uploaded on the e-commerce platform and people can access them by searching Gadhika products. Products made by about 80 beneficiaries have been uploaded. The products are reasonably priced.

The acceptance for the tribal products was also visible at the tribal festival Gadhika held in Kannur recently. The exhibition could attract over 50,000 people and there was a record sale of over ₹45 lakh.

Mr. Renjith says the government has decided to give ₹50,000 to each entrepreneur as grant to increase the production and improve quality.



Natural forest produce like honey and handicrafts made of bamboo and coconut shells are available on Amazon.

Kerala to ready coastal zone management plan

SC had sought list of CRZ violations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here on Wednesday decided to prepare the Kerala State Coastal Zone Management Plan in a time-bound manner under the revised guidelines issued by the Centre in January 2019.

The National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS), Thiruvananthapuram, has been entrusted with the preparation of the plan. The meeting decided to make technical expertise and other facilities available for the NCESS to complete the plan before March 31.

It also resolved to seek legal opinion before filing a



reply to the Supreme Court directive to submit a comprehensive list of CRZ violations in Kerala.

Chief Secretary Tom Jose, Additional Chief Secretary T.K. Jose, Environment secretary Usha Titus and Law Secretary Aravinda Babu attended the meeting.

He claimed that he was in a Lamborghini that was behind the Bentley. “The Bentley was being driven by Balu [Balakrishna], who for long has been with me,” he said.

B.R. Ravikanth Gowda, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic), however, reiterated the fact that the police had “strong proof to confirm that it was Nalapad who was driving the car.” “The car has a defective number plate and the colour was changed from red to black before the accident,” he added.

The Sadashivanagar police filed an FIR against Balakrishna, 27. Officials said he had lied to protect Nalapad. He surrendered on Tuesday claiming that he was the one who drove the car.

IN BRIEF



FASTag to be available free of charge for 15 days

NEW DELHI
The National Highways Authority of India has decided to waive the FASTag registration fee between February 15 and February 29, the government said. Road users can visit any point-of-sale location with a valid vehicle registration certificate and get a FASTag free of cost, it said. PTI

3 priests attack visitor with sword, arrested

BERHAMPUR
Three priests of the Tara Tarini hill shrine in Odisha's Ganjam district, who had attacked and injured a visitor by a sword in a tussle over amount of 'dakshina' were arrested by the Purushottampur police on Wednesday, said police.

NEET scam: CB-CID seeks UIDAI's help

CHENNAI
The Crime Branch-CID of the Tamil Nadu police has written to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), seeking its assistance to track down those suspected of having acted as proxies in the sensational NEET scam. Investigators have shared the photographs and biometrics of suspects with the UIDAI authorities.

Missing idol traced to London museum

CHENNAI
The Idol Wing of the CID has traced the bronze idol of Thirumangai Azhvar that went missing from a Kumbakonam temple in Tamil Nadu about 60 years ago to the Ashmolean museum in London. The museum had purchased the idol in 1967 from an auction house for about \$2,340.

Court offers lawyer to Nirbhaya convict

A condemned convict is entitled to legal aid: judge

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday offered Pawan Gupta, one of the four death row convicts in the December 16, 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case, an advocate, noting that a condemned convict is entitled to legal aid.

Additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana adjourned the hearing for Thursday and told Pawan, who has removed his lawyer, that he could choose from a list of empanelled advocates to represent him in the case.

Nirbhaya's parents and the Delhi government had on Tuesday moved the court seeking fresh death warrants



Awaiting justice: Nirbhaya's mother protesting outside the trial court in New Delhi on Wednesday. PTI

for the four convicts, after the Supreme Court granted liberty to the authorities to approach the trial court for issuance of a fresh date for the execution of these convicts.

The trial court had on January 31 stayed the execution of the four convicts – Mukesh Kumar Singh (32), Pawan Gupta (25), Vinay Kumar Sharma (26) and Akshay Kumar (31).

LPG refill price hiked by up to ₹149

But subsidy raised for domestic users

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The price of the non-subsidised LPG refill cylinders weighing 14.2 kg was on Wednesday increased by between ₹144.50 and ₹149, the steepest since January 2014.

Meanwhile, the Congress flayed the price hike and accused the Centre of 'electrocuted' household budgets. "They have struck the pockets of the public with current," said party spokesperson Randeep Surjewala.

In Kolkata, the Trinamool Congress and the CPI(M) also slammed the BJP-led government and alleged that the objective was to avenge the saffron party's drubbing in the Delhi Assembly polls.

(With PTI inputs)

₹291.48. In January 2014, the prices had gone up by ₹220 to ₹1,241 per cylinder. Subsidy under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has been increased from ₹174.86 to ₹321.48 per cylinder.

However, the government almost doubled the subsidy for domestic users. While in Delhi the cost per cylinder rose from ₹714 to ₹858.50 compared to the January 1 rate, it went up by ₹149 to ₹896 in Kolkata. The price in Mumbai rose by ₹145 to ₹829.50 and by ₹147 to ₹881 in Chennai.

The subsidy to domestic users has been increased from ₹153.86 per cylinder to



T.N. HC stays order against A.R. Rahman

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Madras HC on Wednesday stayed the order passed by a Commissioner of Goods and Services Tax and Central Excise on October 17, accusing music composer A.R. Rahman of evading payment of service tax. The court directed him to pay arrears to the tune of ₹6.79 crore, excluding interest, from April 2013 to June 2017, along with a penalty of ₹6.79 crore.

The court observed that the names of Mr. Asthana

Victim's mother sits on a protest outside court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Nirbhaya's mother Asha Devi broke down at the Delhi court requesting a fresh date to execute the four death row convicts in the gang rape and murder case and sat on a protest outside the court premises.

"I too have some rights," she said after the court offered a lawyer to one of the four

convicts, Pawan Gupta. After the hearing, Ms. Devi joined a protest led by women's rights activist Yogita Bhayana outside the Patiala House Courts premises.

"There is no appeal pending in any court in the country... I appeal to the Supreme Court to issue the death warrant as this court (trial) is in no mood to issue one," she said.

Except Pawan, all convicts have exhausted their legal remedy to file a curative petition before the Supreme Court.

The President has also rejected the mercy pleas of

Mukesh, Akshay and Vinay.

The four convicts have since been sentenced to death by a local court.

The order has been upheld by the High Court and the Supreme Court.

Delhi court raps CBI on Asthana case probe
Accused with bigger role roaming free'SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A city court on Wednesday pulled up the CBI over the probe in a case against its former Special Director Rakesh Asthana and others, wondering why "an accused having a bigger role" was roaming free but the agency arrested its own Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP).

Special CBI Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal placed the chargesheet filed by the agency against Manoj Prasad, an accused in the case, for consideration on February 19. The CBI chargesheet gave a clean chit to Mr. Asthana and DSP Devender Kumar.

The court observed that

and Mr. Kumar, who was arrested in the case in 2018 and later released on bail, were mentioned in column 12 of the chargesheet as there was no evidence against them.

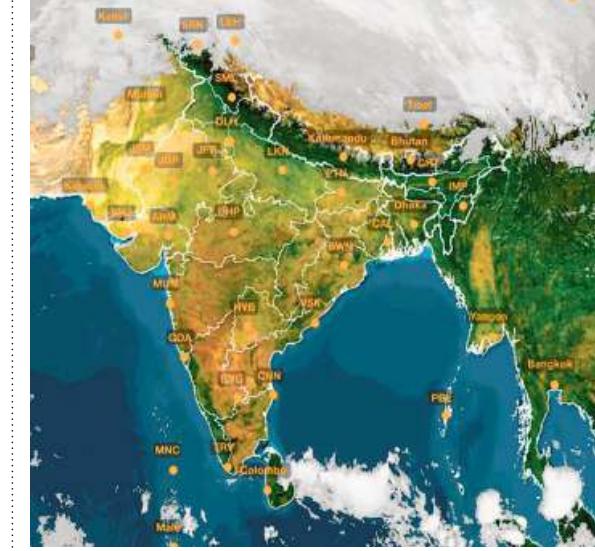
The CBI filed the charge sheet on Tuesday, a day before the matter was to come up at the Delhi High Court.

Rakesh Asthana

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

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 Thursday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir. Cold wave conditions likely at isolated places over Odisha.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	28.0	11.0	Kozhikode	—	36.0	24.0
Ahmedabad	—	32.0	19.0	Kurnool	—	32.0	20.0
Aizawl	—	19.0	8.0	Lucknow	—	24.0	10.0
Altahabad	—	27.0	9.0	Madurai	—	35.0	22.0
Bengaluru	—	30.0	17.0	Mangaluru	—	35.0	22.0
Bhopal	—	28.0	13.0	Mumbai	—	31.0	24.0
Bhubaneswar	—	30.0	13.0	Mysuru	—	25.0	8.0
Chandigarh	—	24.0	9.0	New Delhi	—	30.0	20.0
Chennai	—	31.0	24.0	Patna	—	25.0	9.0
Coimbatore	—	32.0	21.0	Poole Blair	—	31.0	25.0
Dehradun	—	26.0	8.0	Puducherry	—	31.0	23.0
Gangtok	—	16.0	8.0	Pune	—	29.0	17.0
Goa	—	35.0	23.0	Rajkot	—	28.0	15.0
Guwahati	—	28.0	11.0	Ranchi	—	25.0	10.0
Hubballi	—	31.0	19.0	Shillong	—	16.0	6.0
Hyderabad	—	31.0	20.0	Shimla	—	19.0	8.0
Imphal	—	23.0	5.0	Srinagar	—	—	—
Jaipur	—	25.0	11.0	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.0	24.0
Kochi	—	35.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	34.0	23.0
Kohima	—	16.0	7.0	Vijayawada	—	31.0	22.0
Kolkata	—	27.0	13.0	Visakhapatnam	—	30.0	23.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)
Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday
CITIES SO NO CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE
Ahmedabad 67 .72 .34 .181 .134 ...
Bengaluru .9 .42 .59 .85 ...
Chennai 19 .10 .33 .51 .79 ...
Delhi 10 191 .91 .392 .350 ...
Hyderabad .7 .31 .15 .85 .89 ...
Kolkata 14 .84 .14 .250 .197 ...
Lucknow .9 .74 .57 .306 .127 ...
Mumbai 13 .50 .31 .127 .127 ...
Pune 71 .22 .76 .104 .87 ...
Visakhapatnam 11 .30 .48 .104 .101 ...
In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Balabaghari, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 400, indicating a very poor level of pollution.
NO: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Cabinet clears Major Ports Authority Bill

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Major Ports Authority Bill 2020, which will be introduced in the ongoing session of Parliament, Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said.

The Bill, approved by the Cabinet at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will replace the existing regulations under a 1963 law, he said.

The Centre for Science and Environment, in 2018, had criticised the Bill. "The existing draft provides inadequate representation to States... The States should have a say in final decision making on pesticide, as they have the best understanding on the agro-ecological climate, environment and soil conditions," it said in a statement.

The 12 major ports in India would get a boost through the new law, he said, adding that disputes with private companies and PPP operators had been cropping up, but the existing law had no provisions to deal with them.

The new law would also help in improving infrastructure, he added.

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S. No.	Segment Type	E-tender No.	No of sections Units	Last Date/Time for on-line submission E-Tender
1	Train Side Vending	IRCTC/SCZ/1/NIT-20/TSV/2020	07 sections	15:00hrs of 28.02.2020
2	Jan Ahaar	IRCTC/SCZ/1/NIT-21/JA/2020	02 units	12:00hrs of 04.03.2020
3	Refreshment Room	IRCTC/SCZ/1/NIT-22/R/2020	07 units	15:00hrs of 04.03.2020

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S. No. :- P.6/EST/ITC/V Ad/2020/15525 Date : 1/02/2020

Advertisement for the Post of Vice-Chancellor

Applications are invited for the post of Vice-Chancellor, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Shekhawati University, Sikar (Rajasthan). Applicants are advised to send their Bio-data/C.V. by post/Email in prescribed format so as to reach the Registrar, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Shekhawati University, Sikar (Rajasthan) on or before 28 February 2020 upto 05:00 P.M. The appointment of the Vice-Chancellor shall be for a period of three years or till attaining the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier. The Vice-Chancellor being the Academic as well as Administrative Head, is expected to be a visionary with proven Leadership Qualities; Administrative Capability as well as Teaching and Research Credentials. The candidate may visit the University website www.shekhawati.ac.in for format of C.V. and guide-lines.

Application for the post of Vice-Chancellor, Pandit Deend



Birds of a feather

India cannot peg its strategic plans on the chemistry between Trump and Modi

When he visits India for the first time later this month, U.S. President Donald Trump can expect thronging crowds in Gujarat and perhaps a substantive discussion on trade policy in New Delhi, but more than anything, it is his growing bonhomie with Prime Minister Narendra Modi that is expected to steal the limelight. Indeed, this chemistry was evident during the four times that they met in 2019. The pinnacle of those encounters for Mr. Modi was undoubtedly the public relations victory that he won when Mr. Trump graced the 'Howdy Modi' event in Houston before some 50,000 Indian-Americans. Now Mr. Modi is returning the favour perhaps, as he has, in Mr. Trump's words, promised an attendance of five to seven million, from the airport to the new Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel cricket stadium, the world's largest; here, they will address the "Kem chho Trump" event before an expected 1.25 lakh people. While there will always be areas of untapped potential in bilateral cooperation, things could hardly be better between the two nations at this time of global turbulence, in trade and security. On the former issue, despite skirmishes surrounding tariffs in specific sectors, such as medical devices, and counter-tariffs following the U.S.'s termination of its Generalised System of Preferences toward India last year, there is hope for at least a limited trade deal – pegged at \$10-billion – that could take a measure of stress out of the protracted closed-door negotiations. Prospects look brighter still on defence cooperation. India is reportedly moving toward approving a \$2.6-billion deal for 24 Lockheed Martin-built MH-60 Seahawk helicopters. An agreement to buy a \$1.867-billion integrated air defence weapons system is also on the cards.

Notwithstanding this slew of positive, if incremental, cooperative advances, it is the deeper fault lines across the two countries' domestic polities that could, in the longer-term, impact the prospects for smooth cooperation in the bilateral space. For instance, the Indian government's recent policy shifts regarding special status for Kashmir as well as the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register have spooked some U.S. Democrats, including Senators and lawmakers in the House of Representatives. Some have explicitly voiced concerns about the impact in terms of India's commitment to remaining a tolerant, pluralist democracy. In this context, if the November 2020 presidential election puts a Democrat in the White House, it could potentially impact some of India's plans. Even if Mr. Trump wins a second term, deepening Congressional opposition to India-friendly White House policies could endanger bilateral prospects. In this sense, there are limits to how much India can peg its strategic plans on the personal chemistry between its leader and the U.S. President.

Waiting for the winner

Ireland's election results threw up no definite winner, opening up the possibility of a churn

Ireland's general elections on Saturday have thrown up many paradoxes, offering few clues about the next government, or the future of the country's three largest parties. Fianna Fáil, which has been out of power since 2011, has topped the tally. However, its 38 seats leaves it far short of the requisite 80 for a clear majority in the 160-strong Irish Parliament. Sinn Féin, the country's Republican party, has, perhaps with good reason, proclaimed itself the real winner: 37 seats, up 14 over the 2016 polls, and its best result. Yet, such a performance does not guarantee the party, with past links to the IRA, an automatic path to government in the current electoral arithmetic, notwithstanding the protestations of its leader, Mary Lou McDonald. The obverse is the position of the governing centre-right Fine Gael of Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, now relegated to third place with 35 seats, down 15 from the previous election. To be sure, Mr. Varadkar earned international recognition for steering Dublin's negotiations with London to protect the soft border with Belfast, and in turn the peace on either side of the island's political divide. The country is also forecast to emerge among the fastest growing economies in the European Union in 2020. But this putative achievement may only have brought into sharp focus voter disenchantment with Fine Gael's domestic record.

Ireland has experienced severe shortfalls in affordable housing and health-care delivery, potentially rendering the party's return to government politically more delicate. All the same, it would be premature to rule it out of contention for power in any coalition. Sinn Féin is said to have benefited from the prevailing discontent. In the run-up to the polls on Saturday, both Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil had ruled out an alliance with the left-wing Sinn Féin. But Micheál Martin, Fianna Fáil leader, has not dismissed working with Ms. McDonald even while emphasising differences over taxation policy and her party's IRA past. She is believed to have sent out feelers to Labour, the Greens and independents to explore forming a coalition. Sinn Féin has in any case already set out its priorities, to work for the country's unification with Northern Ireland. This stance will boost nationalist sentiment across the border, where Sinn Féin has consistently opposed Brexit. Under Britain's EU withdrawal deal, Belfast is de facto member of the bloc's single market. Sinn Féin's participation in a new government would almost inevitably alter Ireland's political configuration. But going by the 70-day stalemate in 2016, negotiations among the main parties could prove protracted. As deliberations commence, the traditional two parties must note that it is a democratic imperative now to engage Sinn Féin with an open mind.

Trump's march and the Sanders factor

The U.S. President's tenure and its baggage have given a new meaning to the term 'American exceptionalism'



SANKARAN KRISHNA

For approximately half the U.S. electorate, a nightmare that began with the unlikely election of Donald Trump to the presidency, is beginning to look as if it may continue into a second term. The U.S. President's current approval rating (at 49%, in one poll) is the highest it has been since the day he took office. Initial hopes that his evident venality and incompetence may lead to an early termination of his presidency have gradually given way to a shocked realisation that no matter what he does, says, or tweets, there is no diminution in his support among those who voted for him in the 2016 election or in the Republican party. Indeed, as the abortive attempt to impeach him underlined, his command over the party is stronger than ever today.

Nothing stuns

The eruption of each outrageous scandal followed by Mr. Trump's brazen strategy of a scorched-earth counterattack has led the U.S. to a point where it is now impossible to conceive of any scenario that could lead his supporters to rethink their allegiance. A seemingly hyperbolic comment made by Mr. Trump way back in January 2016, when he was a complete outsider among the aspirants for the Republican nomination ("I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters") is reality today.

This presidency and the scandals of the last three years, on both domestic and foreign policy fronts, have given new meaning to the term "American exceptional-

ism". Where it once stood for the idea, at least among the patriotic faithful, that the United States was a beacon for democracy and human rights, a land of opportunity for all comers, and unvested in the social hierarchies of Europe, today it signifies a country that elected, and may re-elect, a bigoted, climate-change-denying carnival barker incapable of distinguishing public office from private self.

Sanders and the Democrats

If Mr. Trump and his supporters present a united bloc impervious to self-doubt, the opposite is true of the Democrats. A crowded field of contenders caught in a seemingly endless series of primaries and caucuses with arcane rules has meant no candidate has really pulled clear of the pack. More importantly, Democrats are deeply divided in terms of a strategy to defeat Mr. Trump. One of the front runners, Bernie Sanders, is running on an explicitly socialist platform that clearly energises racial minorities, youth, poorer sections of society, women, and liberals looking for an alternative to a two-party system bereft of ideas in the face of global warming, endless war, and unprecedented polarisation of wealth.

Yet, socialism or anything vaguely associated with the term has long been anathema for many in the U.S. Mr. Sanders's ideas on socialised medical care, free college education for everyone, and a more progressive tax structure evoke incredulity. Similar incredulity, however, is never expressed about the irrationality of a trillion dollar defence budget year after year; nor is there much recognition that in other industrialised democracies, variants on "socialized" medicine vastly outperform the U.S., or that college education is highly subsidised and incomparably cheaper in such countries.



The mainstream media's conviction that the candidacy of Mr. Sanders will ensure Mr. Trump's victory – one evidently shared by many in the Democratic Party leadership – is perplexing. He is the one candidate who seems to genuinely energise those groups that were central to Obama's victories in 2008 and 2012: racial minorities, youth, and first-time voters. The self-confident pundits who prematurely dismiss Mr. Sanders prospects may do well to remember that even as late as the evening of November 9, 2016, as the first results were coming in, none of them gave Donald Trump any chance of defeating Hillary Clinton.

Carceral state

In a form of slow violence that has escaped the attention of many both domestically and abroad, the U.S., with just 5% of the world's population is now home to about 25% of the world's prison population (2015 data), the overwhelming majority of whom are black or brown minorities. A criminal justice system thoroughly vitiated by racism has interacted with a prison-industrial complex to produce a situation in which a young black man has a higher chance of ending up in prison than he does in college. In deindustrialising States across much of the U.S., one of the few growth industries is prisons staffed by poor whites guarding poorer blacks and Hispanics.

Recent scholarship and quality

investigative journalism have established beyond doubt that the emergence of the carceral state in the alleged "land of the free" was a bipartisan effort. Since the early 1980s, first Republicans and then Democrats competed fiercely to be seen as the party of "law and order", of being "tough on crime", and backing the relentless pursuit of the "war on drugs" – all euphemisms for appealing to the worst instincts, fears, and racism of whites seen as key to winning elections. At least three important remaining Democratic aspirants are tainted by their role in the creation and maintenance of this carceral state: Joe Biden, Mike Bloomberg and Pete Buttigieg.

Mr. Biden was a high-ranking Senator and Chair of the Senate Judiciary committee during the 1980s and 1990s, and instrumental in passing legislation that produced the carceral state. The billionaire Bloomberg is former Republican Mayor of New York City and architect of the city police's notorious "stop-and-frisk program", which racially profiled blacks and Latin Americans leading to disproportionate levels of arrests, often for trivial degrees of drug possession or petty crimes, if even that. Mr. Bloomberg has very recently, and unconvincingly, apologised for the disastrous results of "stop-and-frisk". Mr. Buttigieg pursued similarly "tough" (read racialised) policies during his tenure as Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, from 2012-20, and has been unrepentant, even proud, of this aspect of his record.

It is hard to see any of these three candidates energising minorities or the young given this track record. Meanwhile conservative whites susceptible to such dog-whistle politics may well stay with Mr. Trump and his unapologetically white supremacist views: why opt for the ersatz when you already have the real thing? Mr.

Trump's faithful often cite the fact that he "says it like it is" as their reason for supporting him.)

Besides Mr. Sanders, at this moment the other seemingly strong and viable candidate in terms of appealing to the constituencies that could help the Democrats defeat Mr. Trump is Sen. Elizabeth Warren. Her impressive track record as economic manager (she was part of the committee that oversaw the post-2008 financial crisis recovery programme, and pushed for greater regulations over banking and finance, and for consumer protection) and the calm competence she radiates on matters of public policy could be an ideal complement to Mr. Sanders.

Trump's cards

Besides the advantages of incumbency, Mr. Trump has a huge re-election war chest, the largest in U.S. history as a matter of fact; Republicans (like right-wing parties all across the world) have a pronounced advantage over Democrats in manipulating social media in their favour and against opponents; and polls indicate that as much as 63% of the electorate approves of the way Mr. Trump is handling the economy.

Those are dispiriting facts. Yet, if the long and unpredictable primary season ends with Mr. Sanders and Ms. Warren (or Ms. Warren and Mr. Sanders) as the Democratic ticket, they are likely to bring energy, the newest voters, and alienated minorities into the Democratic fold in a way that none of the other candidates is likely to do. All that may not be enough to unseat the current occupant – but at this point in time, it would appear to be the Democrats' best bet.

Sankaran Krishna teaches politics at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu, U.S.

Nutrition and the Budget's fine print

While there are well-equipped schemes to address malnutrition, funding and policy gaps are problem areas



JAYASHREE B. & R. GOPINATH

A few months ago, the Global Hunger Index, reported that India suffers from "serious" hunger, ranked 102 out of 117 countries, and that just a tenth of children between six to 23 months are fed a minimum acceptable diet. The urgency around nutrition was reflected in the Union Finance Minister's Budget speech, as she referred to the "unprecedented" scale of developments under the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition, or POSHAN Abhiyaan, the National Nutrition Mission with efforts to track the status of 10 crore households.

Plan and allocation

There are multiple dimensions of malnutrition that include calorific deficiency, protein hunger and micronutrient deficiency. An important approach to address nutrition is through agriculture. The Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh which was launched in 2019 by Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani, and Microsoft founder Bill Gates is a recent attempt to bridge this gap. Existing schemes can well address India's malnutrition dilemma. However, where are the gaps in addressing this concern? We analyse Budgetary allocation and the expenditure in the

previous year to understand more.

First calorific deficiency. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme provides a package of services including supplementary nutrition, nutrition and health education, health check-ups and referral services addressing children, pregnant and lactating mothers and adolescent girls, key groups to address community malnutrition, and which also tackle calorific deficiency and beyond. For 2019-20, the allotment was ₹27,584.37 crore but revised estimates are ₹24,954.50 crore, which points to an underutilisation of resources. The allocation this year is marginally higher, but clearly, the emphasis needs to be on implementation.

Another pathway to address hunger is the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, to enhance nutrition of schoolchildren. Here too, the issue is not with allocation but with expenditure. The 2019-20 Budget allocation was ₹11,000 crore and revised estimates are only ₹9,912 crore.

The second is protein hunger: Pulses are a major contributor to address protein hunger. However, a scheme for State and Union Territories aims to reach pulses into welfare schemes (Mid-Day Meal, Public Distribution System, ICDS) has revised estimates standing at just ₹370 crore against ₹800 crore allocation in the 2019-20 Budget.

Next is micronutrient deficiency. The Horticulture Mission can be one of the ways to address micronutrient deficiency effectively, but here too implementation is

low. Revised estimates for 2019-20 stand at ₹1,583.50 crore against an allocation of ₹2,225 crore. In 2018-19, the Government of India launched a national millet mission which included renaming millets as "nutri-cereals" also launching a Year of Millets in 2018-19 to promote nutritious cereals in a campaign mode across the country. This could have been further emphasised in the Budget as well as in the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) which includes millets. However, the NFSM strains to implement allocation of ₹2,000 crore during 2019-20, as revised expenditures stand at ₹1,776.90 crore. As millets have the potential to address micronutrient deficiencies, the momentum given to these cereals needs to be sustained.

Moving to POSHAN Abhiyaan, the National Nutrition Mission which is a major initiative to address malnutrition, had 72% of total expenditure going into "Information and Communication Technology enabled Real Time Monitoring for development and setting up Common Application Software and expenditure on components under behavioural change" according to Accountability Initiative. The focus of the bulk of the funding has been on technical

and operational aspects of the scheme.

The following are suggestions to move forward: Focus on nutrition-related interventions, beyond digital

interventions; intensify the convergence component of POSHAN Abhiyaan, using the platform to bring all departments in one place to address nutrition; direct the announcement to form 10,000 farmer producer organisations with an allocation of ₹500 crore to nutrition-based activities; promotion of youth schemes to be directed to nutrition-agriculture link activities in rural areas; give explicit emphasis and fund allocation to agriculture-nutrition linked schemes; and ensure early disbursement of funds and an optimum utilisation of schemes linked to nutrition.

Nutrition goes beyond just food, with economic, health, water sanitation, gender perspectives and social norms contributing to better nutrition. This is why implementation of multiple schemes can contribute to better nutrition. The Economic Survey notes that "Food is not just an end in itself but also an essential ingredient in the growth of human capital and therefore important for national wealth creation". Malnutrition affects cognitive ability, workforce days and health, impacting as much as 16% of GDP (World Food Programme and World Bank). In that sense, while Budget 2020-21 looks toward an 'Aspirational India', fixing the missing pieces on the plate, can make a difference not just to better nutrition but to build a wealthier nation too.

Jayashree B. and Dr. R. Gopinath work with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation. The views expressed are personal.

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.

Punishing hate

The electorate in Delhi punished the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its hate-filled campaign. On the other hand, the resounding victory of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was the outcome of the solid grassroots work done by the Arvind Kejriwal-Manish Sisodia duo. It is increasingly becoming clear, even to those in awe of the BJP-led Central government, that beyond the vast numbers in the Lok Sabha, the dispensation has nothing to offer to the people by way of positive economic agenda. Its arrogance, haughtiness and megalomania can barely conceal its cerebral

emptiness (Front page, "AAP sweeps Delhi with 62 seats," Feb. 12).

M.A. SIRAJ,
Bengaluru

The Delhi model

The Delhi government has indeed revolutionised the public school education system by showing the political will to spend a large amount of money on an area that is often neglected in this era of populist politics. First, the government took steps to improve infrastructure. Next, it instituted school management committees, giving a sense of ownership to parents in the learning process of their children. These were not novel

concepts, they were very much present in the Right to Education Act; what was needed to put them into action was political will.

However, the face of education is not something that can be changed in a span of five years; it needs sustained investment, both financial and political (Op-Ed page, "The Delhi model of education," Feb. 12).

SANDEEP KUMAR MEENA,
New Delhi

No seat for Congress

The decimation of the Congress, with a vote share of just 4.26%, should serve as an eye-opener to the rank and file of the party on the futility of continuing with a dynastic leadership.

It is bizarre to note that instead of doing introspection, the party is celebrating the victory of AAP, which has no love lost for the Congress. This only exposes the fact that the Congress has given up hopes of being a frontline Opposition party and is content to piggyback on regional outfits to stay relevant. It is a great fall for an organisation which fought for the country's freedom under selfless leaders and is now being staffed with sycophants in thrall to a single family. The Gandhis – Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka – should keep away from party affairs completely so that the outfit can be rejuvenated.

with new young faces who currently have no baggage.

V. SUBRAMANIAN,
Chennai

The need of a Lokpal

It is unfortunate that the government's lack of commitment and the Opposition's indifference have reduced a landmark legislation like the Lokpal law into a farcical exercise. That the anti-corruption watchdog remains in a state of inertia even six years after the law's enactment is an indictment of India's political culture. A mere absence of corruption is not enough to satisfy public perception about the rulers' integrity; there has to be an independent

authority that can stamp the seal of probity on the government's functioning through fearless investigation. When a *de jure* Lokpal is in place, there is no reason the judiciary, groaning under the weight of a huge backlog, should continue to act as the *de facto* ombudsman. Acting only under the compulsion of a judicial dictat doesn't enhance the government's image. It must operationalise the office of the Lokpal (Op-Ed page, "Six years on, Lokpal is a non-starter," Feb. 12).

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN,
Thiruvananthapuram

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In Kashmir, abnormal is the new normal

Placing senior leaders under detention robs them of the opportunity of queering the normalcy pitch



V. SUDARSHAN

Three months ago, Home Minister Amit Shah assured the Rajya Sabha that "normalcy" had been restored in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, the leaders of the two main parties in J&K – Omar Abdullah of the National Conference (NC) and Mehbooba Mufti of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – have not only been under detention for more than 200 days, but have also been slapped with the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act.

As Minister of State for External Affairs in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government, Mr. Abdullah defended India's position on Kashmir to the world, hurled diplomatic epithets at Pakistan in international fora, and wore the national flag on his heart as it were. But now, according to the Public Safety Act dossier prepared by the J&K administration, he stands accused of coddling militants and mobilising the people of Kashmir to defy Pakistan-backed militants and vote in elections. Like Mr. Abdullah, Ms. Mufti has also been deemed "anti-national". Given that she ran J&K as Chief Minister with her party in alliance with the BJP for three years, it is very strange that the same BJP overlooked her leanings then.

Extending the shelf of normalcy
To show the world that the people of J&K participated in elections used to be the Indian government's primary goal. The government used to go out of its way to obtain diplomatic certification for turnouts in elections as a measure of the genuineness of the exercise. The usually abysmal turnouts made it all the more necessary for such measures to be taken. An election in J&K is not going to take place any time soon, but proving that such an election is genuine, when it is held, will still be the main aim of this government. The steady chaperoning of foreign diplomats into the new Union Territory is an indication of this. With every lot of them that enters the territory, the shelf of "normalcy" in J&K is extended. Since the situation is "normal", the question



"With every lot of foreign diplomats entering J&K, the shelf of 'normalcy' in the UT is extended." Envoys of different countries enjoy shikara rides on Dal Lake in Srinagar on February 12. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

then is, when will an election take place?

The Public Safety Act dossier states that the capacity of Mr. Abdullah "to influence people for any cause can be gauged from the fact that he was able to convince his electorate to come out and vote in huge numbers even during peak of militancy and poll boycotts". Does this mean that it is now normal for a District Magistrate to complain that a politician is able to persuade his constituents to come out and vote? In Kashmir, schools and colleges were open for months after the dilution of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, but nobody attended them. Is that also now normal? Every now and then, U.S. President Donald Trump reminds India that he is ready to mediate between India and Pakistan, even though New Delhi insists that Kashmir is an internal matter. For the American President to repeatedly make that offer was the norm in the worst of times in Kashmir; now it has become a routine in the best of times as well. Is this too the new normal?

Impressions

The government has been conducting focused, narrowly guided tours in batches for foreign diplomats to assess and make a broad certification of the normalcy that prevails in J&K to their home constituencies. These diplomats go to Srinagar and no doubt send rosy, impressionistic cables back to their capitals: 'Shops are open; there are no barbed wires on

the main streets; and no menacing soldiers either. There are upwardly mobile politicians and green shoots of political activity. There is an upward tick in developmental trends. No one is complaining of the absence of the sham that was Article 370. There are myriad plans with timelines and bar charts and plenty of projects in the pipeline. Comparisons with the situation in West Bank are definitely far-fetched. And no one got killed'.

On the other hand, Indian politicians who cannot go to Kashmir and determine for themselves just how normal the situation is probably have to request the foreign missions to put out regular updates, in the form of newsletters or health bulletins, to get a better sense of the situation. The promotion of regular diplomatic tourism to Kashmir is apparently very different from the internationalisation of Kashmir, which happens, for example, when China intercedes on behalf of Pakistan at the UN and Indian diplomats exert themselves to temporarily dissolve that crisis.

The challenge ahead

If making "unacceptable statements" can merit invocation of the Public Safety Act, especially when elections are nowhere in view, how much has the crisis in J&K really dissolved? The government can probably take heart that there have been no major instances of violence since August 5, 2019, and no major upheavals or killings. Terrorists have not run ram-

pant. Meanwhile, six months of New Delhi's charm offensive notwithstanding, alienation is omnipresent, as is the keen sense of hurt, betrayal, anger and resignation.

To hold an election, the delimitation hurdle first needs to be crossed. With new political map-making in the region, there will be seven more Assembly constituencies in J&K. These have to be artfully identified and demarcated, which will be done on the basis of the 2011 Census. A delimitation commission is yet to be constituted. Even the panchayat polls, which the Prime Minister declared a resounding success, left half the seats empty because of the absence of candidates and boycott calls.

The challenge for the government then is how to balance the semblance of peace, which is a result of detentions, deployments and restrictions, and provide a platform of very modest political activity that is sanctified by New Delhi, in a manner that can give the seething resentment controllable political vent over what has been done to J&K. This alone explains the calibrated release of minor political leaders. It is presumed that they have been set free on the implicit understanding that they will not be crossing any red lines drawn by New Delhi. The diplomatic tourists hear and see exactly what New Delhi wants them to hear and see. New Delhi's hope is that the local leaders of the PDP and NC come forward, give heft to the process, and grow into major politicians. The expulsion of PDP politicians can only

be a marker for the inroads government agencies are making in signing on new political recruits. It is probably easier to alienate PDP politicians given the divisions already extant in that conglomeration, although it is odd that politicians associated with an "anti-national" like Ms. Mufti should escape that taint. The continued detention of Ms. Mufti and Mr. Abdullah is being done with the intention of starving them of the oxygen of a following, forcing upon them political atrophy, and robbing them of the opportunity to queer the normalcy pitch. In Kashmir, it could soon be argued that the more things are normal, the more abnormal they really are.

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Riding on data for mobility

Data-based governance can assist in reducing traffic congestion, as illustrated by a pilot study in Hyderabad



DILEEP KONATHAM & K. YESHWANTH REDDY

The digital revolution has made interactions between humans and machines, and among citizens, governments and businesses, seamless and efficient. Today, e-governance enables and empowers citizens to directly engage with the state, thereby eliminating barriers in the delivery of public services. The next wave of transformation in digital governance is at the intersection of data and public good. The key to this transformation lies in incorporating data as a strategic asset in all aspects of policy, planning, service delivery and operations of the government.

Transportation is one such critical area, where data-based governance is expected to provide a solution to the ever-growing threat of congestion to urban economies. Congestion caused an estimated loss of \$87 billion to the U.S. economy and \$24 billion to the four metro cities in India in 2018. Given the limited land resources available, the key to solving congestion lies in improving the efficiency of existing transportation systems.

Multiple sources

An efficient transportation system would help ease congestion, reduce travel time and cost, and provide greater convenience. For this, data from multiple sources such as CCTV cameras, automatic traffic counters, map services, and transportation service providers could be used.

A study by Transport for London, the local body responsible for transport in and around the U.K. capital, estimates that its open data initiative on sharing of real-time transit data has helped add £130 million a year to London's economy by improving productivity and efficiency. In China, an artificial intelligence-based traffic management platform developed by Alibaba has helped improve average speeds by 15%.

Closer home, the Hyderabad Open Transit Data, launched by Open Data Telangana, is the country's first data portal publishing datasets on bus stops, bus routes, metro routes, metro stations, schedules, fares, and frequency of public transit services.

The objective is to empower start-ups and developers to create useful mobility applications. The datasets were built after an intensive exercise carried out by the Open Data Team and Telangana State Road Transport

Corporation to collect, verify and digitise the data.

Hyderabad has also begun collaborating with the private sector to improve traffic infrastructure. One such partnership followed a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Telangana government and Ola Mobility Institute. Under this collaboration, Ola has developed a tool, Ola City Sense, to provide data-based insights that can monitor the quality of Hyderabad's roads and identify bad quality patches.

The data is provided to city officials on a dashboard, and updated every 2-3 weeks to capture the nature of potholes/roads. The information thus given is useful not only for carrying out road repairs, it also helps officials take initiatives to improve road safety, monitor quality of construction, and study the role of bad roads in causing congestion.

Planning road repair work

A pilot was implemented in a municipal zone to gauge the efficacy of the data in supporting road monitoring and prioritisation of repairs. The early results of this pilot project were encouraging. The dashboard helped city officials plan the pre-monsoon repair work and budget for repairs last year.

The pilot also demonstrated the willingness of government departments to apply data-based insights for better decision making. This tool is now being adopted across all municipal zones under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. This could also serve as a model for other cities to emulate.

The Hyderabad example shows that governments can make their departments data-centric by institutionalising data collection, building technology platforms and helping the departments develop capacity to handle the insights generated from the data. Command and control centres under the 'smart cities' initiative can be an ideal starting point. Such interventions, however, also need to address genuine concerns around data security and privacy.

The Telangana government has declared that the year 2020 will be the Year of Artificial Intelligence. It aims to run hackathons and masterclasses with AI as the theme. Discussions are on to include AI for Traffic Management. At the core of AI-based algorithms is good data, and partnership with key stakeholders can only help build such algorithms. Insightful data will be the key to transform Hyderabad into a 'world-class city' in terms of mobility.

Dileep Konatham is Director, Digital Media, Telangana government, and heads the 'Open Data Initiative'. K. Yeshwanth Reddy is Lead-Urban Mobility at the Ola Mobility Institute

Parasites, poverty and privacy

The themes of the Oscar-winning film are all too familiar to the global South

VAISHNA ROY

One of the first things that strikes you about *Parasite*, the brilliant South Korean social satire that swept up four Academy Awards this week, is how familiar it feels to Indian viewers. Bong Joon-ho directs it like a perfectly timed high-wire act, but grounds it deeply in his understanding of the class divide.

The untouchability of class

The deep differences between the Park and the Kim family that *Parasite* focuses on mirrors the enormous income gap in India and, interestingly, takes the shape of what is essentially untouchability; only, it's the untouchability of class. The wealthy Mr. Park's one abiding fear



is that his chauffeur Kim Taek might "cross the line". The line is left undefined – but it needs no definition for Indians, into whose homes chauffeurs and gardeners might enter, but might not sit on the sofa. We might foot the driver's bill when we go out, but seldom will he share our table.

If the upper-class Indian justifies this by talking about 'hygiene', the young son of the Kim family has fewer inhibitions – he simply points out that all four members of the Kim family smell the same. There's a poignant scene where Ki-taek's daughter says this smell can never be scrubbed out because it's the smell of the basement they live in. What's left eloquently unsaid is that this is the distinctive odour of poverty. It sharply recalls the scenes from the Tamil play *Manjal*, where manual scavengers lament that the smell of sewage never leaves their skin. And it seems entirely opposite that it is the sight of Mr. Park recoiling from Geun-sae, hand covering nose, that finally pushes Ki-taek over the edge.

Bong extends the implicit untouchability of poverty with the metaphor of the toilet, that familiar forbidden ground. Two vivid scenes demonstrate how close to that reviled toilet the poor lead their lives. First, when searching desperately for an Internet signal to tap, it's by sitting

on the WC and holding phones above their heads that the Kim siblings are able to read their WhatsApp messages. Then, when their basement home gets flooded, Ki-jeong runs to slam down the lid of the WC to keep the rising sewage from spewing out, but later she's forced to crouch on the same lid, smoking a cigarette, oblivious to the slime around her.

Secluded toilets, privacy and personal space are unaffordable luxuries for the poor. In fact, not long ago, India's Attorney General had argued that "it's not right to talk about the right to privacy for poor people". Although the court ruled that privacy is a fundamental right, real life seldom offers it to people whose homes are pavements and cardboard-walled shanties.

This awareness makes the contrast between the Kims' squashed basement and the Parks' soaring, airy home even more stark. In one significant scene, the Kims, caught unawares by the Park family returning home early, hide under the drawing room table, unable to escape even as the Parks make love on the couch. Jammed there, they are forced to listen to an act of intimacy that mocks the lack of privacy for intimate acts in their own life. It reminds us inexorably of Indian chawls and slums – of people who must carefully time their return home to avoid interrupting others; of tiny rooms divided by saris to create the illusion of space; of couples who crowd beaches and parks desperate for solitude.

Universal theme

Parasite's bottom-up, unromantic, searing take on poverty couldn't have come from anywhere but the global South. But its triumph lies in how fluidly it universalises the theme, making it impossible for privileged juries to look away. The film's fantasy and caprice give it a surreal air, but the mortifications it portrays are only too familiar not just to us, but to audiences everywhere in the developing world.

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DATA POINT

Resounding return

AAP stands out | Table shows the contested seat share, contested vote share and total vote share of the winners and runners up in the 10 Assembly elections held in Delhi since 1972

Delhi Assembly elections	Party	Winner		Runner-up	
		Contested	Contested	Contested	Contested
1972	INC	84.62	52.54	BJS	8.93
1977	JNP	82.14	52.58	INC	19.23
1983	INC	60.71	47.5	BJP	38
1993	BJP	70	42.82	INC	20
1998	INC	74.29	47.76	BJP	22.39
2003	INC	67.14	48.13	BJP	28.57
2008	INC	61.43	40.31	BJP	33.33
2013	AAP	40	29.64	BJP	45.59
2015	AAP	95.71	54.59	BJP	4.35
2020	AAP	88.57	53.57	BJP	11.94

Election	Party	CVS (%)	CSS (%)	Election	Party	CVS (%)	CSS (%)
Tamil Nadu 2011	AIADMK	54.06	90.91	Odisha 2014	BJD	43.41	79.59
	BJP	2.55	0		BJP	18.02	6.8
Tamil Nadu 2016	AIADMK	41.06	57.69	Odisha 2019	BJD	44.71	76.71
	BJP	3.57	0		BJP	32.49	15.75
Telangana 2014	TRS	34.3	11.11	West Bengal 2011	AITC	50.15	81.4
	BJP	19.3	52.94		BJP	4.14	0
Telangana 2018	TRS	47.09	73.95	West Bengal 2016	AITC	45.18	72.01
	BJP	7.13	0.85		BJP	10.28	1.03

CVS - Contested vote share; CSS - Contested seat share

The Aam Aadmi Party returned to power in Delhi winning 88% of the seats and over 53% of the total votes. Since 1972, no other party has received such a strong mandate in a Delhi Assembly re-election. Since the BJP's win

FROM PAGE ONE

Pak. jails Hafiz Saeed for terror financing

Soon after the verdict was announced, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Hamid Azhar tweeted: "Pak. remains committed to the earliest completion of its FATF Action Plan. FATF Plenary is a technical process. Irrespective of and without speculating on any final decision at the plenary, we look forward to acknowledgement of significant progress that Pak. authorities have made."

The FATF's next meeting will take place later this week in Paris to decide whether Pakistan stays on the grey list or not.

Foreign policy analyst Hassan Akbar believes that this is a significant step in the right direction. "Hafiz Saeed

has been convicted of two terror financing cases and this demonstrates the slow yet steady progress that Pakistan is making towards improving its financial and judicial systems to deal with terror financing cases," Mr. Akbar said.

The timing has brought up the question of whether this is related to Pakistan's FATF case. Mr. Akbar says that while it is a fact that terror financing has been under the lens due to the need for improved systems under FATF compliance, "the fact that Saeed has been convicted speaks to a much wider systemic change. The hope is that this change is sustained and not back-peddled in the days to come".

25 Ambassadors reach Srinagar for 2-day visit

The envoys stationed themselves in Srinagar and used the time to surf on the waters of the Dal Lake in local boats, called shikaras.

"A Kashmiri woman paddling her boat through the Dal Lake, Srinagar. Like Venice, lots of shopping points selling local handicrafts and boat resorts in the middle of the lake. Undoubtedly, the valley has a lot of potential for boosting tourism," said Tahir Qadri, the envoy from Afghanistan.

He called the situation normal and said, "We saw schools and shops were open on our way from the airport to the city."

Most envoys avoided talking to the media, though they said the visit was aimed at "assessing the situation".

Later, the envoys met delegations of panchayat leaders, veterans and traders.

A delegation of local editors, sources said, told the envoys that Article 370 had increased anger on the ground and demanded restoration of broadband Internet services.

Interestingly, several delegates praised the government's decision to book NC leaders Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah and PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti under the Public Safety Act.

Puducherry passes resolution against CAA

Mr. Narayanasamy underscored his government's intention to carry out the Census without seeking additional information from people, such as their religious identity, date of birth and the details of parents.

Referring to the February 10 letter, written by Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi, cautioning the government against passing a resolution against the CAA, he said he would not be cowed down by threats. "I have made it clear when Parliament passed the amendment to the Citizenship Act that it would not be implemented even at the cost of my government. I challenge the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to dismiss my government for

adopting the resolution," Mr. Narayanasamy said.

Questioning Lt. Governor's caution, Parliamentary Secretary to the Chief Minister K. Lakshminarayanan said the Union Territory had more responsibility to bring a resolution against the CAA as it was bound to give freedom to the people on citizenship under the defacto merger agreement with the Indian Union. The CAA, the NRC and the NPR were aimed at suppressing the rights of Muslims, he said.

While three nominated MLAs of the BJP walked out after protesting against the resolution, the principal Opposition party, AINRC, and the AIADMK boycotted the special session.

SC hears plea for ex-judge's reinstatement

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday considered the plea for reinstatement by a former district judge from Madhya Pradesh who resigned after she raised sexual harassment allegations against a judge of the State High Court.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde heard the former additional judge's lawyer and senior advocate Indira Jaising. Ms. Jaising submitted that her client was willing to take up a post in any northern State.

Rajya Sabha records 96% productivity

Upper House lost 96 minutes in nine sittings in the first phase of Budget session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In the first phase of the Budget session, the Rajya Sabha recorded 96% productivity with 155 members getting a chance to speak in a largely disruption-free session with a loss of only 96 minutes in its scheduled nine sittings.

The Upper House functioned for a total of 38 hours and 30 minutes as against the scheduled available time of 41 hours and 10 minutes. While the House lost 5 hours and 32 minutes on February 3, 2020 due to disruptions and forced adjournments, the members sat for 3 hours

Man held after Delhi shooting

Party worker killed when a gang shot at an AAP MLA's car late on Tuesday

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police arrested one of the suspects within a few hours after a group of assailants allegedly fired at the open car of Naresh Yadav, Aam Aadmi Party MLA for Mehrauli, on Tuesday.

A party volunteer was killed and another injured in the shooting on Aruna Asaf Ali Road when Mr. Yadav was returning home from a temple following his victory in the election, the police said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Ingit Pratap Singh on Wednesday identified the arrested person as Dharamvir, alias Kalu.

A country-made pistol and two live cartridges were recovered from him.

"Several police teams have been formed to arrest the suspects. We have identified all persons who were with Dharamvir during the incident. The hunt is on for the two other accused," Mr. Singh said.

At 11.16 p.m. on Tuesday,



Celebrating a win: AAP leader Manish Sisodia during the party's victory rally on Wednesday. ■ PTI

the police received a call at the control room from Fortis Hospital in Vasant Kunj about the admission of two persons with gunshot injuries.

Ashok Maan, 45, was admitted with gunshot injuries, but doctors declared him dead. Harinder was admitted with gunshot injuries in the right thigh, and he is under treatment.

Both are from Kishangarh and distant relatives," Mr. Singh said.

During the investigation, it was found that the assailants were known to the victim.

The complainant (injured man) had stated that the three had allegedly threatened Ashok around 15 days ago over some petty quarrels that used to take place

between both the parties frequently. But these were never reported to the police.

In November 2019, an FIR under IPC section of attempt to murder was registered at Vasant Kunj (North) police station in which the son of one of the accused was allegedly shot and injured by an acquaintance of victim (Ashok Maan).

139 poll bonds sold before Delhi election

They were together worth ₹81.67 crore

PRISCILLA JEBARA
NEW DELHI

In the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election, 139 electoral bonds worth ₹81.67 crore were sold by various branches of the SBI, according to the response to an RTI query filed by Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd.).

"This was the apprehension we had expressed, that more unaccounted-for money will go to political parties for the Delhi election, without the voter knowing who has given the money to whom. The SC did not take us seriously, and now this data showing that ₹81 crore worth of bonds were sold has validated our fears," said ADR founder Jagdeep Chhokar.

scheme in the Supreme Court. In its November 2019 plea, it had asked for a stay. However, on January 20, the court had declined to issue a stay, despite concerns being raised about anonymous donations and opaque funding during the Delhi polls.

"This was the apprehension we had expressed, that more unaccounted-for money will go to political parties for the Delhi election, without the voter knowing who has given the money to whom. The SC did not take us seriously, and now this data showing that ₹81 crore worth of bonds were sold has validated our fears," said ADR founder Jagdeep Chhokar.

Sales for Assembly polls

He said though the scheme was originally formulated for the Lok Sabha polls, the window for the sale of bonds had repeatedly been opened before the Assembly elections as well.

The SC has not set a date for the next hearing but had given the Election Commission (EC) two weeks to submit its response.

In its submission last week, the EC said it had received sealed covers from 105 political parties with details of funds received through electoral bonds till date. Apart from recognised national and State political parties, the list includes 71 registered unrecognised parties. It also includes four "unidentified address of political parties", according to the affidavit filed by the Commission.

Warrants issued against Khalistani terrorists

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A special NIA court in Mohali has issued non-bailable warrants (NBWs) against two terrorists belonging to the Khalistan Zindabad Force in a case of dropping of arms and ammunition in Punjab by drones originating from Pakistan, the National Investigation Agency said on Wednesday.

Non-bailable warrants have been issued against Ranjeet Singh Neeta, a resident of R.S. Pura in Jammu, who is now based in Pakistan, and Gurmeet Singh alias Bagga, a resident of Hoshiarpur district in Punjab, who is based in Germany now, an NIA spokesperson said. Nine people have been arrested till now and the probe is on, he added.

SC judge recuses from hearing plea for Omar

Court agrees to a request by counsel for Sara Abdulla Pilot to list the case for February 14

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar of the Supreme Court recused himself on Wednesday from hearing a petition filed by the sister of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah against his detention under the Public Safety Act (PSA).

"I will not hear this matter," he said immediately after the case was called for hearing before a three-judge Bench, led by Justice N.V. Ramana, and comprising Justice Sanjiv Khanna.

The court ordered the case to be listed "before another Bench since Mr. Just-

tice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar expressed his inability to participate in the hearing of the matter".

The court agreed to a request by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for Sara Abdulla Pilot, to list the case again for February 14.

The court gave no inkling of why Justice Shantanagoudar recused himself from the case. As a norm, judges need not cite reasons for recusal.

Sister's appeal

Ms. Pilot, also represented by senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, sought issue of a writ of *habeas corpus* to the authorities to pro-

duce Mr. Abdullah forthwith before the court and set him at liberty. She said she was concerned about the welfare, safety and security of her brother. When the PSA was invoked against him on February 5 this year, he had

already been under detention since August 5 last year.

Ms. Pilot said she was shocked to learn that as it was done to their father Farooq Abdullah, the government has imposed a fresh lease of detention under the PSA on her brother. His detention from August 5, 2019, under Section 107 of the Cr. PC (security for keeping the peace), was to expire on February 5 this year. His release was expected.

He had served the maximum period of detention. However, on February 5, the Executive Magistrate ordered his further detention under Section 8 of the PSA in

an "arbitrary exercise of power". In fact, she said, during the past six months, the authorities had made no efforts to verify the truth behind the "information" that Mr. Abdullah was a threat to the peace. On the other hand, there were reams of material in the form of tweets and public statements vouching for his exemplary conduct to maintain the peace. The petition argued that the detention order was illegal as it conflicted with "governmental policy" with the "Indian state", suggesting that any opposition to the former constituted a threat to the latter.

BJP acting against the Constitution: Priyanka

Congress leader meets protesters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
LUCKNOW

The laws that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to implement are "not just against one community but against the entire Constitution, and poor people", Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Wednesday in Azamgarh against the backdrop of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the proposed pan-Indian National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Ms. Vadra visited the eastern Uttar Pradesh city to meet a group of women who faced alleged police brutality last week while trying to stage a demonstration against the CAA and the NRC in Bilariyaganj.

After meeting the victims, Ms. Vadra took out a roadshow and slammed the U.P. police for hitting people who were protesting peacefully.

Ms. Vadra said she would send a report to the National Human Rights Commission about the alleged police atrocities in Azamgarh, and name the police officers and personnel who had committed them.

Chargesheet against four Jaish men

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) filed a supplementary chargesheet against four Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) aides of the Pulwama attack mastermind in a case of conspiracy to carry out terror acts nationwide.

Last September, the NIA filed a chargesheet alleging that Sajjad Ahmad Khan of the JeM, a close aide of Pulwama attack mastermind Mudassir Ahmad Khan, was conspiring to carry out terror acts nationwide.

The supplementary chargesheet was filed against four JeM operatives under Sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy) and 121-A (waging, or attempting to wage war, or abetting waging of war, against the government of India) of the IPC, and various Sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Explosive Substances Act.

Besides Sajjad Ahmad Khan, 27, the agency filed the chargesheet against Bilal Ahmad Mir, 23, Ishfaq Ahmad Bhat, 24, and Mehmajud-Din Chopan, 22. All of them are residents of Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Investigation has established that the accused persons are members of the proscribed terrorist organisation JeM who were planning to carry out terrorist attacks and propagate the activities of JeM," the NIA said.

Rajya Sabha records 96% productivity

Upper House lost 96 minutes in nine sittings in the first phase of Budget session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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and 56 minutes beyond the scheduled time, resulting in a net loss of one hour 36 minutes of the scheduled time.

Though the House was scheduled to have nine sittings, not much business could be taken up as per the convention on the first two days, as the House was adjourned after the address of the President to the joint session of Parliament and after laying of budget papers on the table of the House on the second day. On the third day,

business could not be transacted due to disruptions.

A total of 323 interventions, zero hour and special mentions were made by 155 members, of whom 83 have got two or more opportunities to participate in the proceedings. V. Vijaysai Reddy of the YSRCP had the best participation with nine opportunities, including a zero hour mention, special mention, 5 supplementaries, one starred question, 4 supplementaries to starred questions, besides participation in the debates on the Motion of Thanks to the President and the General Budget.

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It will be a memorable welcome to Trump: PM

'India, U.S. share common commitment to democracy'

KALLOL BHATTACHERJEE
NEW DELHI

India will extend a memorable welcome to U.S. President Donald Trump when he arrives here in the last week of February, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday.

Preparations for a public event are under way in Ahmedabad where Mr. Trump will address a public gathering.

"India and USA share a common commitment to democracy and pluralism. Our nations are cooperating extensively on a wide range of issues. Robust friendship between our nations augurs well not only for our citizens but also for the entire world," Mr. Modi said in a social media message.

Mr. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump will visit



Narendra Modi

New Delhi and Ahmedabad on February 24 and 25, and the U.S. leader is expected to address a public meeting, 'Kem Chho Trump', at the 1.1-lakh seater Motera stadium in Ahmedabad.

Government insiders told *The Hindu* that an additional 10,000 spectators would be accommodated on the floor of the stadium.

Trade bodies FICCI and

BCCI have been roped in to bring in top business executives for the event. Gujarat's Industry Department has also been instructed to bring in people from different industrial zones of the State.

Over 2,500 buses have been hired to ferry people to the stadium where the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has created parking facilities for 3,000 buses and 4,500 cars.

BCCI president Saurav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar and Kapil Dev will be among the dignitaries who will likely attend the event, besides Bollywood stars.

"India will accord a memorable welcome to our esteemed guests. The visit is a very special one and it will go a long way in further cementing India-USA friendship," Mr. Modi said.

Why not notify entire J&K as jail: Tarigami

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at the Modi government, CPI(M) leader from Kashmir Younis Tarigami asked the government to notify the entire Jammu and Kashmir as a jail, so that it no longer had to convert hotels and guest houses as jail to accommodate the ever-growing list of political prisoners.

He was speaking at a press conference here.

"The government should notify Jammu and Kashmir as a central jail. Then they do not have to invoke the Public Safety Act [PSA] or force us to stay inside our homes or convert guest houses and hotels into detention centres," he said. Mr. Tarigami said the government is taking delegations to Kashmir, but they have no place to put them up as guest houses are full of political detenus.

Asked why Jammu and Kashmir despite six months of clampdown has not seen a public outcry or a Shaheen Bagh kind of protest, both Mr. Tarigami and party general secretary Sitaram Yechury said, "Jammu and Kashmir cannot have a Shaheen Bagh for similar reasons as there cannot be a Shaheen Bagh in Tihar jail."

Slamming the government for invoking the PSA against two former Chief Ministers, Mr. Tarigami said the government has shown its moral bankruptcy.

CIA spied through Swiss encryption firm: report

The company was trusted by governments all over world

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON



Crypto AG specialised in communications and information security.

said. The firm had clients such as Iran, military juntas in Latin America, India, Pakistan and the Vatican, it said. There was no official reaction from New Delhi.

Rigged devices

However, none of its customers ever knew that the firm was secretly owned by the CIA in a highly classified partnership with West German intelligence.

These spy agencies rigged the company's devices so they could easily break the codes that countries used to send encrypted messages, according to the report.

"It was the intelligence coup of the century. Foreign governments were paying good money to the U.S. and West Germany for the privilege of having their most secret communications read by at least two [and possibly as many as five or six] foreign countries," the CIA report reads.

Tripura tribal laws to be codified

A CORRESPONDENT
AGARTALA

The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD) has passed resolutions to codify the customary laws of three tribal clans.

The council introduced

separate Bills to adopt the law of the Mizo, Kaipeng and Malsom communities to address their long-standing demands.

Several clans have been approaching the TTAACD to codify their respective customary law.

Paradip Port trust to be tendered

e-TENDER CALL NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited on behalf of Paradip Port Trust for the work "Establishment of 400 Bedded Super Specialty Hospital at Paradip Port with an option to develop medical College and further expansion of hospital on PPP basis". The last date & time of submission of tender 14.04.2020 on 14.00 hrs. For details, please refer website <http://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app/>. Chief Medical Officer PPT/PR/666/2019-20, Dt.12.02.2020



Empty screen: A man going through the NRC in Assam. The data of the register went missing from the portal. ■ FILE PHOTO

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry said here on Wednesday that all data of the Assam's final National Register of Citizens (NRC) were "safe" after those of exclusions and inclusions could not be accessed through the government portal.

A Ministry spokesperson said, "some technical issue regarding visibility in cloud storage was being resolved soon."

IT major Wipro was given the contract to store the data in its cloud platform. Wipro said in a statement that "the IT services contract was not renewed by the authorities upon its expiry in October 2019. However, as a gesture of goodwill, Wipro continued to pay the hosting service fee until January-end, 2020."

The contract with Wipro expired in October last year and it was not renewed as

the new NRC coordinator, Hitesh Dev Sarma, assumed charge only on December 24, an official explained.

As the data went offline, there was an uproar in Assam with the Opposition questioning the move.

Congress MP from Assam Gaurav Gogoi tweeted on Wednesday, "The loss of NRC data in Assam is deliberate by the BJP. How can a ₹1600 cr project be so unprofessional and not renew

manded that he give an account of the ₹1,600 crore spent on the NRC.

The previous NRC coordinator, Prateek Hajela, was transferred to Madhya Pradesh in October on the orders of the Special Bench of the Supreme Court led by former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi. After Mr. Hajela's transfer, Assam BJP chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass de-

clared that their membership of a cloud platform? This is to derail the current NRC exercise in Assam and demand a new one which will be independent of the Supreme Court."

The final NRC published on August 31, 2019 was uploaded on www.nrcassam.nic.in. Around 19 lakh of the 3.4 crore applicants were excluded from the final list.

Plea to Registrar

Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia wrote to the Registrar-General of India and requested him to look into the matter urgently.

"It is a mystery as to why the online data should vanish all of a sudden, especially as the appeals process has not even started due to the go-slow attitude adopted by the NRC Authority. There is, therefore, ample scope to suspect that the disappearance of online data is a mala fide act," he said.

In a February 7 verdict, the court had said the State governments are not bound to make reservation, adding that even courts could not issue any mandamus directing States to provide reservations.

On Tuesday, Mr. Aazad filed a review petition in the Supreme Court seeking a reversal of its order. On Wednesday, speaking to journalists in Delhi, he said that even the top court could "make mistakes."

"I respect the court. We all do. But it has made mistakes, including in this case," he said.

"The court has said we cannot claim reservation in promotion if the State governments do not grant it. They have left us to the mercy of the States. But we will not accept it. This is our fundamental right," Mr. Aazad said.

Singing of national anthem to be mandatory in schools, colleges

Will take effect in Maharashtra on Shiv Jayanti on Feb. 19

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

Singing the national anthem will be mandatory in all schools and colleges in Maharashtra beginning February 19, Minister for Higher and Technical Education Uday Samant said on Wednesday.

"We have taken a decision that the national anthem should be sung before college proceedings begin everyday. This will come into effect from February 19, Shiv Jayanti [birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Mah-

raj]. A letter pertaining to this directive will be sent to all the colleges," Mr. Samant said. The anthem will also be played at various programmes organised at college and university levels, said Mr. Samant.

"The decision to make the singing of the national anthem mandatory in colleges was taken unanimously... even if the attendance in colleges is 50% on a given day, no less than 15 lakh students would be singing the anthem before the start of classes,"

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1	02/2020	Superintending Engineer (Post 01 No.: UR-1)	Level-12 of Pay Matrix
2		Administrative Officer (Academics) (Post 01 No.: UR-1)	Level-10 of Pay Matrix
3		Personal Secretary (Post 01 No., UR-1)	Level-7 of Pay Matrix

Terms and conditions and application form are available at website www nbrac.ac.in Any further development in regard to this advertisement will be communicated through NBRC website only. Last date of receipt of application is 13.03.2020. Last date for candidates domiciled in North Eastern States, Andaman Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir is 28.03.2020

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CORRIGENDUM - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The Due Date for submission and opening of Bids for the following EOI published on 28th January 2020, stands pre-poned due to administrative reasons:

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Description	Mode of Services
1	NAL/PUR/CAD/408/19-Z	Procurement of Cabin Pressure Control System (CPGS) of the Aircraft	Global
2	NAL/PUR/CAD/409/19-Z	Procurement of Environmental Control System (ES) of the Aircraft	

Please visit website: Central Public Procurement Portal (CPPP) of Government of India website <http://eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app> and CSIR-NAL website www.nalsrc.in.

Sd/- Controller of Stores & Purchase For and on behalf of CSIR

KOLAR – CHIKKABALLAPURA DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCER'S SOCIETIES UNION LIMITED., KOLAR

[P.B. No. 63, N.H-4, Huthur Post, Kolar – 563102. Karnataka] (Ph. No. 08152-282300,

E-Mail- kolumld@yahoo.co.in, kumulcivil@gmail.com

IFT No.KCMUL/CIVIL/E-Procurement/MVK Golden Dairy/12119 / 2019-20 Date:10.02.2020

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTIFICATION

1. The Managing Director Komul invites tenders under Two cover system as per Karnataka transparency in public procurement act 1999 and rules 2000 through e procurement registered contractors in CPWD/KPWD/MES or an eligible authority and who have qualification as per tender document are eligible to apply for the following

SI.No.1, Name of Work: **Construction of M.V.K Golden Dairy at Kolar Dairy Premises**, Approximate Value of work (Rs.): 36 Crores, Earnest Money Deposit: 36 Lakhs, Period of Completion: 18 Months including raining seasons, Class of contractor: Class 1 and above

2. Tender documents may be downloaded from e-procurement website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>. Interested tenders may obtain further information at the same address. The KOMUL will not be held responsible for the website problems if any, last date submission or non-receipt of the same.

1 Access to E-tender Documents 10.02.2020 to 09.04.2020 05.00 PM

2 Last Date & Time for Tender Queries/ Clarifications 11.03.2020 within 05.00 PM

3 Last Date & Time for receipt of tenders 09.04.2020, 05.00 PM

4 Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bid 13.04.2020, 11.00 AM onwards

5 Date & Time for Opening of Financial Bid 15.04.2020, 11.30 AM onwards

3. Other details can be seen in the tender documents.

Sd/- Managing Director, Kolar-Chikkaballapur Milk Union Ltd., Kolar.

Quota ruling: Bhim Army calls for bandh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar Aazad has called for a nationwide agitation against the Supreme Court's recent ruling that reservation in promotion for public posts could not be claimed as a fundamental right. He has issued a call for a Bharat Bandh, or all-India strike, for February 23, and also announced a protest march

China's virus cases fall, but toll hits 1,113

Beijing reports lowest number of new cases since Jan. 30; outbreak 'beginning' outside China: expert

REUTERS
BEIJING/SINGAPORE

China reported on Wednesday its lowest number of new coronavirus cases in nearly two weeks, lending weight to a forecast by its foremost medical adviser for the outbreak to end by April – but fears of further international spread remained.

The 2,015 new confirmed cases took China's total to 44,653. That was the lowest daily rise since January 30 and came a day after epidemiologist Zhong Nanshan forecast the epidemic would peak in China this month before subsiding.

Stocks surge

His comments helped soothe public fears and markets, where global stocks surged to record highs on hopes of an end to disruption in the world's second largest economy.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) has likened the epidemic's threat to terrorism and one expert said that while it may be



Off limits: Diamond Princess cruise, which has 175 infected among 3,700 people onboard, making it the biggest cluster of cases outside China, docking in Yokohama, Japan. ■ GETTY IMAGES

peaking in China, this was not the case beyond. "It has spread to other places where it's the beginning of the outbreak," Dale Fisher, head of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network coordinated by the WHO, said.

"In Singapore, we are at the beginning of the outbreak."

Singapore has 47 cases. Its biggest bank, DBS, evacuated 300 staff on Wednesday after a case at head office.

Hundreds of infections have been reported in dozens of other countries and territories, but only two people have died outside mainland China: one in Hong Kong and another in the Philippines.

China's latest figures also showed that the number of deaths on the mainland rose by 97 to 1,113. But doubts have been aired on social media about how reliable the

data is, after the government last week amended guidelines on classification.

Quarantined cruise ship

The biggest cluster of cases outside China is on the Diamond Princess cruise ship quarantined off Japan's port of Yokohama, with about 3,700 people on board.

Japanese officials on Wednesday said 39 more people had tested positive for the vi-

2 Indian crew in cruise ship test positive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TOKYO

Two Indian crew on board the cruise ship Diamond Princess have tested positive for the novel coronavirus and they will be under quarantine till February 19, 2020, the Indian Embassy in Japan said on Wednesday.

A total of 138 Indians were on board the ship.

rus, taking the total to 175.

There was a happy ending in sight for another cruise ship, the MS Westerdam, which Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, Guam and the Philippines had refused to let dock over fears that one of its 1,455 passengers and 802 crew may have the coronavirus. Cambodia finally agreed to let the ship dock at the sea port of Sihanoukville on Thursday.

Bernie Sanders wins New Hampshire primary

He beats Buttigieg; Warren and Biden finish 4th and 5th

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

Independent Senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders narrowly won the New Hampshire vote on Tuesday, establishing his position as the candidate of choice of the progressive wing of the Democratic party. The vote was mostly split between Pete Buttigieg, who came a close second, followed by moderate Amy Klobuchar.

Both former Vice-President Joseph R. Biden and progressive Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren had a bad night.

Mr. Sanders got 25.8% of the vote followed by Mr. Buttigieg, 38, at 24.4% with 89% of the vote counted. Each of these candidates had won 9 delegates (officials who will vote for them in the nominating convention in August). Ms. Klobuchar was at 19.8%. Ms. Warren, who came in at 9.3%, and Mr. Biden, who won 8.4% of the vote, failed to secure any delegates.

"Let me say tonight, that this victory here is the beginning of the end for Donald Trump," Mr. Sanders told jubilant supporters on Tuesday night. Mr. Sanders offered his "appreciation" and "respect" for his fellow Democrat candidates and said Democrats would unite together to defeat Mr. Trump.

Mr. Sanders, who at 78, who is more than twice Mr. Buttigieg's age (38), said he was putting together a "multi-generational, multi-racial, political movement." He also made a veiled reference to Mr. Buttigieg accepting contribution from wealthy donors.

In self-defence, coalition troops returned fire. The situation was de-escalated and is under investigation," he added in a statement.



Scoring a lead: Senator Bernie Sanders at a primary event at the SNHU Field House in New Hampshire on Tuesday. ■ AFP

ference to independents and "newly former Republicans", a term he has used before.

"So many of you turned out. Die hard Democrats, independents unwilling to stay on the sidelines and even some newly former Republicans, ready to vote for something new," he said. "Ready to vote for a politics defined by how many we call in, instead of who we push out."

Once again, he suggested

Mr. Sanders's choices of "revolution or status quo" were untenable for most voters faced with a divisive incumbent in the White House.

Ms. Klobuchar, who did better than in Iowa splitting the moderate vote with Mr. Buttigieg, also made a pitch to the middle at her speech on Tuesday night.

Worst nightmare

"Donald Trump's worst nightmare is that the people in the middle, the people who have had enough of the name-calling and the mud-slinging have someone to vote for in November," Ms. Klobuchar said.

Entrepreneur and Asian American candidate, Andrew Yang, announced that

he was dropping out of the race after Tuesday's performance. Mr. Yang's signature policy was a universal basic income of \$1,000 a month for every American.

"While there is great work left to be done, you know I am the math guy, and it is clear tonight from the numbers that we are not going to win this race," Mr. Yang told the "Yang Gang" – his supporters, adding that he did not want to accept donations for a race that could not be won.

Ms. Warren has said she would remain in the race. "Our campaign is built for the long haul, and we are just getting started," she told supporters.

On the Republican side, President Trump easily won New Hampshire's primary. He was facing token opposition from former Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld. With most of the vote in, Mr. Trump's vote share was approaching the modern historical high for an incumbent President, 86.43% set by Ronald Reagan in 1984.

The political spotlight is now shifting to Nevada, where Democrats will hold caucuses on February 22. (With AP inputs)

WHO to decide on emergency status of Ebola in DR Congo

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

UN health agency experts meet on Wednesday to decide whether the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo should still be considered a global health emergency, following a sharp decline in reported cases.

The World Health Organization last July declared it a "public health emergency of international concern" – a designation that gives the WHO greater powers to res-

trict travel and boost funding.

The outbreak was first identified in August 2018 and has since killed more than 2,300 people in eastern DR Congo.

Situation improving
WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Tuesday said he was "encouraged" by an improvement in the situation, with only three cases reported in the past week. But he added: "It's not over. Any single case could reig-

nite the epidemic."

For the epidemic to be declared over, there have to be no new cases reported for 42 days – double the incubation period.

"We cannot and must not forget Ebola," Mr. Tedros said, adding that he would travel to DR Congo on Thursday to meet President Félix Tshisekedi.

The decision is ultimately up to the WHO's Emergency Committee that meets every three months once an emergency has been declared.

U.S.-led coalition clashes with Syria regime forces

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT

A Syrian was killed and another was wounded in a rare clash on Wednesday between American troops and Syrian regime supporters, who tried to block a U.S. convoy driving through a village in northeastern Syria, state media and activists reported.

He was among residents who had gathered at an Army checkpoint, pelting the U.S. convoy with stones and taking down a U.S. flag from one of the vehicles.

"As coalition forces conducting a patrol near Qamishli encountered a checkpoint occupied by pro-Syrian government forces. After coalition troops issued a series of warnings in an attempt to de-escalate the situation, the patrol came under fire from unknown individuals," coalition spokesman Myles Cagins said.

"In self-defence, coalition troops returned fire. The situation was de-escalated and is under investigation," he added in a statement.

Anglican leader calls his Church 'deeply racist'

He seeks forgiveness from minorities



Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby

citizenship and many were denied basic rights.

"We did not do justice in the past, we do not do justice now, and unless we are decisive in this area in the future, we will still be having this conversation in 20 years' time," he said.

The mass migration was promoted by the government to help rebuild the U.K. from the ruins of war. Yet none received documents confirming their U.K.

If Taliban reduces violence, U.S. may sign peace deal this month

A Taliban spokesperson says progress has been made

REUTERS
KABUL/DUBAI

A U.S.-Taliban peace deal could be signed this month if the Taliban significantly reduces violence, which could lead to an eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, two Afghan government sources and a Western diplomat said on Wednesday.

The tentative timeline shared by sources came a day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said there had been a possible breakthrough in U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar.

The talks had been deadlocked in part over a U.S. demand that the insurgents

agree to sharply reduce violence as part of any American troop withdrawal accord.

Suhail Shaheen, a spokesman for the Taliban's political office in Qatar's capital, Doha, said progress has been made, but refused to share further details.

Doha talks

Doha has been the venue for talks between the warring sides since 2018 even as fighting has continued across the country, killing hundreds of civilians and soldiers as the Taliban have expanded their territorial control.

A third Afghan official

said the U.S. has agreed in principle to a deal, but that it would not be signed until the Taliban could demonstrate a reduction in violence (RIV). The deal could be signed as soon as this month, the official said, requesting anonymity.

A Western diplomat in Kabul said U.S. negotiators were working on an idea that the Taliban should agree on a reduction in violence for at least 10 days with no major violation.

"It is after those 10 days of RIV that both sides can hold talks and firm up plans to hold intra-Afghan dialogue," said the source, on condition of anonymity.

Irish PM says ready to be leader of the opposition

'Party also open to form coalition govt.'

REUTERS
DUBLIN

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said on Wednesday it was likely he would be the leader of the opposition after government formation talks but that Fine Gael party would be willing to help form a government if Sinn Fein fails to.

Left-wing Irish nationalists Sinn Fein surprisingly secured the most votes in the weekend election, but its low number of candidates meant it finished marginally behind the centre-right Fianna Fail and just ahead of Fine Gael by a number of seats.

Sinn Fein leader Mary Lou McDonald said her par-

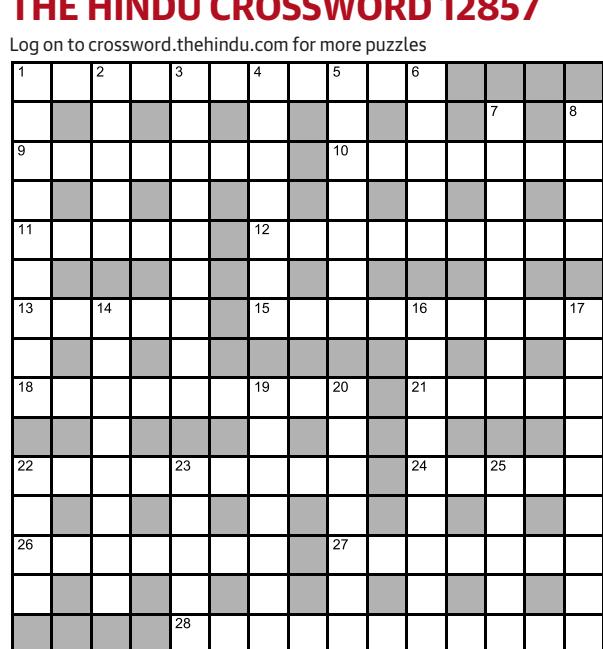
ty "won the election" and would try to form a leftist-led government with smaller parties and independent lawmakers, though that task appeared much harder after the Labour Party said it would not join.

Fianna Fail insisted it would not enter government with either party during the campaign, although its leader declined to repeat earlier outright refusals to consider Sinn Fein.

"... We are the party that founded the state and if we are needed to give the country political stability and good governance, then we are willing to talk to other parties. But, the onus is on Sinn Fein," the PM said.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12857

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



ACROSS

- 1 Believes car, shaking, can still be used (11)
- 9 I've driven away depression, it's clear (7)
- 10 Hide the French heart-throb (7)
- 11 Father has disturbed a high-ranking officer (5)
- 12 Late on transplanting a tree but free from blame (9)
- 13 Six in short film are very bright (5)
- 15 Actions in order for Italian conductor (9)
- 18 Paris priests follow others for these treatments for exhaustion (4-5)
- 21 One girl, fallen back in stormy sea, gets support (5)
- 22 Such a day is sure to be sunny with no chance of rain (9)
- 24 Learner is suffering, it's obvious (5)
- 26 Blazing big – somebody's going round tree (7)
- 27 A couple of learners produce back issue that's not just recent (3-4)
- 28 Clarify viewpoint after detective inspectors break net (11)

DOWN

- 1 When it's time to get up apparently at friend's after having stayed the night? (9)
- 2 Rules announced to bring in means of control (5)
- 3 Cecil and I used foreign language (9)
- 4 Appeal from centre a travesty (7)
- 5 Screams from companions exchanging female for boy (7)
- 6 To some extent, tried a ventriloquist's set-up dodge (5)
- 7 Sharp fall in good use of exact words used in expressing a thought (8)
- 8 Ringleader, about whom there's a charge, is at large (4)
- 19 Alludes to having eastern joints (7)
- 20 Back Mark hosting American (7)
- 22 Solid figure crumbled at intervals (4)
- 23 Towelled and having no sweat, passed over summer's end (5)
- 25 Furious – Red leader isn't showing sign of growing mature (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 12856

L	I	E	G	E	M	E

MARKET WATCH

	12-02-2020	% CHANGE
Sensex	41,566	-0.85
US Dollar	71.34	-0.08
Gold	41,148	-0.31
Brent oil	55.85	-0.25

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	374.10	-0.10
Asian Paints	1893.70	15.60
Axist Bank	755.25	5.30
Bajaj Auto	3146.30	0.85
Bajaj Finance	9771.85	40.25
Bharti Airtel	539.60	5.30
BPLC	474.75	-6.25
Britannia Ind	3136.80	2.10
Cipla	446.80	-3.80
Coal India	180.30	0.95
Dr Reddy's Lab	3195.70	4.50
Eicher Motors	19277.85	268.60
GAIL (India)	130.35	1.20
Grimm Ind	755.35	-3.95
HCL Tech	614.10	3.45
HDPC	2437.60	2.45
HDPC Bank	1249.00	8.40
Hero MotoCorp	2423.05	26.60
Hindalco	193.65	0.00
Hind Unilever	2260.35	10.70
ICICI Bank	549.30	9.55
IndusInd Bank	1277.40	-15.25
Bharti Infratel	243.35	-5.45
Infosys	781.05	7.50
Indian Oil Corp	115.10	-0.95
ITC	213.05	0.45
JSW Steel	293.70	4.95
Kotak Bank	1714.90	37.45
L&T	1297.30	10.40
M&M	531.00	6.95
Maruti Suzuki	7043.30	9.55
Nestle India Ltd.	16297.70	300.55
NTPC	116.80	-0.05
ONGC	106.70	-0.10
PowerGrid Corp	189.35	-0.15
Reliance Ind	1470.30	17.55
State Bank	320.20	-4.15
Sun Pharma	414.60	-3.95
Tata Motors	170.95	1.20
Tata Steel	447.95	3.85
TCS	2170.75	17.35
Tech Mahindra	821.50	1.55
Titan	1269.00	-1.70
UltraTech Cement	4453.75	-12.70
UPL	573.90	-2.75
Vedanta	141.55	0.80
Wipro	244.45	3.20
YES Bank	35.20	-1.65
Zee Entertainment	232.05	0.75

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	71.13	71.45
Euro	77.62	77.97
British Pound	92.29	92.74
Japanese Yen (100)	64.68	64.99
Chinese Yuan	10.20	10.25
Swiss Franc	72.92	73.29
Singapore Dollar	51.31	51.56
Canadian Dollar	53.59	53.84
Malaysian Ringgit	17.18	17.28

Source: Indian Bank

BULLION RATES CHENNAI

Retail Silver (1g)	49.4	(50)
22 ct gold (1g)	3862	(3872)

Inflation climbs, industrial output contracts yet again

Retail inflation climbed to an almost six-year high of 7.59%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A day after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman listed a recovery in industrial output as one of the "green shoots" in the economy, government data showed industrial production contracted again in December 2019, even as retail inflation surged to an almost six-year high of 7.59%.

This is the highest inflation rate since the NDA government came to power at the Centre in May 2014.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) recorded a negative growth of 0.3% in December in comparison to the same month the previous year, according to the National Statistical Office (NSO). The IIP had shown a positive growth of 1.8% in November, after three consecutive months of contraction. IIP contraction came largely on the back of a 1.2% slump in the manufacturing sector. In fact, 16 out of 23 industry groups in manufacturing saw negative growth.

The production of capital goods fell by 18.2% in comparison to the previous year. The electricity sector also contracted marginally. The mining sector, on the other hand, saw growth of 5.4%.

NSO's Consumer Price Index (CPI) data showed retail inflation had surged from 7.35% in December 2019 to 7.59% in January 2020, mostly due to costlier food items.

inflation had surged from 7.35% in December 2019 to 7.59% in January 2020, mostly due to costlier food items.

The last time the inflation rate was higher than this was in May 2014, when retail inflation stood at 8.33%.

Food inflation lower

Food inflation for January 2020 was 13.63%, slightly lower than the previous month's rate of 14.19%.

Vegetables remained costly, showing a 50% inflation rate, despite the recovery in onion prices. The high prices of proteins – pulses, meat, fish and eggs – also contributed to the high rate of food inflation. This is the fourth straight month that retail inflation has crossed the Reserve Bank of India's medium term target of 4%.

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MADHUR TANKHA

As the nation celebrates the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, over 50 artists from across the country have come together at Jawahar Bhawan, to articulate their views through photographs and artworks. This has been made possible by the coming together of the organisation SAHMAT with Aban Raza, an artist and filmmaker, who has curated 'Celebrate, Illuminate, Rejuvenate, Defend, The Constitution of India at 70'.

On display is a copy of the original document that became effective in 1950. The installations, works in mixed media and photos highlight social issues that have come out onto the streets.

When we meet, the nearly six foot tall artist is in a session with 15 undergraduate students of history, political science, and sociology, explaining the work of each artist. Most of the artists on display are young – in their 20s, though there are a few seniors as well. So while Sanna Mattoo from Srinagar is 26 years old, Pablo Bartholomew from Delhi is 64.

Raza, who is also a teacher of printmaking at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), was on campus on December 16, a day after the assault on students. "It was very scary and all my students were fearful. Yesterday five students were roughed up when they tried to cross the barricade after undertaking a protest march from Jamia to Parliament Street." Her reaction came after I pointed out an impactful digital print of JMI students by Ram Rahman. There are other pictures of the protest by students of the minority community against the fear that they would be robbed of their citizenship.

Also present at the exhibition is historian Sohail Hashmi, elder brother of Safdar, overseeing the work spread across the the gigantic space. "SAHMAT was formed as a reaction to Safdar's murder. It is a fight for preservation and creation of creative voices," he says, talking of how the people of Kashmir have suffered over the past few months.

At the exhibition, there are a series of photos by Sanna Mattoo that is titled 'I will never forgive the day my breath started fading away'. There are moving images of a Kashmiri Muslim woman – looking at her fiance, a civilian killed in an encounter. There is also a scene of women mourning death of Aamir, a 13 year old boy. Another disturbing picture of a youngster whose back has torture marks is also on display. These photos on human rights abuse, allegedly perpetrated by se-



Upholding the Constitution through art

Over 50 artists have expressed their views on the Constitution whose 70th anniversary is being celebrated across the country



women and a banner with "Save the Constitution" written on it.

Pablo Bartholomew's Gandhi Statue, Machlipatnam district, Andhra Pradesh, was taken in 1977. Khurshed Ahmad, a Kashmiri artist freelancing in Delhi, has painted a calligraphic work that shows the historic accord of the Delhi Agreement of 1952 signed by Pt. Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah.

Ram Rahman, a co-founder at



SAHMAT says the context of the exhibition is poignant, because of the current agitations focusing on citizenship and rights. "It has led to an amazing burst of creativity, both visual and in text, with poetry songs and slogans, very often created by very ordinary people. There is also much wit and humour in much of the agitation that one is seeing and I think there is a very positive way of citizens engaging with serious issues."

Excerpts from a conversation with Raza.

What was the idea of the exhibition?

The main idea is to take a stand and to say: 'Ok this is what is happening in the country and this is not going in the right direction'. So we have to pause and think about what we have achieved so far since the Constitution was set up 70

Moving stills (Clockwise from left)

A Kashmiri woman looking at her dead fiance; Aban Raza; Jamia protest; Gandhi Statue in A.P.

• SANNA MATTOO, VIJAY S. JODHA, RAM RAHMAN, PABLO BARTHOLOMEW

years ago, and about how we take this forward. The only way is to involve more young people. So we decided to rope in young artists who will take the dialogue forward.

Can art go hand in hand with politics?

The Constitution itself was hand painted by Nandalal Bose and his team. Art now is being used as protest: roads have been painted, murals installed in the city. Art is reminding us that we need to take a stand. Art and politics have to go hand in hand when there is a threat to change the nature of the Constitution. Artists have to be responsible and relevant to society. If you stay apolitical, then it means you are silent, which is not acceptable in today's context and times. You have to be a responsible citizen and save the Constitution.

Do you feel that art is a medium to highlight the concerns of the minorities in Delhi – like the dadas in Shaheen Bagh and students protesting at JMI?

Absolutely. We have included Shaheen Bagh's banner that has a poem by German poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht translated into Hindi. It is "Kya zulmato ke dor mein bhi geet gaye jaye ge / Ha zulmato ke geet jayege" (meaning, "In the dark times will there be singing? Yes, there will be singing about dark times.") The intention was to increase representation; minority's representation. The voices in Kashmir, of young women and Dalits can be heard loud and clear here. There is one artist from Manipur; two from Assam couldn't come because of road blockages.

Could you talk a little about the artist Sanna Mattoo's depiction of life in Kashmir?

Sanna Mattoo is a photographer who is risking her life. She could just disappear one day. Not just her, but any Kashmiri. Where is the accountability? It is absolutely ridiculous that all democratically elected representatives like Omar Abdullah have been in the custody for months.

At Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road; on until February 15th



POP-UP

All great romances

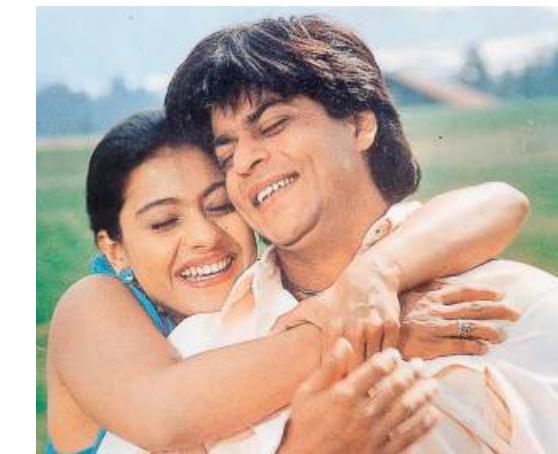
From cinema to quality time with your pets, a curated list of things-to-do over Valentine's Day weekend



Pawfect party

Doggie Bazaar, an online pet-merchandise store, is organising a Doggie Valentine Party on the 16th of February. This event also includes games and prizes. Desserts from Paw Petissiere, a bakery for pets, and pet apparel and accessories from Stars And Snowflakes by Aastha, a Chhattarpur-based brand, will be available for sale at the venue. A canine behaviour session by trainers from the K9 School, Chhattarpur, will also take place. Pet Pipers, a grooming service for pets will be at the premises to offer complimentary massage sessions for your pets.

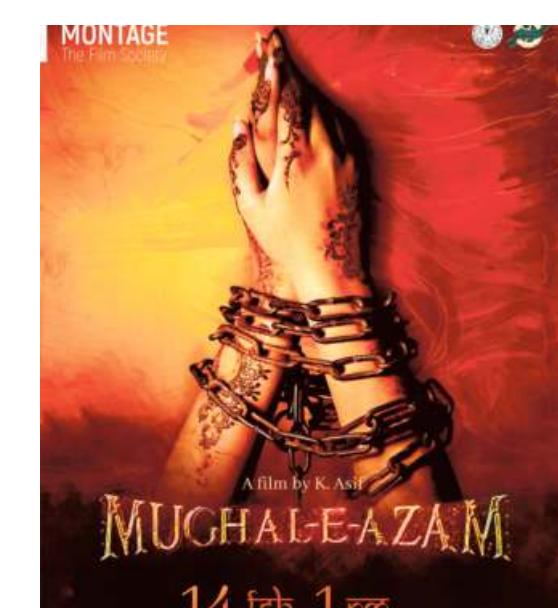
At Auro Kitchen & Bar, Aurobindo Palace Market, Delhi; ₹199 per ticket; on the spot registrations also available



Cinema under the stars

A three-year-old cinema club, founded by Sahil Kapoor and Sanchit Gupta with presence in six cities (Delhi, Gurugram, Pune, Bangalore, Mumbai, and Dehradun), is organising two film screenings this weekend. One is open-air screening, by a pool, and the other is a drive-in experience. The films they will screen for Valentine's Day are two romantic classics - Aditya Chopra's 1995 film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*, starring Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol (14th February), and James Cameron's 1997 classic *Titanic*, starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet (15th February). The viewing experience is modelled along the lines of a silent headphone party, where everyone has to be plugged in to the audio through wireless headphones.

Drive-in at Backyard Sports Club, ₹999 per car for four people and regular seating (sans car) at ₹399; open-air at IBIS Hotel, Aerocity, ₹499 per head. Annual membership to the club at ₹999



MONTAGE

On 14th February, Montage, the film society of Kirori Mal College, Delhi University, will screen the 1960 Hindi film *Mughal-E-Azam*. Directed by K. Asif, the film is a historical drama, starring Prithvi Raj Kapoor, Madhubala, Durga Khote, and Dilip Kumar. Entry is free and open to all college students with a valid college ID Card.

At Academic Auditorium, Kirori Mal College, University Enclave, North Campus; starts at 2 p.m.

Contact us at delhimetro@thehindu.co.in

5 EVENTS WORTH YOUR WHILE



LITERARY

Book exchange

Select Citywalk has organised a book exchange offer where readers can bring their old books and exchange them for a brand new book of their choice. On till 16th February and supported by Rupa Publications and Delhi Book Lovers, it is an initiative organised to encourage book-lovers to read and share more.

VENUE: The Plaza, Saket

TIME: 12 noon - 8 p.m.

PAINTINGS



Automobile art

Art of the Automobile, an exhibition of paintings that honour automobiles as moving pieces of art, by artist Vinita Singh, opens today. Her paintings are inspired by design elements of various vintage cars and their stories. The artworks span oil on canvas, water colour, charcoal, and mixed media.

VENUE: Blomfield, Bikaner House

TIME: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

FOOD



Valentine special

Kampai, a restaurant which specialises in Japanese food, has a special collection of dishes on offer until Valentine's Day. Preparations on this menu include the Chef Special Omakase Veg Sushi Platter, Shitake No Sumashi, Shitake No Sumashi Soup, Portobello and Eringi Skewers, Prawn Tempura and Buta Shogayaki.

VENUE: Worldmark 1, Aerocity

TIME: 12 noon - 11:30 p.m.

EXHIBITION



Mixed media

An ongoing group show of paintings and sculptures titled Trails of Materials explores the journey of three artists, through various objects. Satish Sharma celebrates earth in different shades, while Anju Kaushik uses discarded objects to make sculptures, and Rubikrat Vohra uses paintings to depict human emotions.

VENUE: Triveni Kala Sangam, Mandi House

TIME: 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

FILM



French drama

Alliance Française de Delhi will screen *Le Dernier Vol*, a French film directed by Karim Dridi. This 2009 film, starring Marion Cotillard, tells the journey of a woman who searches for her lover after his plane disappears over the Sahara Desert while attempting a record-breaking flight from London to Cape Town.

VENUE: M. L. Bhartia Auditorium, Lodhi Road

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

The girl from the tea garden

Here, memories of growing up in Munnar and a way of life that has passed into the sepia-tinted pages of a history book

SHONALI MUTHALALY

They say you can never go home again. Nonetheless, I try.

Climbing the steep, tea-draped hill that I recklessly careened down 20 years ago on a bicycle, I notice little has changed, in this part of Munnar at least. Our old bungalow still cascades solidly down the slope, in a series of rose gardens and strawberry patches. In my childhood bedroom, the fireplace crackles with wood, still delivered by truck once a month. And, the lawn is still periodically dug up by herds of wild boar and trampled by elephants, loudly blundering through the vegetable garden at midnight.

As the sun sinks, a chilly darkness descends, and the only sounds are rustling trees and the piercing call of nightjars, in this bungalow with no neighbours. It has been about 140 years since the pioneer European planters hacked their way through the lush shola forests, planting tea and building these remote sprawling homes to conquer the hills. They created a distinct style of



plantation life, a blend of English and Scottish traditions, blurry at the edges after years in India. Like our butler's meatloaf: wholly British, with a pleasing kick of local spices.

Yes, there were butlers. There still are. Uniformed butlers serving canapés, pies and aspic pudding at cocktail parties hosted ev-

ery week in the bungalows on each estate. Hurricane lanterns and roaring wood fires on stormy nights. Hand-cranked rotary phones, with their own exchange, offering fascinating opportunities to eavesdrop on cross connections. Trout fishing and picnic baskets.

Reassuringly, while touristy

Munnar is now an angry tangle of tour buses, choked roads and souvenir stalls, much of the tea estates, and surrounding forests, have remained unchanged for more than a century.

The early years

I'm on a mission to find the Munnar of the pioneer planters.

My father, who worked with Tata Tea in Munnar, points me towards *A Centenary of Planting in the Kanan Devan Hills* by Amita Baig and William Henderson, published in 1978 by Tata-Finlay. The tea company, Kanan Devan Hills and Munnar are inextricably intertwined in a complicated, colourful history.

In 1888, the Kanan Devan Planters Association was created to unite the planters, living in rugged isolation. In 1964, the Tata-Finlay collaboration was formed and Tata Tea launched in 1983. Then, in 2005, Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company succeeded Tata Tea, becoming the first employee-owned plantation company in India.

K Mathew Abraham, Managing Director and CEO of KDHP, ex-

plains how Tata's 24 estates were combined into seven to optimise productivity. This still means that the company owns 24,000 acres of tea and protects about 20,000 acres of forests, swamps and wetlands. Hence, though Munnar town and touristy sites like Madupatty Dam, Top Station and the entrance to Eravikulam National Park are jammed with long lines of tourists, the estates still continue to look the way they did a century ago.

Stating that one of KDHP's objectives was to protect Munnar's eco system, Abraham says that within the estates, "there is no change in land use from early

It was always sporty: planters arrived by horseback, to use the golf course, play cricket and tennis. The pleasingly shadowy men-only bar, dark with wood paneling, still smells like leather and whisky, though it's now dry.

Here too, walls are crowded with animal trophies from hunts long forgotten, yet the most striking feature is 52 hats arranged across a wall. From 1928, the club began a tradition of hanging the hats of planters who served for 30 years in the High Range. Today, when old planters return – this is an active, well-connected community, which even has a rapidly-expanding WhatsApp group – they still gather in the same bar, under these same hats.

Next to the club, secretive

Lodge Heather is eerily silent, except for when a herd of cows noiselessly trudges past. A Scottish Masonic Lodge, set up in 1902, it became infamous with locals who called it 'Thalavetti Kovil', meaning a church where people were beheaded, because they saw the *doras* (British managers) meeting there in secret.

It is locked and there isn't a soul around, so I give up and head to Munnar's most poignant British monument, the century-old Christ Church. Hewn out of rough granite, its intricate stained glass windows let in a kaleidoscope of coloured sunshine. In the hushed silence, I read brass plaques, in loving memory of the pioneer planters, who battled homesickness, cholera, and the jungle.

Driving out of Munnar, I pause at MSA (Munnar Supply Association), built in 1900, reportedly the oldest department store in South India.

When we lived here, this is where we bought our weekly provisions. VN Thampachan still maintains shelves of old handwritten registers, and meticulously fills columns in new ones: all planters are members, and have accounts at MSA.

He chats about how he has lived in Munnar his entire life, working with the Tatas for years, and finally retiring at 58, only to take this job. "When I was young, in the '70s, we used to come here to see the Europeans, who would arrive on horses, with their dogs," he smiles. "I entered for the first time in 1978, to buy my first watch. I was so excited."

With its red oxide floors, wooden shelves filled with local jams and deep freezers packed with bacon, this space too seems unchanged. As I wander through, I see an elderly man smiling at me. He grins, "I remember you: I used to drive you to school." Thampachan nods in agreement, and they ask about my family. Thanks to the local High Range School, where children of tea pickers, estate workers and managers share classrooms, there is a strong sense of community.

And amid the bustle of tourism and wave of commerce, this essentially is why the core of Munnar has remained unchanged. It's defined by the people who have lived here for generations, sharing a rich collective memory and an unshakable loyalty to this small, fiercely independent town: a Munnar you will never see as a tourist.

POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



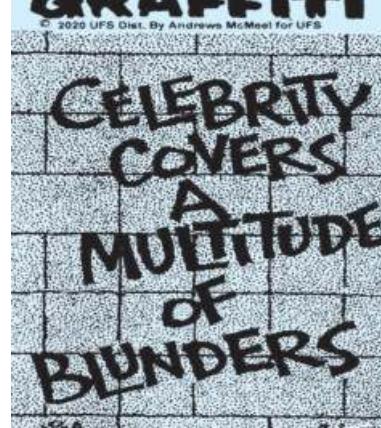
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



GRAFFITI



THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13301

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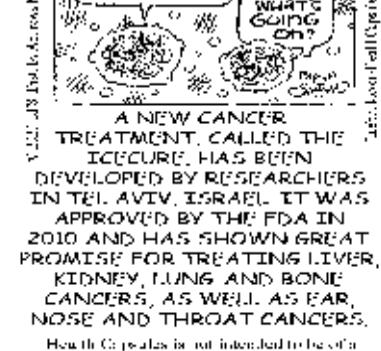
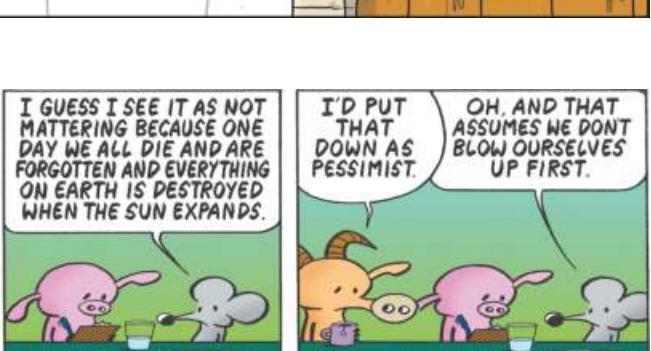
To play the Guardian Quick Crossword, the Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online, scan the QR code.

- 2 Opening (8)
- 4 Grief (6)
- 5 Deviation from the accepted norm (10)
- 6 Squad (4)
- 7 Go by horse (4)
- 10 Of great significance (10)
- 12 Ancestry (8)
- 13 Expressed agreement (8)
- 16 Deep, narrow gorge (6)
- 18 Manipulated (4)
- 19 Top edge of something (4)

The solution will appear on February 14, 2020. Solution No. 13300

ALL	B	E	T	S	A	R	O	F	F
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PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



- 15 Hasten (anag) – capital city (6)
- 17 Make an enemy of (4)
- 3 Enquire about someone (3,5)
- 8 Mist coming in from the sea (4)
- 9 Right to act completely at one's own discretion (4,4)
- 22 Device for removing condensation from a windscreen (8)
- 11 There's no cause for alarm (3,2,5)
- 14 Fall back on (4,2)
- 1 Clear-cut (8)

AN-NDE

Jonassen triggers India's collapse, spins it Australia's way

Memorable triumph for the hosts; Smriti's blistering knock goes in vain for the Women in Blue; Mooney named 'Player-of-the-Series'



In smashing form: Though Smriti Mandhana was in her element, India failed to cross the finish line. ■ GETTY IMAGES

Maxwell ruled out of SA tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Australia's dashing all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is set to miss the beginning of the IPL after an elbow injury on Tuesday ruled him out of the upcoming ODIs and T20 Internationals in South Africa.

The tour of South Africa starts on February 21.

Maxwell will undergo surgery on his left elbow and will be replaced by D'Arcy Short in both squads.

Cricket Australia said he might require at least six to eight weeks to attain full match fitness, which means he is likely to miss the beginning of the IPL too, which is starting on March 29. The 31-year-old is representing Kings XI Punjab in the franchise-based league.

Ishant to undergo fitness tests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Indian paceman Ishant Sharma will undergo a fitness test at Bengaluru's National Cricket Academy (NCA) on February 15.

If the 31-year-old seamer gets through the physical examination, he will join the team in time for the first Test against New Zealand beginning in Wellington on Feb. 21.

Ishant, who has 292 wickets from 96 Tests, suffered a grade-3 tear on his ankle during the Delhi-Vidarbha Ranji Trophy game in January.

He has since been on a rehabilitation programme at the NCA and has gradually started bowling.

Ishant has a specific role in the Indian pace pack dur-



Ishant Sharma.
■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

USA equals lowest ODI score

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
KATHMANDU

The United States joined Zimbabwe in making the lowest total in a 50 over international after it was skittled out for a mere 35 by Nepal on Wednesday.

Leg spinner Sandeep Lamichhane was the wrecker-in-chief, taking six for 16, as USA was finished off in 12 overs in a World Cup League Two match here. Fellow-spinner Sushan Bhari took four for five.

West Indies-born opener Xavier Marshall was the only batsman to get into double figures, making 16.

Nepal, playing its first international series on home soil, reached the target in just 5.2 overs after losing the openers in the second over.

Bumrah loses top spot in ODI rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

India speedster Jasprit Bumrah lost the top spot but all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja climbed three rungs to grab the seventh position in the ICC ODI rankings released on Wednesday.

Bumrah, who went wicketless in India's 3-0 loss to New Zealand, was placed in the second position with 719 points in the bowling chart.

Big jump
Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who snappet six wickets in the series, jumped to 13th spot even as chimanian bowler Kuldeep Yadav slipped to the 16th.

Kiwi pacer Trent Boult, despite missing the limited over series against India due to a broken hand, moved to

India-New Zealand ODI series in numbers



BATTING							
Name	M	R	HS	Avg.	S/R	100s	50s
Shreyas Iyer	3	217	103	72.33	95.59	1	2
K.L. Rahul	3	204	112	102.00	110.27	1	1
Henry Nicholls	3	199	80	66.33	81.55	0	2
Ross Taylor	3	194	109*	194.00	110.22	1	1

BOWLING							
Name	M	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	5w	4w
Yuzvendra Chahal	2	6	3/47	17.50	5.25	0	0
Hamish Bennett	3	6	4/64	33.16	6.86	0	1
Tim Southee	3	4	2/41	46.25	6.37	0	0
Shardul Thakur	3	4	2/60	56.75	8.05	0	0

the top of the bowling chart after Bumrah slipped.

Jadeja, who took two wickets and scored 63 runs in the series against New

Zealand, moved to the seventh spot with 246 points in the all-rounders' list which saw Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi emerge as the new

World No. 1. In the batting chart, India skipper Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma continue to hold on to the top two positions respectively.

RCB to be renamed?

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bangalore could be renamed as Royal Challengers Bengaluru ahead of the upcoming IPL season. While there was no official statement from RCB, the club's recent social media activity has given rise to strong speculation that a rebranding exercise, which includes a change of name, is in the

process. There has been a demand from a section of supporters to change the Bangalore in the team's name to Bengaluru.

Online petition
A year ago, a petition was launched on the [change.org](#) website for the same cause.

"Folks at @rcbtweets, what's happened to our social media accounts? Hope it's just a strategy break," tweeted A.B. de Villiers, while there was a similar post from Yuzvendra Chahal. RCB chairman Sanjeev Churiwala did not comment on the issue.

Record six women in match-officials' list

WORLD T20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI

Nitin Menon is the lone Indian in the ICC's list of umpires for the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup in Australia, where an unprecedented six women will be in the match officials' team for the tournament.

As announced earlier, India's G.S. Lakshmi will become the first woman match referee at a global ICC event. Lauren Agenbag, Kim Cotton, Shaun George, Nitin Menon, Claire Polosak, Ahsan Raza, Sue Redfern, Langton Rusere, Alex Wharf, Jacqueline Williams.

Redfern and Jacqueline Williams are the women umpires named for the eight-team competition.

Williams will stand along with Shaun George in the high-profile tournament opener between Australia and India on February 21.

Match officials: Match Referees: Steve Bernard, Chris Broad, G.S. Lakshmi. Umpires: Lauren Agenbag, Gregory Brathwaite, Chris Brown, Kim Cotton, Shaun George, Nitin Menon, Claire Polosak, Ahsan Raza, Sue Redfern, Langton Rusere, Alex Wharf, Jacqueline Williams.

Harbhajan backs Shubman over Prithvi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HAMILTON

Shubman Gill's stellar show in the recently-concluded India-A series is an indicator that he is ready for Test debut, feels senior off-spinner Harbhajan Singh.

Shubman had scores of 83 and 204 not out batting in middle-order in the first 'A' Test and then scored a hundred opening in the second game,

showing his versatility at different slots.

Prithvi Shaw, back in the Test squad after 16 months, is also a contender in the playing XI with his equally dazzling repertoire of strokes.

Chance

"Shubman should get his chance since he has been part of the team (as reserve opener) for quite a while without playing any Test match," Harbhajan, who has been Gill's State team skipper in white-ball cricket, told PTI.

Their journeys have been intertwined since the U-19 days but in next 10 days, Prithvi and Shubman will provide skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri with a lot to ponder while fighting to be Mayank Agarwal's opening partner in first Test against New Zealand, starting on February 21.

Vintage Paes delights the crowd

CHALLENGER

ASHWIN ACHAL
BENGALURU

He may be 46 and at the fag end of his career, but the Leander Paes show is still going strong. Paes, partnering Australian Matthew Ebden, unfurled his full bag of tricks to record a 7-6(2), 6-4 win over Zhizhen Zhang and Blaz Rola in the first round of the \$1.62,000 Bengaluru Open ATP Tennis Challenger here on Wednesday.

With Ebden low on energy after a gruelling three-set loss in the singles event earlier in the day, it was left to Paes to do the heavy lifting. The Indian was up to the task, delighting the crowd with a magical display.

Paes prowled the net, using a deft touch to place his volleys in the far corners of the court. When required, he swiftly moved across the net to cover the angle. On one occasion, Paes was completely wrong-footed, but showed great reflexes to stretch his hands out to make sweet contact.

In the second set, down 1-3 and 0-40, Paes unleashed his famous fighting spirit. Riding on crowd support, Paes managed to hold serve, before Paes-Ebden broke back to make it 3-3. From here on, Zhizhen and Rola simply wilted under pressure.

Paes made one last electric play, showing great anticipation to cover a thunderous smash from Rola. Paes managed to get the ball back in play, and Rola – shocked that the point had not ended – made an unforced error. A



On top of his game: Leander Paes showcased his repertoire of shots as he and Matthew Ebden beat back the challenge of Blaz Rola and Zhizhen Zhang. ■ V. SREENIVASA MURTHY

short while later, Paes-Ebden sealed the win, and Paes blew celebratory kisses to the fans at the KSLTA Stadium.

For Ebden, the chance to be a part of Paes' swansong was too good to miss. "I've been playing on the tour for many years, so I wanted to find some spark and excitement. As soon as I found out that Leander was set to retire at the end of the year, I texted him saying, 'Lee, I heard you're playing some tournaments in India. I'm coming over, let's play together.' I'm honoured to be a part of this," Ebden said.

In the singles section, Indian southpaw Prajesh Gunnaneswaran opened his campaign with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 win over World No. 609 Sebastian Fanselow of Germany. In another second round

match, Ramkumar Ramanathan brushed aside qualifier Abhinav Shammugam in straight sets.

The results: **Singles:** Second round: Prajesh Gunnaneswaran bt Sebastian Fanselow (Ger) 6-2, 4-6, 6-4; Ramanathan Ramkumar bt Abhinav Shammugam 6-1, 6-3; Mohamed Safwat (Egy) bt Matthew Ebden (Aus) 7-6(5), 6-7(1), 7-5; Sidharth Rawat bt Rishi Reddy 6-2, 6-2; Benjamin Bonzi (Fra) bt Nikola Milojevic (Srb) 6-4, 6-1; Frederico Ferreira Silva (Por) bt Kimmie Coppejans (Bel) 6-3, 3-6, 7-5.

Doubles: First round: Saketh Myneni & Matt Reid (Aus) bt B.R. Nikshep & Vasisth Cherukuri (Swe) & Christopher Rungkat (Ind) bt Prajesh Gunnaneswaran & Sumit Nagal 6-3, 6-4; Matthew Ebden (Aus) & Leander Paes bt Blaz Rola (Slo) & Zhizhen Zhang (Chn) 7-6(2), 6-4.

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 6 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Simmons powers 76ers over Clippers

LOS ANGELES Australia's Ben Simmons delivered his sixth triple double of the season as the Philadelphia 76ers won their 25th home game with a 110-103 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday. **The results:** 76ers bt 110, Clippers 103; Wizards 126 bt Bulls 114; Pelicans 138 bt Trail Blazers 117; Spurs 114 bt Thunder 106; Rockets 116 bt Celtics 105. AGENCE

Barca's Dembele out of Euro 2020

MADRID Ousmane Dembele will miss Euro 2020 after Barcelona announced on Tuesday that the France international will be out for around six months following surgery on his right hamstring. Dembele's absence also means he will miss the rest of this season for Barca. The 22-year-old has suffered a number of hamstring problems since joining from Borussia Dortmund in August 2017 in a deal worth up to €147 million. AFP



Banerjee's health improving: hospital

KOLKATA Legendary Indian footballer P.K. Banerjee, who was admitted to a city hospital with chest infection, is showing improvement in his health conditions, a statement from the medical facility said on Wednesday. The 83-year-old was admitted to the hospital for the second time in less than a month with a history of fever and cough. "Banerjee is showing improvement and responding well to the ongoing treatment," said the statement. PTI



Vettel is Ferrari's first choice: Binotto

REGGIO EMILIA (ITALY) Ferrari team manager Mattia Binotto insisted on Tuesday that Sebastian Vettel remained the team's "first choice" for the future despite reports that Lewis Hamilton could join the Italian stable next season. "Seb is our first choice, our preference. We're talking with Seb and we'll take the time needed. We are focused on the car and the tests. There will be a time for the rest," Binotto said. AFP

FC Goa eases past Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MARGAO FC Goa beat Mumbai City FC 5-2 in a high-scoring match to go three points clear at the top of the ISL table here on Wednesday.

Rowlin Borges (18th) handed Mumbai the lead before Ferran Corominas (20th), Hugo Boumous (38th) and Jackichand Singh (39th) swung the contest Goa's way.

Though Bipin Singh (57th) pulled a goal back for Mumbai, Coro (80th) struck again before Mohammed Rafique scored an own goal in the 87th minute to seal the win for FC Goa.

The victory saw FC Goa remain on course to clinch the top spot in the league while Mumbai remained four points ahead of fifth-placed Chennaiyin FC which has played two games less.

Dalal's blistering century drives Delhi

Jonty Sidhu and Himmat Singh also send Rajasthan on a leather hunt

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Delhi's target of scoring around 400 runs in a day was almost achieved against an inconsistent Rajasthan attack on the first day of their Ranji Trophy match here on Wednesday.

Put in, Delhi finished the day at 389 for six, riding mainly on Hiten Dalal's pre-lunch 102, Jonty Sidhu's 92 and Himmat Singh's 90.

With 52 boundaries and six sixes coming in 89 overs, Rajasthan could do very little as Delhi went about its task in a business-like manner, ready to trade wickets for quick runs.

Setting the pace

The 142-run opening stand came off just 25.3 overs and set the pace of Delhi's innings. Dalal was on fire as he smashed a six and 18 hits to the fence before his dismissal signalled an early lunch.

Before Dalal, who dominated the first session with some fluent stroke-play during his 93-ball blitzkrieg, Anuj Rawat (45, 5x4, 2x6) and skipper Dhruv Shorey (1) departed in quick succession.

Fall of wickets: 1-142, 2-147, 3-158, 4-189, 5-336, 6-372.

Rajasthan bowling: Choudhary 22-6-62-1, Haq 17-2-78-2, Rituraj 14-2-77-0, Chahar 16-0-87-1, Lomror 13-1-59-1, Maneria 7-0-15-1.

Can East Bengal stage a revival?

Faces the tough Punjab test next

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KOLKATA

Deserted by both form and fortune, a beleaguered East Bengal will look to stop the slide when it takes on Punjab FC in an I-League fixture at the Kalyani Stadium on Thursday.

Having lost five matches in the last six outings, East Bengal finds itself struggling at the 10th spot among 11 teams.

With its investor Quess Corp going through the motions after reiterating its decision to divest its stake by the end of the season, East Bengal finds itself in a financial bind. Just when things were not working out for the team, Spanish head coach Alejandro Menendez put in his papers, deepening the crisis. Now, there are talks about some of the foreign players looking to move out.

Menendez's assistant Mario Rivera, who is currently in charge of the team, shot down the speculation, saying

all the players were available for selection. "We are trying to work hard and improve on our shortcomings that have cost us the last few matches. We are looking to focus on each match and not think too ahead of ourselves," he said.

Tough ask

Rivera knows that his side faces a difficult task against Punjab, a team that has lost only once in the last 10 outings and is placed second in the table. "We are here with an eye on the championship and will be looking to return to our rhythm quickly," said Yan Law, the Punjab coach.

After remaining unbeaten in nine matches, Punjab suffered its only defeat against current leader Mohun Bagan in the previous outing at the same venue. The visitors will thus be eager to turn things around, taking on a seemingly weaker opposition in East Bengal.

Menendez's assistant Mario Rivera, who is currently in charge of the team, shot down the speculation, saying

Casillas to run for RFEF presidency?

FOOTBALL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MADRID

Former Spain goalkeeper Iker Casillas plans to run for the presidency of the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF), Spanish media reported on Wednesday.

Casillas told the national sports council (CSD) of his intention to run in the upcoming RFEF elections, reported the Cadena Ser radio station early Wednesday.

According to this media, Casillas "has made the decision to run" for the elections and has informed Irene Lozano who, as secretary of state for sport, is president of the CSD.

Contacted by AFP, the CSD made no comment. The date of the election has not been decided.

The AS newspaper Mundo Deportivo said that "it was Casillas who requested the meeting" with Lozano.

Current RFEF president Luis Rubiales is in perpetual conflict with Javier Tebas, the president of the Spanish league.

According to the rules, the elections should be held in the second half of the year after the Tokyo Olympics. However, Rubiales has asked the CSD to bring the date forward to the first half of the year before Euro 2020, which will run from 12 June to 12 July.



Iker Casillas. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY



On the pedal: Delhi's Hiten Dalal took the attack to the Rajasthan bowlers to notch up a century in quick time. ■ FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

Chinese GP postponed

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
REGGIO EMILIA (ITALY)

The Chinese Grand Prix scheduled for April 19 has been postponed because of the "continued spread" of the deadly Coronavirus, now named COVID-19, motorsport's governing body FIA announced Wednesday.

The postponement also throws into doubt the inaugural race in Vietnam, which takes place two weeks before but where there have also been cases of COVID-19.

"The FIA and @F1 continue to work closely with the teams, promoter, CAMF and local authorities to monitor the situation," FIA said in relation to the Shanghai postponement.

"The global situation regarding this virus will continue to be monitored by the FIA with regard to other motor sport events."

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff, speaking in London on Monday, said not going to Shanghai would be a "shame".

The Scuderia broke with tradition and presented its

Bopanna & Shapovalov in quarterfinals

INDIANS ABROAD

SPORTS BUREAU
ROTTERDAM

Rohan Bopanna and Canada's Denis Shapovalov beat John Peers and Michael Venus (Nzl) 7-6(0), 6-7(5), [10-8].

\$275,000 WTA, Hua Hin, Thailand: Rosalie van der Hoek (Ned) & Ankita Raina bt Desirae Krawczyk (USA) & You Xiaodi (Chn) 6-4, 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF men, Monastir, Tunisia: Filip Cristian Jianu (Rou) bt Ajay Pruthvi Nemakal 6-0, 6-0.

\$15,000 ITF men, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt: Simon Yarbarek (Swe) bt Aryan Goveas 6-1, 4-6, 6-1; Marek Gengel (Cze) bt Sahil Gaware 6-3, 6-1.

Arun Kumar quits as Pondicherry coach

SHAYAN ACHARYA
MUMBAI

Pondicherry head coach J. Arun Kumar has stepped down in the middle of the Ranji Trophy 2019-20 campaign.

He confirmed the development to Sportstar on Wednesday, but refused to reveal the reason behind it. The Cricket Association of

Ferrari unveils car for 2020



Ferrari's SF1000... new car, new hopes. ■ AFP

new racing car outside of its stronghold of Maranello, unveiling it instead amid of sea of red on stage at the Teatro Romolo-Valli in the nearby city of Reggio Emilia.

"This is a very important place for our country," chairman of the Ferrari group John Elkann explained.

"It was in this city that the tricolour flag, which became that of Italy, was created. And Ferrari is proud of Italy and of representing Italy."

"This is a very special year," continued Ferrari Team Manager Mattia Binotto. "It's 70 years of Formula One, we have been there from the start and we are going

to reach the figure of 1,000 Grands Prix, which is something incredible."

Both Vettel and Charles Leclerc said they were impatient to try out the new car, which will be on track next week for the pre-season testing in Barcelona.

"I felt emotional when I saw it," said Monaco's Leclerc. "Now I can't wait to be out on track and try it and to show all the work that has been done on this car."

"It's going to be a great challenge. I'm ready to learn from my mistakes to become an even better driver. What all of us want at Ferrari is to be world champions."

Joseph stars for Gokulam

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
COIMBATORE

In an I-League match that produced some exhilarating end-to-end football, Gokulam Kerala FC scored a much-needed 1-0 win against the defending champion Chennai City FC. The winner was netted by Gokulam's inspirational captain Marcus Joseph.

The Trinidadian striker will not forget that goal in a hurry. Neither did Gokulam, which not only avenged the 2-3 defeat suffered at home last month, but also ended a three-match losing streak to the Chennai men.

There was indeed little that separated the two. They both were on 14 points from 10 matches.

The victory has taken Gokulam to the third spot, with 17 points, behind Mohun Bagan (26) and Punjab FC (17).

Chennai has dropped a place down to sixth.

The result: Chennai City FC 0 lost to Gokulam Kerala FC 1 (Marcus Joseph 78).

Anurag rallies to beat Qamar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Anurag Nenwani battled hard to beat Faisal Qamar 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 in the pre-quarterfinals of the ₹100,000 AITA men's ranking tennis tournament at The Tennis Project, Baliawas, on Wednesday.

The winner of the singles and doubles events will get a wildcard entry into the \$15,000 ITF men's Futures tournament to be staged at the same venue.

The results: **Pre-quarterfinals:** Kunal Anand bt Tushar Madan 3-6, 6-2, 6-3; Lakshay Gupta bt Neeraj Yashpal 7-6(5), 4-6, 6-0; Anurag Nenwani bt Faisal Qamar 4-6, 6-3, 7-5; Raghav Jaisinghani bt Yugank Bhardwaj 6-2, 6-1; Chirag Durhan bt Shivam Dalmia 6-4, 6-2; Gourav Gulia bt Yugal Bnasal 4-6, 6-2, 2-1 (concl.); Akash Nandwani bt Chandril Sood 7-6(8), 6-4; Bikramjeet Singh Chawla bt Jatin Dahiya 6-2, 6-7(6), 6-1.

Doubles (quarterfinals): Jason David & Rushil Khosla bt Vanish Nandal & Vitin Rathhee 7-6(4), 6-4; Raghav Harsh & Cahir Warrik bt Tejas Ahuja 6-2, 6-1; Bharat Phulwaria bt Vanish Nandal 6-3, 7-5 in the boys' pre-quarterfinals of the Asian under-14 tennis tournament at the Yellow Balls Tennis Academy in Baliawas.

In another exciting contest, second seed Rethin Pranav Senthilkumar prevailed over Mayank Sharma 7-5, 2-6, 7-6(4). In the boys' doubles quarterfinals, Jason David and Rushil Khosla combined well to stun the top seeds Vanish Nandal and Vitin Rathhee 7-6(4), 6-4.

The results: Boys (pre-quarterfinals): Raghav Harsh 6-3, 6-3; Samprit Sharma bt Jason David 7-6(6), 2-6, 6-2; Vitin Rathhee bt Kandhavel Mahalingam 6-1, 6-1; Manan Nath bt Cahir Warrik 6-2, 7-6(2); Jigyashan Hazarika bt Tejas Ahuja 6-2, 6-1; Bharat Phulwaria bt Vanish Nandal 6-3, 7-5; Krish Tyagi bt Vishal Prakash 6-1, 6-3, 6-1; Rethin Pranav Senthilkumar bt Mayank Sharma 7-5, 2-6, 7-6(4).

Doubles (quarterfinals): Harshit Yadav & Kshitij Kamal bt Jatin Dahiya & Kunal Anand 6-1, 7-6(5); Aaditya Tewari & Ankit Chopra bt Pallav Kumar Rousha & Anuj Malik 6-4, 6-3; Vilasir Khate & Anurag Nenwani bt Chirag Durhan & Sanjeev Tomar 7-5, 2-6, [11-9]; Lakshit Sood & Chandrill Sood bt Rishiraj Shekhawat & Chinmay Bakshi 6-4, 6-4.

A NO-NDE

RANJI SCORES, FINAL ROUND, DAY 1

GROUP A

At New Delhi: Delhi 389/6 in 89 overs (Anuj Rawat 45, Hiten Dalal 102, Jonty Sidhu 92, Himmat Singh 90) vs Rajasthan. **Toss:** Rajasthan.

Nadiad: Andhra 177 in 84.2 overs (Karan Shinde 49, B. Sumanth 40, Arzan Nagwaswalla 4/18) vs Gujarat 2/0 in 4 overs. **Toss:** Andhra.

Hyderabad: Hyderabad 239/7 in 86 overs (B. Rahul 52, T. Ravi Teja 44, Prateek Reddy 76 batting, Yash Thakur 4/44) vs Vidarbha. **Toss:** Vidarbha.

Patiala: Bengal 138 in 49 overs (Manoj Ti

Abhishek gets the better of Rahul

Saurav and Joshna advance with comprehensive victories

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

Abhishek Pradhan became a pro last year when he was 25 years old. Busy working in the pharmaceutical company of his father, the Mumbaikar realised that he was missing squash when he took the plunge professionally in 2019. He did justice to his huge decision when he reached the final of the PSA Challenger Tour in Jaipur this month.

Ranked 170 in the world and seeded two, Abhishek played a compact game to defeat his State-mate and 19-year-old Rahul Baitha 11-9, 11-9, 11-6 in the men's first round (pre-quarterfinals) of the SRFI-77th Senior National squash championships at the ISA courts here on Wednesday.

Later, the top seeds in men and women's sections, Saurav Ghosal and Joshna Chinappa, reached the quarterfinals with ease. While Saurav scripted a facile 11-4, 11-3, 11-8 win over Sandeep Jangra of Services, Joshna thumped Madhya Pradesh's



Intense focus: After two tight games, Abhishek Pradhan, left, prevailed over Rahul Baitha.

■ M. VEDHAN

Radhika Rathore 11-5, 11-3, 11-4.

Rahul, who took to senior pro squash only six months ago, did match Abhishek (6'1") with his reach and drops. The first two games were

close with Abhishek and Rahul stretching each other to the limits. At 9-9 in the first game, Rahul's drop hit the tin and the next point, Abhishek was awarded a stroke. Similarly in the second

game, the scores read 9-9. Abhishek won the next two points – one when a stroke was awarded to him and the other when Rahul's drop hit the tin. The third game turned out to be one-sided

game, the scores read 9-9.

after Abhishek took a 10-3 lead.

The results (first round): Men:

Saurav Ghosal (TN) bt Sandeep Jangra (Services) 11-4, 11-3, 11-8; Rutvik Rau (Mah) bt Vikas Mehra (TN) 11-9, 11-5, 7-11, 11-8; Abhay Singh (TN) bt Suraj Chand (Mah) 11-3, 11-5, 11-2; Abhishek Agarwal (Mah) bt Jamal Sakib (Services) 11-4, 11-4, 11-7; Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu (TN) bt Ravi Dixit (Services) 11-9, 11-1, 11-9; Yash Fadte (Goa) bt 9/16-Vijay Kumar (Services) 11-8, 11-2, 11-7; Gaurav Nandnag (Del) bt Guhan Senthilkumar (TN) 11-8, 12-10, 11-6; Abhishek Pradhan (Mah) bt Rahul Baitha (Mah) 11-9, 11-9, 11-6.

Women: Joshna Chinappa (TN)

bt Radhika Rathore (MP) 11-5, 11-3, 11-4; Sachika Balvani (Mah) bt Sushmita Panigrahi (Kar) 11-3, 11-4, 11-2; Sanya Vats (Del) bt Abhisheka Shannon (TN) 11-9, 11-7, 11-6; Urwashi Joshi (Mah) bt S. Akshaya Sri (TN) 11-3, 11-4, 11-6; Tanvi Khanna (Del) bt Riya Sisodia (Raj) 11-9, 11-8, 11-8; Aparajitha Balamurukan (TN) bt Shameena Riaz (TN) 11-7, 11-6, 11-2; Sanika Choudhary (Del) bt R. Pooja Arathi (TN) 9-11, 11-9, 11-6, 7-11, 11-5; Sunayna Kuruvilla (TN) bt Rathika Suthanthira Seelan (TN) 11-2, 11-9, 11-3.

'FIH award a huge motivation'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR

India's Vivek Sagar Prasad says winning the FIH Rising Star of the Year award will push him to work hard and achieve greater feats in coming times.

Back in January 2018, when the 17-year-old Prasad was given the opportunity to represent the Indian men's hockey team in a four-nation tournament in New Zealand, he became the second youngest player ever to represent the senior team.

Two years on, the youngster – who got the award on Monday – has transformed into one of the best upcoming players in the world.

"I think there is no better feeling than representing your country at the highest level," he said.



Full of joy: Vivek Sagar Prasad says there is no better feeling than representing the country at the highest level.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

opening goal against world champion Belgium at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium during the second match on February 9, Vivek's confidence was palpable during Australia.

Having scored India's

on doing my basics right. There was an opportunity to go forward as well, now and then, so I utilised that during the first goal. I think we had a few opportunities throughout the match, but we couldn't convert."

"I think I was just focusing

Ahlawat joins Aman at the top

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Veer Ahlawat and Aman Raj returned two-round totals of 12-under 132 to emerge joint leaders at the halfway stage of the TATA Steel PGTI Players Championship. Raj, who had held the sole lead overnight, carded 67 at the Eagleton Golf Resort on Wednesday while Ahlawat struck a 65 as the pair opened up a one-stroke advantage.

Bengaluru's Khalin Joshi produced the day's best score of eight-under 64 to lie third at 11-under 133. Gaurav Pratap Singh and Himmat

Rai (134) were one shot behind in tied fourth. Shubhankar Sharma, the pre-tournament favourite, followed up his first-round 73 with a steady 71 in round two to occupy the tied 35th place at par-144.

Ahlawat (67-65), who started on the 10th tee, fired five birdies on the back-nine, including four on the trot from the 14th to the 17th. He eventually finished seven-under for the day. "I hit a lot more fairways today as compared to round one," the Gurgaon pro said later. "I played well for most of the day but had a bad stretch to

wards the end."

Top scores (after round two):

132: Veer Ahlawat (67, 65), Aman Raj (65, 67); 133: Khalin Joshi (69, 64); 134: Gaurav Pratap Singh (70, 64), Himmat Rai (68, 66); 135: Akshay Sharma (68, 67), Mari Muthu (68, 67), Udayan Mane (68, 67); 136: O.P. Chouhan (68, 68), S. Chikkarangappa (67, 69).



Veer Ahlawat. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

MCC to play one ODI, three T20s in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

Custodian of cricket laws, the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), will play one 50-over match and three T20 matches during its upcoming tour of Pakistan, beginning on Thursday.

All the matches will take place in Lahore, the MCC said in a press release.

Lahore Qalandars will be the Club's first opposition in a floodlit T20 match at the Gaddafi Stadium.

Lahore boast of Pakistan's international stars such as Shoaib Afridi and Fakhar Zaman in its ranks for this

edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Pakistan Shaheens - effectively the nation's A-team – will play MCC in a 50-over match at Aitchison College two days later, and the hosts will be captained by Saud Shakeel.

The Club will then switch to the T20 format against Pakistan's domestic champion Northern, and Multan Sultans of the PSL, which will have England's Moeen Ali and James Vince in its squad for the tournament which begins shortly after the MCC tour.

The tour will take place from February 13 to 19. MCC president Kumar Sangakkara will captain a 12-member squad for the tour, which includes the likes of Ravi Bopara, Roelof van der Merwe and Ross Whiteley. MCC head coach Ajmal Shahzad said: "This tour of Pakistan will be a momentous occasion for everyone involved."

"We expect the standard of cricket to be high during this trip."

"The MCC squad possesses both international and extensive domestic experience which I am sure will prove strong opposition for some of Pakistan's best emerging cricketers."

"We hope that this tour helps contribute to the Pakistan Cricket Board's wish of seeing international teams returning to tour the country on a regular basis."

Test cricket returned to Pakistan after more than 10 years with the Sri Lankan team playing a two-match series last December.

Major Test-paying nations have avoided touring Pakistan since the 2009 terror attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore, which killed eight people and injured several players.

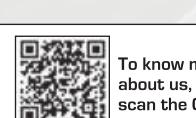
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