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NEARBY



Fake currency racket, based in T.N., busted
MUMBAI
The Mumbai Police Crime Branch has busted a fake currency racket based in Tamil Nadu, where counterfeit notes were printed in Tirupur and sent to Mumbai with couriers for circulation in the city's markets.

MUMBAI LOCAL ▶ PAGE 3

BEST to float tenders to tackle 'change' problem

MUMBAI
The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) Undertaking will be floating tenders to appoint an agency or a bank to collect and deposit its loose change and currency notes. The BEST has seen a surge in collection of coins since it slashed fares last year. Senior officials said ICICI Bank had sought a handling charge which the BEST couldn't afford.

MUMBAI LOCAL ▶ PAGE 3

GR issued to regulate Ola, Uber fares

MUMBAI
App-based cab aggregators such as Ola and Uber can now charge surge pricing fares up to three times of the base fare of black-and-yellow (*kaali peeli*) taxis, which is ₹14.85 per km. This has come into effect after a Government Resolution (GR) issued on Monday. With the State accepting most of the recommendations of the Khatau Committee, the aggregators' fares could be regulated soon.

MUMBAI LOCAL ▶ PAGE 4

Scindia meets Modi, quits Congress

Former Minister set to join BJP, likely to file nomination for Rajya Sabha today

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

ter the party gained power in the State.

Sources in the BJP said Mr. Shah and Mr. Scindia as well as a BJP spokesperson, who is a personal friend of the latter from his banking days, had been in talks for months. Later State-level leader Narendra Tomar had been roped in along with Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Setting off a chain of events, the former MP from Guna drove to Gujarat Bhawan in the morning to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The two later left for the Prime Minister's official residence, 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, in Mr. Shah's vehicle.

Mr. Scindia, 49, announced his decision to quit the Congress party right after his meeting with Mr. Modi.

Stifled in party

While Mr. Scindia's resignation letter was dated March 9, he made it public only after he met Mr. Modi. In his letter addressed to Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Mr. Scindia said he was unable to serve the people within the party and was hence taking this step.

The Congress later said it had sacked Mr. Scindia.

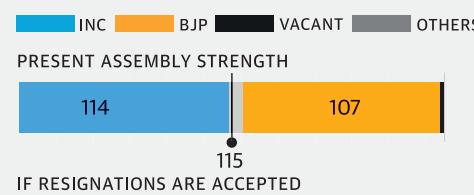
Mr. Scindia's loyalists in the Madhya Pradesh Congress (around 19 MLAs, including a Minister) had landed in Bengaluru on Monday, prompting an emergency meeting of the State Cabinet. Sixteen Ministers had submitted their resignation to Chief Minister Kamal Nath allowing a Cabinet revamp.

In talks for months This, however, was not enough to pacify Mr. Scindia who has been having growing differences in the Congress over what is his due af-

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 11

Crisis deepens

On Tuesday, at least 22 Congress MLAs resigned from the Madhya Pradesh Assembly. If the resignations are accepted, the Congress govt. will lose majority in the 230-member House. The BJP, with 107 MLAs, will be ahead of the half-way mark.



As you well know, this is a path that has been drawing itself out over the last year
JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA in his resignation letter to congress chief Sonia Gandhi



Out of favour: A party worker breaking the name plate of Jyotiraditya Scindia at the State Congress headquarters in Bhopal. ■ A.M.FARQUI

As 22 Cong. MLAs quit, Nath govt. on the verge of collapse

Three more lawmakers join 19 Scindia loyalists

SIDHARTH YADAV

BHOPAL

As many as 22 Congress MLAs in Madhya Pradesh resigned from the Assembly on Tuesday, plunging the government into a crisis.

The BJP held a meeting of its Central Election Committee (CEC) on Tuesday evening but a member told *The Hindu* that the list of its candidates for next month's Rajya Sabha polls will only be out on Wednesday.

Speculation is rife over the future course of the Madhya Pradesh government and Mr. Scindia.

Later in the day, BJP leaders handed over hard copies of the letters to Speaker N.P.

Prajapati. Following the resignations, Chief Minister Kamal Nath requested Governor Lalji Tandon to issue orders for the removal of the six Ministers, who had resigned, from the Cabinet.

Three other MLAs also submitted their resignations to the Speaker.

'No threat to govt.' As the government teetered on the edge of collapse, the Congress held a Legislature Party meeting in the evening that was attended by 92 MLAs, including four Independents. Four Congress MLAs did not attend, sources in the Chief Minister's Office said.

Late at night, Mr. Nath said there was no threat to his government. "We will prove our numbers. The MLAs they have held hostage are in touch with me. Why did they take them to Bengaluru? The BJP must bring them back to Bhopal," he said.

Omkar Singh Markam, one of the 16 Ministers who had resigned on Monday night to enable a Cabinet revamp, told reporters, "Our mission is to serve the people, not go after power. Congress gave us democracy, fought for independence. It will continue fighting."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

COVID-19: BCCI yet to decide on IPL

AMOL KARHADKAR

MUMBAI

Despite various State governments raising concerns about the COVID-19 threat to the Indian Premier League's (IPL)'s 13th edition, scheduled to start on March 29, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has decided to adopt a "wait and watch" approach before taking a final call on the money-spinning T20 tourney.

With the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in India crossing 50, the Karnataka Health Minister B. Sriramulu joined his Maharashtra counterpart Rajesh Tope in appealing to the Centre to reschedule the IPL. The cash-rich league is scheduled to be played in nine States from March 29 to May 24.

While IPL chairman Brijesh Patel didn't respond to

a query, a BCCI executive confirmed to *The Hindu* that the league authorities are monitoring the situation but won't take any drastic step unless instructed by the government.

"Anyway the South Africa (ODD) series is going to be played in packed houses and a veterans league is already attracting large crowds in Maharashtra, so for the time being, the question of exploring other options doesn't arise," the executive said.

Depending on the government's decision, the IPL committee may consider exploring back-up venues from the regions that aren't hit by the virus or play in a few grounds to empty stands.

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 17
CABINET LIKELY TO TAKE STOCK TODAY ▶ PAGE 5

6 contacts of Pune couple isolated

JYOTI SHELAR

MUMBAI

Six people who came in contact with the Pune couple, who tested positive for COVID-19, have been placed under isolation at the Kasturbha Hospital here on Tuesday. Additional municipal commissioner Suresh Kakani said their samples have been collected and reports are expected to come by Wednesday. According to civic officials, the Centre had sent the list with the names of the six co-passengers of the Pune couple, who returned to India from Dubai on March 1. They were then contacted and sent to the isolation facility.

THREE MORE TEST POSITIVE IN MAHARASHTRA ▶ PAGE 7
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 2, 13

24 arrested for Meghalaya lynching

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The police in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya on Tuesday arrested 24 persons in connection with the lynching of a man on Sunday night.

The incident, triggered by rumours about childlifters spread through social media, was similar to the killing of Goa-based sound engineer Nilopal Das and his friend Abhijeet Nath in Assam's Karbi Anglong district in May 2018.

Witchcraft was initially believed to have made the villagers of Syntung attack a group of nine men from Shillong, who had gone there for a picnic.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Muted fun



Toned-down colours: Youngsters celebrating Holi on R.K. Beach in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. Celebrations were a low-key affair across the country as people stayed away from big gatherings amid the COVID-19 scare. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

Yes Bank effect: a word of caution

State to focus on nationalised banks

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

In the wake of the collapse of Yes Bank, the Maharashtra government has directed all its departments, civic bodies and semi-government corporations to not transact with private banks for the time being, and focus only on nationalised banks.

Minister of State for Finance, Shambhuraje Desai, told *The Hindu*, "Finance Minister Ajit Pawar and I held a meeting with senior officials, including the Chief Secretary and finance secretary after the Yes Bank episode. We discussed the situation and have given directions to the administra-

tion," he said.

The Minister said no new transaction will be initiated with a private bank for the time being. "Government departments, semi-government corporations and civic bodies have independent accounts. Many in the State had already opened accounts with Yes Bank and are facing problems now. We do not want government money to be stuck and have therefore ordered the departments and corporations to go ahead with new transactions with nationalised banks only," said Mr. Desai.

According to sources in the Finance Department, the Yes Bank episode may impact the Mahatma Phule Crop Loan waiver scheme as a few cooperatives had their

deposits with the bank.

The Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, the Mumbai and Thane fire brigades too had their accounts with the bank, apart from the City and Industrial Development Corporation's home loan account, and the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited.

A senior official from the Co-operation Department, which is executing the crop loan waiver scheme, said the issue is likely to be discussed in Wednesday's Cabinet meeting.

"We have not received any serious complaints as of now, but will be monitoring the situation and if needed, steps will be taken accordingly," he said.

A Mumbai surgeon is on a mission to locate the noted sculptor's work

JYOTI SHELAR

MUMBAI

A Mumbai-based surgeon is on a quest to trace all 372 sculptures made by his great grandfather, the iconic sculptor Ganpatrao Mhatre, who took the art world by storm in the 19th century with '*Mandirpathagamini*' (To the Temple). The life-size statue shows a Maharashtrian woman in a nine yard sari, on her way to a temple.

Dr. Hemant Pathare has located 280 figures so far. Among the ones he is still looking for are a Saraswati standing on a peacock that

went missing from a Sangli museum, a marble statue of Lord Ram, a bust of King George V that disappeared from a Gujarat college and another of Sir William Dring of the East Indian Railway Company that once stood at Howrah station.

Life-size statues "There was also a full-size marble bust of Zarathustra made for Parsi philanthropist Bomanji Dhirshaw Petit, and a seated Ganesh for Sir Hurkisondas Narrotandas. No one knows their current location," said Dr. Pathare. At least 50 of

the yet-to-be-traced sculptures are life-size statues and busts. Mhatre's preserved records are his main references, but articles, books and relatives have also helped. In 1896, Mandirpathagamini won the best sculpture prize and a medal from the Bombay Art Society. "Till then, all memorial sculptures, bronze or marble, were done by Europeans. Indian

royalty did not entrust such tasks to Indian sculptors," said Dr. Pathare.

"It is easy to identify his work. The eyes, face, features, everything is true to life," he said.

The doctor's search has taken him across the country. He traced some figures in the State Bank of India, Central Bank of India and the Masina Hospital in Mumbai and some across the border at the Karachi Parsi Institute. "The royal family in Mewar graciously allowed me access to their collections," he said.

Dr. Pathare, who is attached to the Jaslok Hospital, plans to publish his work as a coffee-table book.



From another era: Dr. Hemant Pathare with the replica of the Mandirpathagamini figure at his residence. ■ PRASHANT NAKWE

Bollywood faces the heat over COVID-19 outbreak

15-20% impact expected on revenue from big ticket Hindi films, far less impact on South industry; board exams, protests also factors, say observers

NAMRATA JOSHI

MUMBAI

Baaghi 3, at ₹17.5 crore net, may have lagged in the highest opening day collections for a Hindi film in 2020 so far, but it is also the first to face the adverse effect of the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to the box office forecast of trade magazine *Super Cinema*, the opening day range for director Ahmed Khan's *Tiger Shroff* starrer had been projected at a much higher range – between ₹26 and ₹28 crore – than what has been delivered. "Weekend was better, but the trends have been lower than expected, the collections have been affected nationwide," says Amul Mohan, editor of the magazine.

Shailesh Kapoor, CEO of media consulting firm Ormax Media, concurs. Ormax's opening day projections for the film had also been substantially higher at

₹21 crore. Its projections for the upcoming *Sooryavanshi* stand at a whopping ₹30.8 crore. However, in a virusless market, the figure for the Rohit Shetty biggie starring Akshay Kumar would have been even higher at about ₹36 crore, says Mr. Kapoor.

Ormax will conduct the study every three days. The next round of figures will be out on Thursday.

Delhi-based exhibitor Sanjay Mehta, however, thinks there are several factors eating into the earnings of *Baaghi 3* and other recent films. "The low pre-Holi period and board exams have come in the way and *Baaghi* is a predominantly youth-oriented franchise," he says.

The impact has been felt far less in South film industries with fewer cases detected so far. An Ormax study of the impact of COVID-19 on theatre-going behaviour conducted across 80 cities in the Hindi-Tamil-Telugu industry belt on Thursday-Friday-Sa-

turday last week showed that 23% regular theatre goers in India are likely to stay away from theatres till the threat is reduced. The proportion is higher in Hindi-speaking markets (26%) than in south India (17%).

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According to Mr. Kapoor, it's the possible changes in release calendar that are more worrying. Already there are rumours about Reliance Entertainment delaying *Sooryavanshi*, slated for a March 24 release, and Kabir Khan's 83 that is supposed to come out on April 10. A *Sooryavanshi* spokesperson, however, said the decision will be taken only on Wednesday.

things will come to a head if things go out of control in the weeks ahead and if the government decides to shut down theatres temporarily. He remembers the case of a film *Main Khiladi Tu Anari* distributed by him back in 1994. "It started off at 100% collection. On the 6th day, the Delhi government ordered cinema closure due to a plague scare. The film couldn't gather the same momentum when the theatres reopened," he remembers.

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"A massive 27-film franchise like James Bond has a bigger market and a lot more at stake but the seven-month postponement could make even the bigger Bollywood producers do a rethink," says Mr. Mohan. "It will mean that there will be no film of sizeable scale and star cast in the next three-four weeks," says Mr. Kapoor. The first quarter has anyhow been bad with only *Tanhaji* and *Baaghi 3* faring well.

The only other time the industry had faced such a crisis in recent past was during demonetisation. However, things had stabilised by the time of the big Christmas releases. "Uncertainty is a big factor. With six new cases detected, theatres in Kerala will be closed till March 31 and film releases postponed. A lot, for Bollywood, however, will still depend on how *Baaghi 3* fares in the first week," says Mr. Mohan.

Viral effect

■ The international convention of the Indian film industry, FICCI Frames, scheduled to be held in Mumbai from March 18 to 20, has been postponed to a "later and safer date".

■ Saregama India's foray into the live events space with musical *Disco Dancer*, a stage adaptation of B. Subhash's cult classic film of the same name starring Mithun Chakraborty, was to have its premiere run in Mumbai from March 26 to 29. It now stands deferred to June.

■ The International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) awards, scheduled to be held for three days in

Indore from March 27, now stand postponed. New dates to be announced later.

■ The big trailer launch event of Kabir Khan's 83, scheduled at MMRDA Grounds, has been postponed. "We don't want to have a public event because of the coronavirus situation. We are monitoring the situation and will take decision soon," Mr. Khan said.

■ Deepika Padukone has cancelled her trip to Paris Fashion Week.

■ The shoot of Maddock Films' Rajkumar Rao-Kriti Sanon starrer, set to start in Delhi on March 15, has been cancelled.

23%

regular theatre-goers in India said they are likely to stay away from theatres till COVID-19 threat is reduced.

This proportion is higher (26%) in Hindi speaking market than in south India (17%).

Source: Ormax media survey



Belapur couple stuck in Iran

RAINA ASSAINAR

NAVI MUMBAI

A retired officer of the Public Works Department and his wife, both residents of Belapur, are among 44 Indian tourists stranded at Qom in Iran due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Sharifuddin Momin (72), who retired as PWD secretary in 2003, and Jaitunbi (70), were on their way to Iraq, their son Rafiq (44), an architect, has said.

On February 21, the couple and 42 others, mostly from Kolhapur, flew from Mumbai to Tehran. The group of senior citizens, which was going to Najaf and then Baghdad to visit the mausoleum of Abdul Qadir Gilani, reached Tehran airport at 6 p.m. and had a connecting flight to Iraq at 10 p.m. "The group had booked the pilgrimage with Saad Tours and Travels based in Kolhapur. The travel group has arranged their



Jaitunbi and Sharifuddin Momin. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

stay and food till now," Mr. Rafiq said.

He said the tour was supposed to be till March 3. On learning that the Iran-Iraq border was closed, the tour operator took the group to visit mosques, dargahs and holy places in and around Tehran. "They booked a ticket for India for February 28. But from February 27 evening, the Indian government stopped flights from Iran," Mr. Rafiq said.

The group is now waiting for news on when they can return home. "A medical team from India has reached Iran and they have been sending back samples, but this group is still waiting to be tested. They are frustrated. We are in touch through video calls. I had approached [NCP leaders] Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule, tweeted about the problem, yet their is no clarity," Mr. Rafiq said.

Airport gets more doctors, thermometers

DGCA warns airlines to ensure self-declaration forms are available on board

ADITYA ANAND

MUMBAI

With all international passengers arriving into the country being screened for COVID-19 and the resultant queues over the long weekend, Mumbai airport has added 90 doctors and infrared thermometers.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), meanwhile, has pulled up airlines for not ensuring enough self-declaration forms are available on board, leading to crowds at the terminals.

Officials of Mumbai International Airport Ltd said 1,27,819 passengers from 1,090 aircraft have been screened at the airport since January 18. Between Monday and Tuesday, 10,902 passengers from 96 flights were screened. The directive to screen all arriving international passengers was issued



Passengers being screened at Mumbai airport on Tuesday. ■ AP

on March 5.

"We have requisitioned 30 more doctors from the Brihanamumbai Municipal Corporation along with 10-15 medical and paramedical staff from the Airport Health Organisation (AHO). This will be enough to effectively screen the arrival corridor," an airport official said.

From 42 doctors and pa-

rmedics in three shifts last week, Mumbai airport now has 136 doctors and paramedics working in three shifts, along with 25 infrared thermometers.

The official said passengers were being screened by the AHO at 10 additional counters being set up by the airport. "Passengers are advised to fill up the self-re-

porting form in the flight before disembarking and are mandated to submit it to the AHO at the time of screening. However, this was not happening effectively, leading to long queues," the official said.

Taking note of this, the DGCA on Tuesday evening issued a circular. "It has come to our knowledge that some airlines are not ensuring availability of self-declaration forms as specified in the circular dated March 4. This is leading to long queues at arrival points," it said.

The aviation regulator warned all airlines operating on the international sector to ensure sufficient self-declaration forms as specified by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare are available on board, and to get passengers to fill them in duplicate before disembarkation.

Timings

MUMBAI

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 11
RISE 06:50 SET 18:47
RISE 20:39 SET 08:08
THURSDAY, MAR. 12
RISE 06:49 SET 18:48
RISE 21:42 SET 08:53
FRIDAY, MAR. 13
RISE 06:48 SET 18:48
RISE 22:43 SET 09:39

Mumbai Weather	max min
Mumbai Airport	30 19
Pune	33 16
Mumbai City	30 19

Mumbai Today
29°C The morning will be hazy and pleasant. Day will be slightly warm with a partly cloudy sky.

Mumbai Tomorrow
29°C Dry weather is likely. A slightly warm day is forecast. A partly cloudy sky will prevail. Night will be pleasant and hazy.

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INSTITUTE OF WOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

(INDIAN COUNCIL OF FOREST RESEARCH AND EDUCATION)
18th Cross, Malleswaram, Bengaluru - 560 003.

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Pune 33 16

Mumbai City 30 19

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GUVNL hereby invites e-tender for purchase of **500 MW RTC power** for the period **01-04-2020 to 30-06-2020** at GETCO Periphery (interconnection point of Gujarat STU with CTU) as per Ministry of Power (MoP), Govt. of India Guidelines dated 30-03-2016. RFP will be available at www.mstcecommerce.com from 09-03-2020. Bid has to be submitted online through DEEP Portal of MoP. All terms and conditions shall be as per RFPA.

Date: 10-03-2020 General Manager (Commerce)

max min

Mumbai Airport 30 19

Pune 33 16

Mumbai City 30 19

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max min

Mumbai Airport 30 19

Pune 33 16

Mumbai City 30 19

E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender ID: 2020_AAI_45221_1

E-Tender duly filled in and digitally signed are hereby invited for Hotel License for "Tour Operator cum Hotel reservation counter" at Domestic Arrival Terminal at Chennai Airport for a period of Three (03) years with Minimum Reserve License Fee (MRLF) of ₹ 3,3,500/- (Rupees Three Lakhs Thirty Three Thousand Five Hundred only) per month with Annual Compound Escalation plus all applicable taxes and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of ₹ 2,50,000/-

The tenders are to be filled online and technical documents are to be scanned and submitted through e-tender only. Any changes in the Tender schedule, corrigendum, etc. shall be available only on the website and will not be published in newspapers.

The last date of e-tender downloading - 27.03.2020 upto 1530 hrs, uploading - 27.03.2020 upto 1530 hrs. Opening of Technical bid through e-tender - 30.03.2020 at 1530 hrs and opening of Financial bid through e-tender 08.04.2020 at 1530 hrs. For further details, please visit AAI website www.aai.aero/ portal address <https://etenders.gov.in> or contact the office of Jt. GM (Commercial), Airports Authority of India, 2nd Floor, Operational Offices, Chennai Airport, Chennai - 600 027, Contact No.: 044-22560528/4239/4613.

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IN BRIEF

4-year-old boy drowns in tank in Govandi

MUMBAI
A four-year-old boy drowned after he slipped and fell into a tank in Govandi on Tuesday. Mohammad Arif Nasullah Shaikh was playing with friends when the incident occurred. Before rescue teams reached the site, passers-by rescued the boy. The police took him to Rajawadi Hospital, where he was declared brought dead. The body has been taken for a post-mortem.

Man drowns in Thane, teen dies in Palghar

THANE
A 32-year-old construction worker from Kalyan drowned in a creek while celebrating Holi, the police said. In another incident, an 18-year-old girl died after she fell off a motorcycle in Vasai in Palghar district. PTI

Pollution watch

	FORECAST TODAY (AQI*)
Bhandup	97
Colaba	86
Malad	228
Mazagaon	372
Worli	144
Borivali	318
BKC	150
Chembur	235
Andheri	138
Navi Mumbai	292

* AIR QUALITY INDEX
 Good 0-50 | Satisfactory 51-100 | Moderate 101-200
 Poor 201-300 | Very poor 301-400 | Severe 401-500

IN MAJOR CITIES

	PM10	PM2.5	Avg.
Mumbai	125	82	199
Delhi	177	83	176
Pune	84	53	67
Ahmedabad	156	86	186

Fake currency racket based in T.N. busted

Notes were printed in Tiruppur, sent to Mumbai for circulation



As good as real: The police found genuine currency notes being scanned and then printed on paper similar to the one used in currency printing at the accused's house. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

GAUTAM S. MENGLE
MUMBAI

he had been arrested in an attempt to robbery case in 2011 and had come to Mumbai from his native Tiruppur for a court appearance. Before he left, he was approached by Sarvanan Vaniyar, who gave him the counterfeit notes and told him to hand them over to a receiver in Mumbai," a Crime Branch officer said.

Raid in Tiruppur

Acting on the information, the Unit IV sent a team to Tiruppur, which, working with the local police, conducted a raid at Mr. Vaniyar's residence on Monday.

"We found a set-up in Mr. Vaniyar's house, where genuine currency notes were being scanned and then printed on a paper similar to the one used in currency printing.

The accused would then paste green-coloured plastic strips on the notes to make them look like security strips," the officer said.

The Unit IV team seized a total of 1,473 notes of ₹500 denomination and 85 notes of ₹200 denomination, with a face value of ₹7.55 lakh, from Mr. Vaniyar's residence and arrested him.

The police are now working on apprehending the person who was to pick up the consignment from Mr. Nadar. The team is also trying to find out how long the racket has been active and pumping fake currency notes into the city's markets.

Last week, the Crime Branch Unit IX had arrested two people who were allegedly printing counterfeit currency notes using a sophisticated set-up in Ulwe in Navi Mumbai. The racket was found to have links in Kerala. The Unit IV is probing to confirm whether the two rackets are connected.

The accused have been identified as Aslam Khan (41) and Firoz Khan (39), both residents of Sewri. The duo was intercepted on the basis of a tip-off received by senior police inspector Sunil Mane of Unit X.

A Crime Branch officer said, "According to the information, the duo would be present near the court in Sewri on Tuesday with drugs. As soon as we received confirmation from our informant about their arrival, we stopped and searched them."

The duo was arrested and charged with possession of commercial quantities of a controlled substance under the Narcotic Drugs and Psy-

He was arrested and booked for possession of counterfeit currency notes under the Indian Penal Code. "During his interrogation, Mr. Nadar told us that

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After cooler than usual March, city to see warmer days soon

Summer-like situation may be seen after March 15: IMD

TANVI DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Mumbaikars can expect respite from heat for the next few days, after which temperatures will start rising. The city has seen unusually cool days this month, with daytime temperatures staying under 30 degrees Celsius and night temperatures under 20 degrees, even though March usually records maximum temperatures as high as 41 degrees.

Despite some very hot days in February, this month has not turned out to be as hot as expected. For at least the past week, daytime temperatures in Mumbai have been between 29 and 31 degrees Celsius. The first 10 days of March have been warmer as compared to the last six years.

Even on Tuesday, while people celebrated Holi, the day started with haze and a cloudy sky. As the day progressed, the mercury rose slowly, with the maximum temperature touching 30.5 degrees Celsius, two degrees below normal. The minimum temperature was closer to normal at 21.2 degrees Celsius. The normal daytime temperature for March is 32.8 degrees Celsius while minimum is 21.4 degrees.



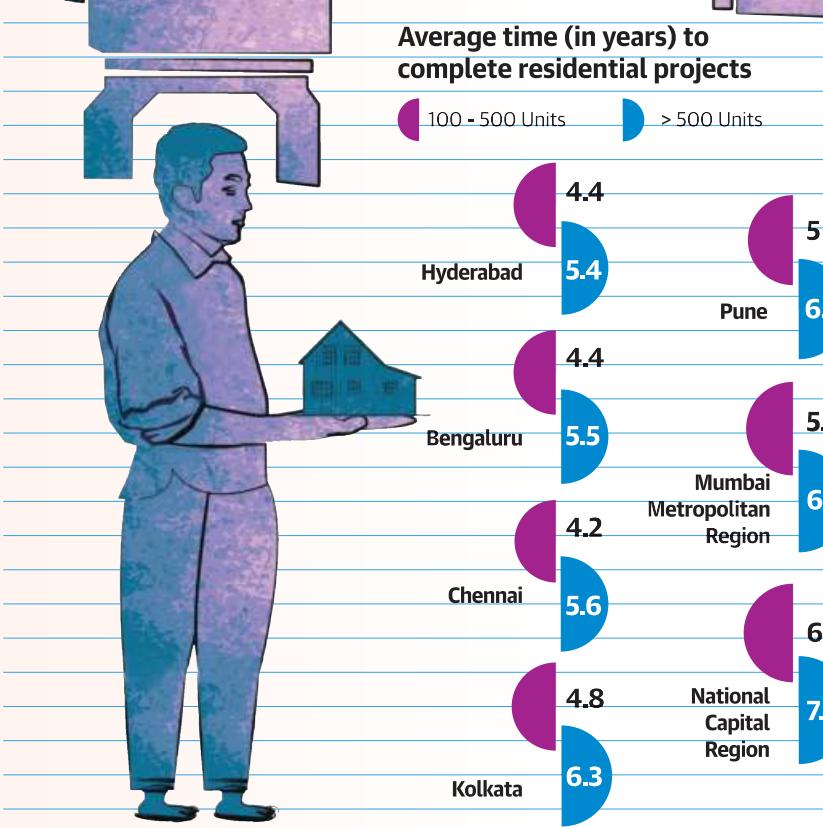
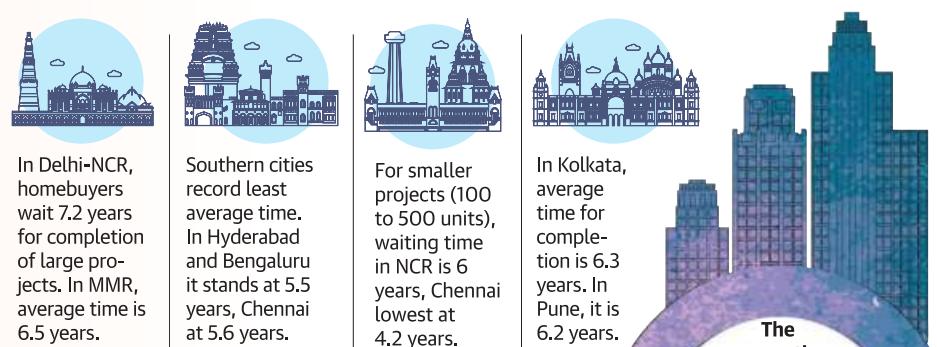
Brief heat: The first few days of March were hot, with asphalt on the roads heating up to form a mirage. ■ AADESH CHOURHARI

North India has been getting frequent western disturbances which also "spill" cooler air and keep a check on temperatures. This wind pattern will break from March 14, so expect a rise in temperatures (maximum touching 33-34 degrees Celsius), which will be above normal."

K.S. Hosalikar, the deputy director general of IMD, on Tuesday tweeted, "Currently Mumbai is enjoying its bit extended pleasant season with max temp around 30 Deg C. As per model guidance, trend to continue for next 48 Hrs in Konkan & N Madhya Mah. Thereafter gradual rise likely. Mumbai summer like situation could be from 15,16 March...with max 34°C. (sic)"

MMR records second longest project completion time

Among top 7 cities, from 2010 to 2019, homebuyers in NCR had to wait for the longest time to get possession of flats



TEXT: LALATENDU MISHRA, SOURCE: ANAROCK RESEARCH

The average time taken to complete smaller projects of 100-500 units each in the top 7 cities is 5.2 years, and 6.5 years for large projects of >500 units each

- Most projects in the southern cities are joint developments where landowners get a share of the resulting units.
- Among the major reasons for NCR to trail behind are delays due to land litigation issues, lack of professionalism by many developers in project delivery, and periodic construction bans by the National Green Tribunal and Supreme Court due to rising pollution levels.
- "The difference of 1.5 years in average completion time between NCR and the southern cities must be measured in the real-time strain it adds on consumer patience and optimism," Anuj Puri, chairman, ANAROCK.

ILLUSTRATION & INFOGRAPHIC: SANJAY TAMBE

7-year-old horse wins C.N. Wadia Gold Cup

Event held in memory of Sir Cusrow Wadia, instrumental in starting racecourse

VINAYAK M. ZODGE
MUMBAI

Seven-year-old horse Vulcan won the 76th C.N. Wadia Gold Cup organised at Mahalaxmi Racecourse in Mumbai this weekend. Every year, the event is sponsored by the Wadia Group in memory of late Sir Cusrow N. Wadia, a visionary and philanthropist from the Wadia family.

Vulcan has been trained by Adhiraj Singh Jodha. Jockey A. Sandesh rode the horse to victory.

Children who have survived open-heart surgery or stroke performed at the event on Sunday. At least 10 paediatric doctors and heart patients were also felicitated on the occasion.

The Sir Ness Wadia Foundation, a charitable trust set up in 1969, has disbursed funds to causes ranging from medical needs of the less privileged to scholarships for



A legacy: Ness Wadia with child cardiac patients at Mahalaxmi Racecourse. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

people with disability and drought relief in different parts of the world.

"It is a moment of pride for me to represent Wadia Group on this special occasion to commemorate the immense contributions made by Sir Cusrow Wadia,

not only as a successful businessman but as a custodian of the legacy of philanthropy his parents left him," said Ness Wadia, managing director, Wadia Group.

"A keen horse-racing enthusiast, Sir C.N. Wadia was instrumental in giving Mumbai its first and only world-class racecourse, which is

one of the city's greatest architectural landmarks. The lasting legacy left behind by him has been a huge responsibility for successive generations of the Wadia family to carry on and I am certain that future generations will continue to walk the path laid down by him."

State accepts bid to regulate Ola, Uber fares

Ceiling for surge price set at 3 times *kaali peeli* rates

AJEEET MAHALE
MUMBAI

App-based cab aggregators such as Ola and Uber in the State can charge surge pricing fares up to three times of the base fare of black-and-yellow (*kaali peeli*) taxis, which is ₹14.85 per km, a Government Resolution (GR) on Monday said. The aggregators' fares could be regulated soon, with the State government accepting most of the recommendations of the Khatua Committee.

In its report, the committee had recommended a ceiling fare for three categories of aggregator cabs: regular, mid-sized and premium, at ₹26, ₹32, and ₹38 per km, respectively. The base fare for the three categories was fixed between ₹14 and ₹16 per km. While accepting the



In a GR issued on Tuesday, *kaali peeli*'s have been asked to implement a telescopic fare policy. ■ FILE PHOTO

need to regulate the surge, the GR states the new formula to cap the fares.

A.L. Quadros, leader, Mumbai Taximen's Union, said the State should ideally implement the Maharashtra City Taxi Rules, 2017, which has been stuck in litigation, instead of introducing piece-meal measures like this.

The four-member committee, headed by retired IAS officer B.C. Khatua in 2016, tabled its findings in 2017. In

addition to fixing the fares of app-based aggregators, the committee was also asked to suggest fares for *kaali peeli* taxis and autorickshaws in Mumbai. It had suggested a new telescopic fare for taxis, where the increase in journey length would attract a discount in fares, and a 'Happy Hour' scheme, where there would be lower fares during lean periods.

In the GR, the government has agreed to the telescopic

fare, but rejected the lean-period suggestion. Mr. Quadros said they had rejected both and that the telescopic fare proposal was not feasible. "What the report doesn't account for is that taxi drivers who agree to long-distance journeys often have to return empty. Who will pay for the loss borne by the driver? If this is implemented, drivers will have no option but to refuse long journeys," he said, adding they will take up this issue and demand a fare hike.

"The Khatua Committee recommended a fare hike three years ago. Since then, the price of gas has increased by ₹9.5 per kg. Hence we are demanding that the minimum fare be increased to ₹25," Mr. Quadros said.

The minimum fare for black-and-yellow taxis is ₹22 for the first 1.5 km, beyond which they charge ₹15 per km. For autorickshaws, the base fare is ₹18 and the per-km rate is ₹12.

A city, a guru and a deep calling: U.S. violinist connects East, West with her music

American violinist Sarah MeeRan Cave, who followed her heart to learn Indian Classical music from a guru in Mumbai, keeps his memory alive in her music, in a city she loves

SHUBHA SHARMA
MUMBAI

From the way she boards an autorickshaw, you might be deceived into thinking she is a Mumbaikar. Balancing a violin in one hand, purse slung over her slim shoulder, Sarah MeeRan Cave executes the perfectly timed leap before the vehicle courses through Bandra's multiple lanes.

Ms. Cave is equally adept at jumping into local trains. Over the years, she has developed a relationship with Mumbai and its "amazing vitality". "There's that whole train culture, you know, like, 'Where are you getting down?' And then you have to know what side your stop is going to be on, and you have to really be firm, or you're just going to get shoved off the train."

She had just one day in the city before flying off to Los Angeles, where she lives, and the separation was beginning to gnaw at her. She would return in the winter for sure. "Bombay always makes me a more open-minded, courageous person. I feel like I thrive more here," she said.

No other city in India, or the world, makes her feel as free. Or as safe. "I've never had an issue as a foreigner." The reason: "there's an

acceptance of different types of people. There's a respect, like a, 'You do your thing well, don't get in my way and we'll be fine.' And then if something happens, 20 people will come and help you."

Leap of faith
The pull came in the spring of 2015, in a way she would never have imagined.

Ms. Cave began violin studies at the age of three. She eventually worked for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and went on to teach violin in the U.S. and abroad, including the Bangalore School of Music, where she conducted their chamber orchestra.

From 2013 to 2015, she attended the Violin Making School of America. "In Utah, of all places," she says. "It never quite felt right." Those years were a struggle to find her centre.

In 2015, Ms. Cave won a full scholarship to a three-week Eastern music residency at the Banff Centre of the Arts in Canada.

The residency would give her an exposure to Turkish, Persian, Arabic and Hindustani music. On the faculty was renowned sarangi player Dhruba Ghosh. "From the moment he walked into the space



Liberated: Sarah MeeRan Cave playing the violin at Bandra Reclamation. The musician says that no other city in the world makes her feel as free or safe as Mumbai. ■ VIJAY BATE

and started to teach the workshop, I just knew. I thought, 'this is exactly the music I've been looking for my entire life.'

At the end of the three weeks, she sat with her friend in the practice room, crying. "I thought, I can't go back to my old life, to this violin-making programme. And she said, 'Well, could you actually just not go back to it?'

Ms. Cave knew then, she had to move to India. "It was the most clear moment of

potential, little by little. "We would swim through one note for something like 20 minutes, but let that note fill me to completion."

Her guru helped her stay grounded. "Where I was as a person and musician (before that) was different. I was overplaying notes, playing very fast, to be virtuosic, to play a solo with an orchestra, to win a job. But I never felt rushed by him."

He helped her open up, free herself from the bindings of her old learning.

These notes (in Indian Classical music) didn't have any expectations. I was able to dive into that freedom, and the teacher held that freedom."

She never really connected with her Western music teachers that way. In her tribute to Ghosh on her website, she says, "He showed me the life force that literally lies in the sarangi and the violin themselves, that there is life and energy everywhere... He always welcomed me with an open heart and taught me to dive deep into my soul, into the grids of ragas and soar high above storms like the eagle. He said he wasn't humble; this apparent humbleness was a natural result – when master and student or two friends sit at sunset and watch the sun set beyond the event horizon, both know they are part of that experience. The illusion of the 'other' dissolves."

Signs from the universe
A friend told her about his death in a WhatsApp message in July 2017. She had gone back to the U.S. on her guru's urging. About three days before he passed on, she had a dream where she was a swirl in a galaxy and her centre was shifting.

And the night before his passing, before she went to sleep, she asked the Universe for a clear sign as what to do about moving forward with her Indian life, her musical explorations.

In many ways, Ms. Cave had received her guidance. She had always wanted to try composing. "I thought, 'I'm going to go back to Bombay. I already have my flat, my community and I'm going to compose. Then I'm going to put a show together.' And so that's what I did."

She creates, produces and performs in her show called *Home en Root*. Her influences span Bach and Brahms, Roma Gypsy music, Flamenco, Salsa, Arabic and Indian Classical. "It's about celebrating different aspects of life in different types of music and genres."

The confluence of cultures in her work excites her. People ask her how she will brand herself, with her "not quite Western and not quite Eastern" work. "For me, it's like, how do I expand enough to encompass everything?"

It's like two fish apparently swimming in opposite directions, an image she received in her meditation one day. "I realised the relationship

between them does not consist of their moving in opposite directions, but only appears so," she says on her website. "In order to hold the opposing forces, we simply need to see the two fish are actually part of a greater circle; they're essentially in orbit... if we step back and expand our perspective, we suddenly see the two fish were part of one current all along."

Ms. Cave recently put up a show called 'Sacred Currents' in Mumbai, to "honour seemingly oppositional forces". A tabla player, a Carnatic electric guitar player and a Carnatic vocalist performed with her.

Mumbai, she says, is a place where people are more open to collaboration. It's a tug that goes beyond the workings of her mind; "a grounding into where everyone has come from, in a way."

Like a soul connect? "There's no expectation, nothing you have to do; stuff just happens. It's the perfect combination to allow creativity to happen and I feel like it's so large, it's infinite. It holds all of humanity. I feel that especially in the Himalayas or even in Bombay; it's an energy of the city that isn't anywhere else."

German firm aims to cash in on India's electrification

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

Automotive supplier Brose Group of Germany, with global revenues of €6.2 billion, has drawn up a five-year growth plan to increase the revenue of its Indian unit three-fold to €80 million in FY25 from €27 million in FY20.

It has also announced plans to invest an additional €17 million in India by FY25 in various initiatives including capacity expansion and capability enhancement.

The Indian unit, Brose India Automotive Systems, which produces and supplies window regulators, side door latches, door modules and seat height adjusters to European car manufacturers with operations in India as well as global car manufacturers, has decided to broad-base its product offerings to tap into large Original Equipment Manufacturers in India like Maruti, Hyundai, Tata Motors and Mahindra.

Brose is also gearing up to capitalise on the electrification drive in India to supply electric motors and inverters to electric two-wheelers and e-rickshaws which are in demand in the country.

People from north eastern States face racism, 'Chinese' slur in Pune

Punekars point to north-easterners as carriers of coronavirus, taunt them in public places

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

The fears surrounding COVID-19 have fuelled an old prejudice against people from the north eastern States who are living and working in Pune. The label 'Chinese' attached to them now comes with added xenophobia, insensitivity and verbal attacks in public places.

Last week, Hmingtei Chhangte, a working professional from Mizoram, was subjected to humiliation in Reliance Mart after a shopper in the same aisle created a ruckus, saying she could be a carrier of COVID-19.

Narrating the ordeal in a Facebook post, Ms. Chhangte said the woman covered her face each time she passed by her and when Ms. Chhangte asked her what the matter was, the woman began to scream and shout, gesticulating that Ms. Chhangte had been 'infected'.

While the staff intervened to calm the woman down, Ms. Chhangte, who has been living and working in Pune city for a decade, left the store feeling insecure and disheartened.

"We have received at least 10 reports of racist or xenophobic incidents from people from north eastern States, because of their features. Women, especially, are very uncomfortable venturing out of home. They face 'coronavirus' taunts while going out to buy groceries or even taking children to a park," said S.K. Sourioo, former president of the North East Community of Pune. At times, those creating a ruckus do not even have the courtesy to listen to the explanations and protestations of people from the north east who say they are not Chinese citizens, but In-



Spectators holding banner inside D.Y. Patil stadium at Navi Mumbai during the Road Safety World series T20 match between India Legends and Sri Lanka on Tuesday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

dians, he said.

In another case, a woman, who did not wish to be named, said she was startled to hear cries of 'Coronavirus aa gaya' (coronavirus has come) when she went to purchase a protective face mask in the city's Sanghvi

area.

"It is our humble request to Pune's citizens to desist from passing such racist comments or taunts, which hurt members from the north eastern States. This is a virus that is afflicting people of all races and commun-

ities. North, South, East or West, no part of the globe is secure from its scourge," Mr. Sourioo said.

Mr. Sourioo also said they had met the Pune Police Commissioner and the Deputy Collector to apprise them of such incidents.

Cabinet may discuss IPL today

ALOK DESHPANDE

MUMBAI

With confirmed cases of COVID-19 rising, the Maharashtra Cabinet is likely to discuss the postponement of Indian Premier League (IPL) matches scheduled to be played in the State.

While Health Minister Rakesh Tope said in Nagpur that "events like IPL can always be organised later," the issue is likely to figure in Wednesday's Cabinet meeting.

The State government is understood to be contemplating writing to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the parent body of IPL, regarding the same. Mumbai is scheduled to host at least eight matches, including the season-opener

on March 29 and the final on May 24, during the T20 cricket league's 13th edition.

While the government is

pondering over the possibility of postponement of the IPL, Mumbai is already witnessing another cricket tournament, which is attracting large turnouts. Legends of the game, including the likes of Sachin Tendulkar, Brian Lara, Brett Lee and Jonty Rhodes have been participating in the Road Safety World Series. The five-nation veterans' T20 league, being played in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Pune, is incidentally an initiative of the State transport department.

"The issue is important and we are monitoring it. The Assembly is in session and in case of any decision, the House will be informed first," said a senior Health Department official.

A senior minister of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, said certain sanctions are inevitable to curb the spread of COVID-19. "We have to ensure the safety of people, and impose some restrictions to avoid the spread. The issue might be discussed in the Cabinet meeting and we will come to a decision," he said.

The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) however is continuing with preparations for the marquee clash between Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings on March 29. (With inputs from Amol Karhadkar)

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IN BRIEF



Remove party colours on govt. buildings: HC

Seeks compliance report in two weeks

P. SAMUEL JONATHAN
GUNTUR

The High Court on Tuesday directed the Andhra Pradesh government to restrain from painting government/panchayat buildings with colours similar to the ones of flags of political parties or party offices.

The HC directed the Principal Secretary, Panchayat Raj department, to remove the colours painted on the buildings within 10 days and directed the Chief Secretary to furnish a compliance report within two weeks to the court Registrar.

Issuing the orders on writ petitions, Chief Justice J.K. Maheswari and Justice Ninnan Jayasurya directed the State Election Commission to hold free and fair elections to the local bodies and take appropriate steps without allowing the parties to take any form of evil practices which might influence the voters.

In a significant observation, the court held that it had become a common practice for any political party to paint the buildings of panchayat or others akin to the colours of the party flag, and directed that such practices should stop. It also held that the National Building Code applies to the buildings of the Panchayat Raj also as they fall within the purview of the local self-government and constructed with government funds.

The court said the use of impermissible signs cannot be permitted to be used and said such actions might affect the conduct of free and fair elections.



Ex-Minister accused of diverting money to the newspaper

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOZHIKODE

Sleuths of the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) on Tuesday carried out raids at the headquarters of the *Chandrika* daily, the organ of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), in connection with the case registered against former Public Works Minister V.K. Ebrahim Kunju for alleged corruption in the construc-

tion of the flyover at Palarivattom in Kochi.

It was alleged that a portion of the kickbacks to the tune of ₹10 crore was transferred to the account of the daily during the demonetisation period.

The VACB team verified the accounts, records and documents at the office on the YMCA Road from 9 a.m. Previously, the VACB team had secured information

about the transfer of the money to the establishment.

It wanted to ascertain the source of funds that had been deposited into the account of the newspaper run by the Muslim Printing and Publishing Company. Mr. Kunju, who is a member of the board of directors of the newspaper, however, termed as "politically motivated" the raids on the newspaper.

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government will conduct a two-day door-to-door survey starting Wednesday to identify the persons who had recently been to novel coronavirus (COVID-19) affected countries.

The ground level survey is to reach out to the persons who have not undergone 28-day mandatory observation and isolation and check any possibility of the spread of the virus.

The government has or-

Schools closed but no change in SSLC and Plus Two dates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

With eight more cases of COVID-19 being confirmed in Kerala on Tuesday, the State has gone into a partial shutdown mode by imposing limits on public gatherings and ordering closure of schools and colleges till March 31 to prevent further spread of the disease.

At a press conference here on Tuesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who chaired a special Cabinet meeting here to cobble together a strategy to preempt COVID-19 from getting past the efforts of the government to contain it, urged temples, churches, mosques and ashrams to suspend crowded festivals and events till the threat eased. He advised madrasas and other places of religious



Scare in the air: A near-deserted casualty ward of the General Hospital at Pathanamthitta in Kerala on Tuesday. ■ LEJU KAMAL

learning to temporarily suspend classes.

No cinema shows

All public programmes, including those involving Ministers, stand cancelled. Government offices will observe a strict protocol to prevent the spread of the virus. The public have been advised to avoid overcrowded weddings and social activities for now. There will

be no cinema shows, staging of dramas and other cultural events till March 31.

Mr. Vijayan sought to marshal public support for the government's decision to shut down educational institutions and halt academic activities, including summer holiday camps and private events, till the threat of the outbreak receded.

He said SSLC (Class 10) and Plus Two examinations

would be held as per schedule. Students under observation for COVID-19 could appear for the tests in special rooms. The government also shut down anganwadis and ordered District Collectors to supply meals to the children at their homes. As many as 1,116 persons are under surveillance across the State, of which 967 are confined to their houses. The rest 149 are in hospitals.

Pilgrims told to avoid Sabarimala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president N. Vasu has urged the public not to attend the monthly pujas scheduled to be held at Sabarimala Ayyappa temple from March 13 to 18.

Mr. Vasu told reporters here on Tuesday that the request to pilgrims to abstain themselves from the monthly pujas was made in view of the precautionary measures initiated by the government following the spread of COVID-19 cases. Pilgrims from all over the country reach the temple for the monthly pujas. The State Cabinet too had called upon the public to suspend festivals, marriages and other functions.

KSRTC premier services see dip in bookings since March 3

Officials predict similar trend in intra-State operations

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU

With people altering travel plans as a precautionary measure against COVID-19, the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) has taken a hit primarily on its inter-State services. It has seen a reduction of 20% in bookings in premier bus services, which are air-conditioned.

According to KSRTC officials, the drop in passengers and rise in cancellations began from March 3. With four people testing positive for the virus in Bengaluru since March 9, officials predict that bus services within the State may also see reduction in passengers. A senior KSRTC official said that operations to cities in Kerala such as Kottayam, Ernakulam, Calicut and Thiruvananthapuram were among the worst hit, apart from Hyderabad, Vi-

jayawada, Pune and Mumbai. "Since most of the premier buses running inter-State services are long journey, they are generally pre-booked. So we are seeing a 20% drop in passenger traffic," he said.

Shivayogi C. Kalasad, Managing Director, KSRTC, said though all the cancellations cannot be attributed to COVID-19 alone, most of it could be because of the fear of its spread.

They believe in the religion of humanity

Karimnagar realtor's effort to provide food is backed by people across religions

K. M. DAYASHANKAR

KARIMNAGAR

Hunger knows no religion, gender, or colour. It is neutral. In these times of polarisation along communal lines, some people have united for the cause of humanity. One such person is a man who is serving people, especially cancer patients and their attendants, by feeding them every Sunday in Karimnagar town.

It all started a year-and-a-half ago when S.G.M. Hussain, alias Haqani, a realtor, was passing a cancer hospital at the Housing Board Colony Road when an old woman stopped him and asked where she could find some food. Mr. Haqani replied that there was no hotel nearby, but offered to get food for her.

'Really touched'

At the hotel, the owner, who knew Mr. Haqani, asked why he was taking a parcel. When



Members of the HIM voluntary organisation serving food to patients at a hospital in Karimnagar. ■ K.M. DAYASHANKAR

the latter told the hotel owner about an old woman waiting for food at the hospital, the owner refused to take money. When Mr. Haqani returned and handed over the food packet to the old woman, she offered money, which he declined. "Then the old woman blessed me by putting her hand on my head, which really touched my heart and soul," he recalled.

That set Mr. Haqani think-

persons every Sunday without any interruption," said Mr. Haqani.

Seeing his service, his friends and well-wishers, including Hindus and Muslims, joined HIM and began contributing to it. Some pitch in bags of rice, while others give vegetables, pulses, oil, water packets, plates, etc. What stands out is that not all HIM's donors are rich; many belong to the middle class people.

Vanaja, a widow, who runs a flour mill in the town is such a contributor. She gives one rice bag per month, and other essentials whenever required. Taking time off, she also participates in the food distribution on Sundays.

"With the blessings of almighty, I have plans to serve food every day to the patients at the hospital. There is no religion for our charity service," said the altruist proudly.

Kerala HC calls for action taken report

Lens on land grab in Munnar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOCCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court has directed the State government to file a statement indicating the recommendations made by it on various reports, including the one by former Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue and Land Management) Nivedita P. Haran, on the illegal land grab in Munnar, and also the action taken by the Idukki District Collector or the police on the issue of bogus title deeds.

The Bench comprising Chief Justice S. Manikumar and Justice Shaji P. Chali directed the government to state the actions in a tabular form to enable the court to ascertain whether the steps

taken by the government were proper.

Forged titles

The order was passed on a petition filed by One Earth One Life and the Paristhitthi Samrakshana Samiti of Thodupuzha. They alleged that large-scale encroachments on revenue and forest land had taken place in Munnar, Devikulam, and Kannan Devan Hill villages. The encroachers created forged titles for the land, the petitioners alleged. The petitioners said those who encroached on the land included political parties, religious organisations and government employees. Some of them had taken loans using forged titles.

Two tombs in Qutb Shahi complex regain lost glory

Conservation efforts impresses U.S. diplomat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth I. Juster visited the Qutb Shahi tombs complex to mark the completion of year-long conservation efforts by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture on the twin mausoleums of Taramati and Premamati. The conservation effort was aided by the U.S. under its Ambassadors Fund for Culture.

Cultural Preservation

"This is my third visit to the Qutb Shahi tombs. It looks so beautiful today. It has progressed tremendously. I am delighted," said Mr. Juster.

"We got a grant of \$1,00,000 (about ₹70 lakh) and the two mausoleums have been restored using that fund," informed Ratish Nanda, CEO, Aga Khan Trust for Culture.



just outside the Golconda fort. The stone mosque remains unfinished as Premamati died in 1662 when Abdullah Qutb Shah was at the

height of his power.

"Much of it is original lime stucco work. Wherever it was damaged, we restored," said Ratish Nanda, CEO, Aga

Khanda Trust for Culture (AKTC), on the recent effort to restore two tombs here. The other restored tomb belongs to Taramati, who is fa-

bled to be a companion of Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah.

The two tombs are of two women who retained their

identities and were honoured with a space inside the royal necropolis of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. They have been restored using the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Photographs taken before the conservation work began show domes covered with moss and big peepal trees. "The trees led to seepage, damaging the inside of the dome. The plinth was in a dilapidated condition," said AKTC's Prashant Banerjee.

Interestingly, while Premamati's dome is 1.5 times bigger than that of Taramati's, both of them look equal due to the different sizes of the finials. A dancing pavilion built in Taramati's honour outside the Golconda Fort still exists and has been turned into a convention centre.

IAF plane returns from Iran with 58 Indians

Globemaster aircraft evacuated stranded persons

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) C-17 Globemaster aircraft with Indians evacuated from Coronavirus-hit Iran landed at Hindan Air Force Station on Tuesday morning.

"The C-17 returned from Iran to Hindan airbase this morning with 58 Indian citizens onboard. The Indians who have returned from Iran will be quarantined at Hindon," the IAF said.

Defence officials said 31 women, 25 men and two children were brought back. The aircraft also carried 529 samples for investigation.

"IAF has activated necessary medical protocols and has put required facilities in place to provide fellow citizens with adequate care and support," the IAF stated.

The C-17 with an IAF medical team and support staff onboard took off at 8 p.m. on Monday evening from Hindan airbase.

Samples brought back

It brought swab samples of 529 Indians to carry out laboratory tests and check whether they carry coronavirus infection.

About 2,000 Indians are living in Iran, a country that has witnessed increasing numbers of coronavirus cases in the last few days.

The official said the Indian citizens who have returned from Iran have been quarantined at a medical facility in Hindon.

"The IAF has activated necessary medical protocols and has put required facilities in place to provide fellow citizens with adequate care and support," an official said.

(With PTI inputs)



Back home: Indian nationals after they were brought to India by Indian Air Force's C-17 Globemaster aircraft from COVID-19-hit Iran, at Hindan airbase on Tuesday. Fifty-eight Indians were airlifted in the military transport aircraft. ■ PTI

Three more test positive in Maharashtra

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

Three more persons in the city have tested positive for COVID-19, taking the tally of positive cases in Maharashtra to five, said State health officials on Tuesday.

The daughter of the Pune couple, who tested positive on Monday, a co-passenger and the Ola cab driver who ferried the couple from the Mumbai airport to Pune on their return from Dubai on March 1, were the latest to test 'positive', said Dr. Pradip Awate, State epidemiologist.

As of now, all five positive cases in the State are from Pune.

"All five persons including the couple, their



Keeping vigil: Security guards posted outside Naidu Hospital for Infectious Diseases in PUNE on Tuesday. ■ JIGNESH MISTRY

daughter, a co-passenger who hailed from Yavatmal district and the Ola cab driver who ferried the couple, have been placed in isolation in Pune's Naidu Hospital after their samples that were sent to the National Institute of Virology

(NIV) tested positive," Pune district Collector Naval Kishore Ram said, adding that all five individuals were stable and there was no cause for concern.

In addition, the samples of two other family members had also been sent to

the NIV for tests, said Pune Divisional Commissioner Deepak Mhaisekar.

Tracking the rest

Saying the couple who tested positive were stable, he said the district administration was tracking the tour group of 40 persons who were with the couple on their trip to Dubai.

At present, six persons including the couple, three of their kin and the Ola driver are in isolation at the Naidu Hospital.

"The Pune couple had travelled to Dubai in the last week of February and were part of a 40-member tour group. They returned to India on March 1. One of the two started showing symptoms of infection and were referred to Naidu hospital for a check-up on March 8. Their samples were sent to the NIV and both tested positive. As Dubai was not in the list of the affected places given out by the Centre, the passengers could not be checked and separated at the airport itself," Dr. Mhaisekar said.

To track down the persons with whom the couple had travelled to Dubai and with those who came in contact with them in the past week, five teams comprising officials from the police, health and revenue departments, as well as authorities from Pune and the Pimpri-Chinchwad civic bodies had been formed.

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 Wednesday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Utarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	31.2	14.4	Kozhikode	—	35.6	27.2
Ahmedabad	—	32.3	19.4	Kurnool	—	37.3	24.4
Aizawl	—	23.1	12.1	Lucknow	—	22.4	13.6
Aligarh	—	24.3	12.2	Madurai	—	36.8	24.0
Bengaluru	—	32.9	22.4	Mangalore	—	34.7	24.7
Bhopal	0.6	30.2	18.6	Mumbai	—	—	—
Bhubaneswar	—	33.8	22.7	Mysuru	—	33.9	24.3
Chandigarh	—	23.7	10.4	New Delhi	—	26.6	10.0
Chennai	—	33.6	23.6	Patna	—	—	—
Coimbatore	—	35.8	24.0	Port Blair	—	31.4	22.0
Dehradoon	—	25.3	8.3	Puducherry	—	32.6	23.8
Gangtok	—	15.6	9.0	Pune	—	33.1	17.5
Goa	—	33.2	21.1	Rajpur	—	—	18.0
Guwahati	—	30.3	15.4	Ranchi	—	27.7	13.0
Hubballi	—	33.0	20.0	Shillong	—	18.4	4.1
Hyderabad	0.5	34.7	21.3	Shimla	—	16.6	5.7
Imphal	—	27.2	8.7	Srinagar	—	—	2.8
Jaipur	—	—	14.6	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.3	26.1
Kochi	—	32.4	26.2	Tiruchi	—	37.1	23.0
Kohima	—	24.2	9.5	Vijayawada	—	—	—
Kolkata	—	31.0	18.7	Visakhapatnam	—	32.0	25.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	46	29	17	...78	100	■■■■■
Bengaluru	12	50	86	—	128	■■■■■
Chennai	.8	16	—	25	43	■■■■■
Delhi	33	53	5	190	233	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.7	26	21	41	63	■■■■■
Kolkata	.8	38	13	253	149	■■■■■
Lucknow	6	42	55	275	42	■■■■■
Mumbai	54	47	11	162	178	■■■■■
Pune	51	18	82	79	76	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	11	28	41	29	49	■■■■■

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 263 indicating a severe level position. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 33

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

SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

PM_{2.5} & 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

+ Oil Marketing Companies cut petrol and diesel prices

The prices have come down by over ₹5 a litre this year

PIYUSH PANDEY

MUMBAI

The state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) have reduced the prices of petrol and diesel by 30 paise and 25 paise a litre respectively as international crude oil price fell.

The sixth consecutive cut comes after the OMCs reduced the prices by a quarter of a rupee on Monday.

In Delhi, a litre of petrol is priced at ₹70.29 and diesel ₹63.01. In Mumbai, petrol is

selling at ₹75.99 and diesel ₹65.97. In Chennai, petrol will cost ₹73.02 and diesel ₹66.48, according to data from Indian Oil Corporation. In Kolkata, petrol is selling at ₹72.98 and diesel ₹65.34.

The prices of petrol and diesel have come down by over ₹5 a litre each since the beginning of this year. They are likely to drop further in the coming weeks as India follows the monthly average pricing of the benchmark crude oil.

Only half the funds utilised for this financial year

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

The government spending on improving education at madrasas has dropped drastically after the States were asked to pitch in with funding, said a parliamentary panel, slamming the "disturbing trend" which hurts children from the most educationally backward communities.

After the change in funding ratios, only 15% of allocated money was used last

year. With just over a month left in this financial year, only about half the funds had been spent. The Centre intends to hike allocations more than 80% next year, despite the low utilisations in

the last two years.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, which submitted its report on demand for grants in 2020-21 to the Rajya Sabha

last week, expressed concern that the School Education department has not used the allocated funds for providing education to madrasas over the past three years.

Over the last three years, the Centre's annual budget has allocated ₹120 crore for the scheme.

In 2018-19, funding for the larger component of the scheme was changed from a 100% Central grant into a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with a 60:40 split between Central and State funding. Only ₹18.25 crore was actually spent that year.

In 2019-20, the expenditure under the scheme was ₹63.57 crore as on February 10, 2019, just above half of the allocated amount. With over a month to go, the Centre hoped that the final expenditure would be higher, it told the panel.

'Hindu adoption not valid without consent from wife'

Supreme Court cites two essential conditions for adoption

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A Hindu adoption is not valid unless the man takes prior consent from his wife and there is a "ceremony of giving and taking in adoption," the Supreme Court has held.

A Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao said the mandate of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956 was that no adoption was valid unless the two essential conditions of the consent of the wife before a male Hindu adopts a

child and proof of the ceremony of actual giving and taking in adoption.

"The appellant [Vanaja] admitted that she does not have the proof of the ceremony of giving and taking of her in adoption. Admittedly, there is no pleading in the plaint regarding the adoption being in accordance with the Act. That apart, the respondent, who is the adoptive mother, has categorically stated in her evidence that the appellant was never adopted," the court concluded, rejecting appeal.

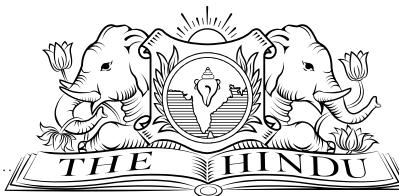
Girl hangs herself after intimate video surfaces

Boyfriend leaked it to his friends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD

A 16-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide in Chhatarpur locality of Gujarat's Ahmedabad after her boyfriend leaked their intimate video, police said on



Market mayhem

The global rout in equities amid the widening coronavirus outbreak portends more pain

Manic Monday saw India's bellwether S&P BSE Sensex suffer its worst single-day fall in terms of points as the 30-stock gauge plunged 1,942 points, or 5.2%, to its lowest close in 52 weeks. While the proximate trigger for the headlong selling spree was the global market rout induced by an oil price plunge, there are clear indications that the underlying investor sentiment has turned bearish. From the S&P BSE 500 index, comprising the top 500 BSE-listed companies across all key industries, to the S&P BSE SmallCap index, representing the smallest listed firms, there was virtually no corner left untouched by the sell-off. While every Sensex member lost ground, with 22 retreating at least 3%, both the broader gauges accounting for a combined 1,200 companies saw about 93% each of their constituents posting declines. The breadth of the losses is one sure indicator that investors are looking to exit equities for now with whatever gains they can muster, or worse in a bid to cut their losses. And Monday's losses, while dramatic, have only extended a slide that has over the past month seen the Sensex and BSE 500 lose about 13% each, and the mid-cap gauge drop 14%. Coinciding with this slide has been a 116% jump in volatility as measured by the National Stock Exchange's India VIX index, another ominous sign that prices are unlikely to stabilise any time soon. Also, foreign institutional investors have turned net sellers of their Indian equity holdings in a big way this month, taking the cumulative net sales since February to ₹10,658 crore.

With the Indian economy still in search of fair winds and the global outlook for growth getting bleaker with each passing day as the widening coronavirus outbreak threatens to push the world into its worst downturn since the 2008 financial crisis, a sustained sell-off looms. To complicate matters, the proposed State Bank of India-led bailout of capital-starved Yes Bank may be a far tougher challenge than appeared at first flush. Among the hurdles is a legal challenge to the plan by holders of the troubled lender's Additional Tier-1 bonds. And the best intentions of the Centre and efforts by the RBI notwithstanding, any failure to expedite the resolution at Yes Bank runs the risk of undermining wider banking sector stability. To be sure, already there is talk of concerted central bank action among the leading western economies as well as likely fiscal measures to address the threat posed by COVID-19. The U.S. Federal Reserve last week made an emergency cut in its benchmark interest rate and President Trump is contemplating a raft of steps including a payroll tax cut. The RBI and the Centre too would ideally need to move in lockstep with measures to ensure adequate liquidity to help bolster sentiment at this time of market and economic fragility.

Scoring low

The absence of playgrounds and electricity in govt. schools speaks poorly of policy priorities

It should rank as an irony that as a founder-leader of the International Solar Alliance, India has not yet electrified a significant number of government schools, while extolling the elegance and virtue of photovoltaic electricity to the rest of the world. The lack of power in schools is taken note of by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development in its latest report on budgetary grants for school education and literacy for 2020-21. Under the framework of concurrent powers, the Centre operates its own schemes and sponsors several school education programmes covering the States, notably Samagra Shiksha and the Mid Day Meal scheme. Yet, as the panel found from data for 2017-18, only 56.45% of government schools had electricity and 56.98% a playground, while almost 40% lacked a boundary wall. There are some high-performing States, but even in politically well-represented Uttar Pradesh, almost 70% of schools lacked electricity. Other depressing insights from the district information database as of end-2019, are: neglect of toilet construction for children with special needs, failure to build toilets for girls in a third of secondary schools and laboratories for higher secondary science students. The tardy progress on such important facilities, in spite of the projects having been sanctioned, shows the low priority that school education is being accorded.

One of the first things the NDA government did at the launch of its second term was a '100-day programme' for education, focused in part on training of school-teachers and opening of central schools. It should be possible to bring the same mission-mode approach to infrastructure now, ensuring that no school is left behind. Solar power can be installed in schools and toilets built for all students in 100 days. Community participation can make sure that the objectives are satisfactorily met. It may be more challenging to find attached playgrounds, but that problem can also be overcome by identifying suitable commons that can be upgraded to accommodate students, while permanent arrangements are made. More fundamentally, the Centre and States must realise that their talk of a demographic dividend has little meaning, when they do not provide enough funding for proposals on the one hand and the administrative machinery fails to utilise even the amount allocated in some cases. As the parliamentary committee notes, the allocation to the School Education and Literacy department has suffered a cut of 27.52%, amounting to ₹22,725 crore in the Budget Estimate for 2020-21, although public expenditure on education has been rising. A public school system that guarantees universal access, good learning and all facilities has to be among the highest national priorities.

For a universal status of personhood

In instilling a regime where there is a presumption against citizenship, the Foreigners Act denies the weakest their rights



SUHRIT PARTHASARATHY

A series of judgments delivered by the Gauhati High Court over the course of the last few weeks has brought into sharp focus the utter brutality of the regime governing the Foreigners' Tribunals in Assam. These verdicts entrench the establishment of an unreasonable burden on people declared as deemed foreigners by seeking from them a standard of proof that is wholly incommensurate with the consequences that befall the ultimate finding – in many cases, consignment to detention camps and a pronouncement of a condition of statelessness. From a reading of the judgments, the standard, as it were, is so disproportionate that it is virtually impossible to glean what a petitioner actually has to do to succeed. Indeed, the chances of success are so negligible that, an analysis of 787 orders and judgments of the High Court between 2010 and 2019, by Leah Verghese and Shruthi Naik of Daksh India, shows us that in 97% of the cases, the petitioner before the court was confirmed as a foreigner.

This statistic is scarcely surprising given the list of documents deemed inadequate for the purposes of establishing a person's citizenship. Consider the following: electoral photo identity cards, voters' lists bearing petitioners' names, land revenue receipts, certificates issued by the local panchayat, bank passbooks, permanent account number (PAN) cards and ration cards. Each of these has been variously rejected as proof of citizenship. What is more, accord-

ing to the court, not only must a petitioner adduce documentary evidence, whatever that might actually be, establishing that their parents or ancestors were present on Indian soil prior to March 25, 1971 – a cut-off date distinct to Assam – but they must also independently validate those documents by securing the testimony of their issuing authorities. For example, if a petitioner produces a certificate of her marriage in an attempt to establish her lineage, and should that document be accepted by the Tribunal, the petitioner will still have to lead evidence through the authority that was responsible for dispensing the certificate. Is there, we might want to ask ourselves, a more noxiously labyrinthine exercise than this?

Assam and tribunals

The Foreigners' Tribunals (FT), which work as quasi-judicial bodies, were originally created through an executive order made by the Union government in 1964. Their task was to furnish opinions on whether persons referred to them were "foreigners" or not within the meaning ascribed to the term under the Foreigners Act, 1946. This legislation, which was enacted by the colonial government with a view to regulating migration into India, defines a foreigner as any person who is not a citizen of India. It also accords to the government a wide-ranging power to control the entry, exit and movement of foreigners to and within the territory of the country.

In Assam, the FTs have played a role unique to the State's history. Typically, the tribunals there have seen two kinds of cases: those concerning persons against whom a reference has been made by the border police and those whose names in the electoral roll has a "D", or "doubtful", marked

against them. The references made to the FTs in the State have arisen out of a mandate contained in the 1985 Assam Accord. The agreement was a product of a student-driven movement against, among other things, immigration into the State following the declaration of Bangladesh's independence on March 26, 1971. It made a number of stipulations, including a direction to government to identify and have declared as foreigners any person who entered Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 24, 1971 – the names of the persons so identified, the accord says, ought to be deleted from the electoral rolls. What is more, the pact also demanded that the government identify those who came into Assam on or after March 25 of that year and have them deleted and expelled. It was to this end that in 1997 the electoral rolls were revised in the State and more than three lakh individuals were marked as doubtful voters. This revision was made without any prior and independent verification. Out of those left out, nearly two lakh people have already been referred to the FTs.

Burden of proof

Ordinarily, under the Indian Evidence Act of 1872, the burden of proof in any court of law lies on the person who seeks to make a claim or assert a fact. This would mean that before the FTs, it is the government, which avers that a person is a foreigner, on whom the burden ought to lie. But Section 9 of the Foreigners Act reverses this

Perhaps, the solution lies, as Gautam Bhatia has written, in an



approach taken by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. That is that the burden to establish citizenship might well lie on the individual, as the Foreigners Act stipulates, but once he or she has produced a basic set of documents that, on the face of things, make out a plausible claim, the onus ought to then shift to the State to rebut the evidence provided.

In 1983, the Union government, sensing the oppressive nature of the burden placed, introduced the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act. This law, which overrode the Foreigners Act, subtly shifted the onus to prove citizenship from the individual to the government. But, in July 2005, the Supreme Court, in *Sarbananda Sonowal vs Union of India*, declared the legislation unconstitutional. The Court found, through an almost cavalier consideration of history and facts, that migration into Assam constituted "external aggression" against the State, and, therefore, that the Central government had violated Article 355 of the Constitution. Given this, the burden to establish citizenship, the Court held, ought to always rest on the individual.

It is this judgment in *Sarbananda Sonowal* that has since served as the fundamental premise on which the Gauhati High Court has ruled on various petitions made against the verdicts of the FTs. But even assuming the burden ought to lie on the individual to establish her citizenship, these rulings could still benefit, as Madhav Khosla recently pointed out, by the outlining of a sensible test on what degree or level of proof ought to be sufficient to discharge the burden. However, by holding, for example, that persons suspected of being foreigners ought to not only provide documentary evidence but also have those documents attested by the authority that issued them, the Court has foisted on the petitioners a standard that is virtually impossible to meet.

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approach taken by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. That is that the burden to establish citizenship might well lie on the individual, as the Foreigners Act stipulates, but once he or she has produced a basic set of documents that, on the face of things, make out a plausible claim, the onus ought to then shift to the State to rebut the evidence provided.

This approach is, no doubt, far from perfect. In a country like ours, where the weakest and poorest among us are often denied access to basic goods, requiring individuals to produce documents to establish citizenship can by itself represent an onerous demand. We often see rights as universal, but as political philosopher Hannah Arendt pointed out in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, to truly possess rights, individuals often need to belong to a political community. In other words, "the right to have rights" is seen as contingent on citizenship. In instilling a regime where a presumption against citizenship operates, the Foreigners Act denies to the weakest among us this right to have rights. It treats them as less equal beings. To reverse this damage, we must do as Seyla Benhabib has suggested. We must recognise a universal status of personhood of every human being independent of their nationality.

Suhrit Parthasarathy is an advocate practising at the Madras High Court

The public unravelling of Yes Bank

The manner of its collapse raises questions on the central bank's role and the late action by the Enforcement Directorate



PUJA MEHRA

On Sunday, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Yes Bank's swashbuckling co-promoter Rana Kapoor, accusing him and his family of using shell companies to receive kickbacks from the bank's corporate borrowers.

On March 5, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had used its powers to supersede the bank's board and impose restrictions on its operations. The bank's depositors cannot withdraw more than ₹50,000 for the next four weeks at least. Predictably, the State Bank of India (SBI) has emerged as Yes Bank's knight in shining armour. Surprisingly, though, it is crowdsourcing the rescue plan.

Balance sheet scam

The manner in which the Yes Bank collapse has unravelled raises several questions. The full extent of its troubles spilled into the public domain two years ago, when, in September 2018, the RBI had declined to extend Mr. Kapoor's term as managing director and chief executive officer by three years. It directed the bank to end his tenure by January 31, 2019.

Why has the ED then swung into action so late, giving Mr. Kapoor

The scam on the bank's balance sheets must have been visible to the RBI as far back as in 2015. The RBI's asset quality review (AQR) had forced Yes Bank, as it had several other banks, to report transparently their previously unstated non-performing assets (NPAs).

Before the AQR in 2015, bankers avoided recognising bad loans on their books. They did this by restructuring the loans susceptible to defaults or by extending new loans, called evergreening, to keep the stressed borrowers afloat. Thus, while the borrowers were able to avoid defaults on repayments, the lenders managed to show low NPAs.

The RBI found that for the year ended March 2016, Yes Bank had classified loans worth ₹749 crore as gross NPAs, understating the figure by a whopping ₹4,176.70 crore. It directed Yes Bank to reclassify more loans as NPAs. Disclosing this to the stock exchanges in May 2017, Yes Bank assured investors that the higher NPAs would not have further ramifications as it had already taken remedial action.

However, just five months later, in October 2017, the bank disclosed, once again, that the RBI had discovered more underreported gross NPAs on its books. For the year ended March 2017, the under-reporting was of the tune of ₹6,355 crore.

Why has the ED then swung into action so late, giving Mr. Kapoor

March 2019, the RBI discovered underreported NPAs worth ₹2,299 crore. Incidentally, around the time the moratorium was announced last Thursday, news broke of another resignation at the RBI. This time of its well-regarded Deputy Governor N.S. Vishwanathan, a specialist in regulation, supervision of banks and non-banking finance companies. The exit follows a four-decade career at the RBI and just three months ahead of his retirement in June. Was it prompted by the health issues cited or a protest against the RBI's stance on policy matters such as handling of Yes Bank?

Shareholders' role
And what of the bank's shareholders? Why did they ratify remuneration hikes and a renewal of tenure for Mr. Kapoor despite public information of the serial under-reporting of NPAs? The regulators must ensure now that all current equity held by Yes Bank holders should get wiped out since it represents a pure risk capital. If this is not done, any investment by Yes Bank's saviour, the SBI, will be a subsidy to them. Let us not forget that barely two years ago, the SBI and its associate banks received ₹8,800 crore in recapitalisation from the Central government. Other public banks received more.

How credible can the rescue be when barely three months ago the SBI had disclosed that the RBI has discovered under-reported NPAs –

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Finally, what other options were considered by the RBI? Did they include a market-based solution? DBS Bank has just turned into a wholly-owned subsidiary of its Singaporean parent. Could Yes Bank's network of branches been of interest to it? Ideally, the moratorium ought to have been announced, together with the scheme for restructuring, over a weekend. That would have made it less disruptive, the limit of ₹50,000 on withdrawals by depositors would not have been needed, and the RBI's credibility would not have suffered as much.

Puja Mehra is a Delhi-based journalist and author of *The Lost Decade (2008-18): How India's Growth Story Devolved into Growth Without A Story'*



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.

The cost of saving Yes

In the Yes Bank case, in our haste to find faults and then fix responsibility for them, are we not overlooking a vital aspect which could have played a significant role in the disastrous showing by the bank – the floundering economy of the country? I would say that it all started with the folly of demonetisation which virtually brought the cash-driven rural and MSME sectors of the economy to its knees. It also struck a huge blow to the real estate sector. The parlous state of the real estate sector did have a role to play as far as some prominent NBFCs who lent massively to the sector are concerned. The slowdown in realty and the stalling of infrastructure projects has had a chain reaction in the form of

sharply reduced demand for many products. Unless the government realises the gravity of the situation and initiate steps to stimulate the economy, there could be more bad news.

M.P. MURALIDHARAN,
Bengaluru

■ How many readjustments is the government of the day going to make to save every bank that is ready to collapse? What about the State Bank of India's own non-performing assets? The Yes Bank case shows that lending heavily to corporates without due diligence of their loan history is one of the major issues affecting the banking sector. Had similar loan amounts been extended to small- and medium-scale industries it would have most certainly boosted growth and

employment and might have even revived the sinking growth of MSMEs. The government of the day needs to invite the best banking experts to run banks and also ensure a strong regulation regime to control the issue of growing NPAs.

RATNARAJ JAIN,
Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh

■ The case raises questions on the efficacy of present regulatory systems and procedures. It is to be noted that the bigwigs who commit these huge financial frauds are very aware of our legal system, where a case can be dragged on for decades using the maze of adjournments and appeals at various levels. It is to be hoped that at least now the banking regulator will thoroughly reform the regulatory systems and procedures and that

independent bank board members will be appointed based on their professional competence and integrity.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,
Hyderabad

■ The puerile, insidious act of the Uttar Pradesh government, of using hoardings to 'name and shame' persons arrested during protests last December against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, is reprehensible and exceeding its remit (Page 1, "HC orders removal of Lucknow hoardings", March 10). By demonising the alleged protesters and portraying them as criminals is proving of *mens rea* by the government per se. The judiciary should have also adjudicated to recover the expenses against the

provision of hoardings from the Lucknow District Magistrate.

DEEPAK SINGHAL,
Chennai

■ Question whether there is proper utilisation of skills of an educated person remains unanswered. The government needs to fix strict eligibility criteria and thereby help to channelise the potential of the skilled and the educated for the betterment of the nation. The government should also incentivise job creators and curb the perception that only government jobs are best.

ARUCHANA VENKATAMADHVARAJ,
Thoothukkudi, Tamil Nadu

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:
We erred: The first entry in the Corrections and Clarifications column (March 10, 2020) erroneously gave the number of CPI(M) MPs in the Lok Sabha as two. The correct figure is three.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-

India needs all hands on deck

It is puzzling why the country relies solely on the National Institute of Virology for genome sequencing



R. PRASAD

On February 6, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognised the Pune-based National Institute of Virology (NIV) as one of the 15 laboratories that would provide reference testing support for the novel coronavirus.

The number of COVID-19 cases remained constant at three for nearly a month in India, but now it is going up steadily. Anticipating such a scenario, more labs are screening COVID-19 samples now. Besides the 52 labs belonging to the Viral Research and Diagnostic Laboratories network of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 10 labs under the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) have been included for testing COVID-19 samples.

Till recently, all the 52 labs were allowed to only screen samples; only NIV was authorised to confirm positive cases. With more suspected cases piling up, a long delay in confirming positive test results would have become inevitable for NIV. So, in a welcome move, ICMR has pre-empted such a scenario. "Four-five days ago, 13 labs were authorised to confirm positive cases without sending them to NIV. Another 17 labs will be authorised to do so on March 11 and the remaining labs on March 13," says Nivedita Gupta of ICMR. With the 10 labs under the NCDC regularly confirming positive H1N1 cases, we can expect these labs to be authorised to also confirm positive COVID-19 cases.

Unfortunately, several national labs have not been brought up to speed to perform other vital functions during an outbreak.

Sequencing the genome

NIV is the only lab in India which has a bio-safety level-4 (BSL-4) facility to culture pathogenic, novel viruses, study the origin of such viruses and provide a comprehensive characterisation of them by sequencing the entire viral genome. NIV has sequenced the SARS-CoV-2 genome collected from two patients in Kerala.

When the entire genome is sequenced it helps researchers under-



"Anticipating a rise in COVID-19 cases, more labs now are screening samples." Students wear protective masks at a railway station in Kochi. ■ REUTERS

stand the arrangement of the four chemical entities or bases that make up the DNA or RNA. The differences in the arrangement of the bases make organisms different from one another. Sequencing the genome of SARS-CoV-2 will help us understand where the virus came from and how it spread.

In the last decade or so, many national laboratories have developed the expertise to sequence the entire genome of viruses and bacteria using the latest equipment (next-generation sequencing, or NGS). About a dozen labs have a BSL-3 facility to inactivate the virus and sequence the genome using advanced equipment. They also have the expertise to undertake such work.

It is therefore puzzling why India relies solely on NIV for undertaking genome sequencing. If there's a compelling need to have all hands on deck to sequence the genome, it is now.

While NIV sequenced two of the three COVID-19 samples collected from Kerala in late January-early February, it is not clear if more samples have been sequenced. Contrast this with how other countries have responded. Many of the 263 sequences shared with the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID), a public platform started by the WHO in 2008 for countries to share genome sequences, are by universities and hospitals. In mainland China, many of the sequences are shared by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which is present in all the 31 provinces. At 90, China has posted the most sequence data on GISAID. This is fol-

lowed by the U.S. (37).

Unutilised expertise in India

"We tested around 75,000 samples of H1N1 during the 2009-2010 outbreak. We have a BSL-3 facility and the latest sequencing equipment. We are ready to help out if ICMR reaches out to us," says Professor V. Ravi, Head of the Department of Virology at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru, about sequencing.

"It is time for team building, not the time to work in silos," says Dr. Chitra Pattabiraman from NIMHANS. "If we are not given an opportunity to develop these skill sets and not encouraged to participate, then how are we ever going to get good at it?"

During the 2018 Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, a lab outside NIV, the Manipal Centre for Virus Research, successfully proved that given an opportunity it could not only diagnose the novel virus but also partially sequence it. The Manipal Centre confirmed the Nipah virus in 17 of the 24 samples it received from Kerala. Unfortunately, since April 2019, the Manipal Centre has been directed to restrict itself to processing the samples of pathogens specific to the BSL-2 facility. It is not even one of the designated labs to test for the novel coronavirus.

Virologist Professor Gagandeep Kang, executive director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, however feels that given that the number of COVID-19 cases in India is still under 60, NIV does not feel overwhelmed.

While agreeing that many labs in

stitutions in India have the ability to sequence the viral genome, Professor Kang emphasises that sequencing is useful to know where the virus strain came from and to check if the strain is evolving, but does not inform us of the immediate strategy to control the outbreak or its spread.

With the latest sequencing equipment widely available in many research labs and the cost of sequencing falling, researchers are using genome sequences for genomic epidemiology. This becomes possible as scientists already know the number of mutations that arise on an average in a month in the case of COVID-19, its incubation period, and the average time between cases in a chain transmission (serial interval). Using this data, it has become possible to identify the index case even when the source of infection is not known, and find the link between two seemingly unconnected outbreaks.

How China built capacity

China was completely unprepared when the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) struck in 2002-2003. The outbreak infected over 8,000 people globally and killed nearly 800. The bird flu (H5N1) outbreak that followed in 2003 underscored the need for influenza detection and response in China. This led to a collaboration between the Chinese National Influenza Center and the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2004 to build capacity in influenza surveillance in China.

For the next 10 years the collaboration worked in many ways: it led to developed human technical expertise in virology and epidemiology, a comprehensive influenza surveillance system, strengthened analysis, the dissemination of surveillance data, and improved early response to influenza viruses with pandemic potential. By 2014, the national influenza surveillance and response system included 408 labs and 554 sentinel hospitals.

Today, there is a Centre for Disease Control and Prevention in each of the 31 provinces in mainland China. The infrastructure and capacity-building that was put in place by China for influenza surveillance stood in good stead when the H1N1 pandemic struck in 2009.

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Writing as resistance

Despite insurmountable challenges and ennui, distress shouldn't prevent us from writing

KUNAL RAY

Visuals of the Delhi riots kept many across on tenterhooks. People despaired and felt distressed. Frantic calls were made to ensure safety of friends and family. Social media rituals of 'like', 'dislike', and 'share' were duly performed. Witnessing the frenzy increased our sense of helplessness. During occasions like these, one wonders what we can do to help. Is it good enough to just write and bemoan the troubling state of affairs? Can anyone really benefit from that? The heart-breaking visuals that emerged from the riots and the poignant, relentless accounts remind us of W.B. Yeats's much cited poem, 'The Second Coming', where he says, "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity."

Dealing with agony

In the times we live in, violence is being normalised in the most grotesque way. As a result, people resort to different ways of dealing with their agony. Some might take to writing to capture the terror that was unleashed on the streets of Delhi. Writing serves as a document and gory reminder to what transpired and how. Writing captures memory, safeguards it for posterity for future action and recall. But writing in times of distress is easier said than done.

Some might even deem it escapist. They might think it doesn't take much to write in the comfort of your home when war is being waged on the street outside. Writing is a comfortable option in comparison. And it cannot prevent genocide. However, I am sure many would agree if I say distress derails writing. It makes the act of writing difficult, often perilous.

The writer struggles for the exact word to justify quantify her enormity of grief and desolation. Distress creates perplexity. You wonder if there's any purpose to it all, to all that you write, read, compose, paint. Does anybody care? While ruminating over these questions, I changed upon a video of vocalist Shubha Mudgal singing Habib Jalib's famous



nazm, 'Main nahi manta (I do not accept)' at a protest site and it made me realise that every such gesture matters. It restored an individual's faith in what they do. Perhaps all purpose is not lost.

The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote extensively about and in distress. So did Qurratulain Hyder, Krishna Sobti and Saadat Hasan Manto and many others. Faiz Ahmad Faiz's *Hum Dekhenge*, which became the protest anthem across recent demonstrations in the country, lived perennially in distress. Writers like Mirza Waheed, Salma, and Perumal Murugan have given a face and body to distress in their writing. Svetlana Alexievich's Nobel Prize is a recognition of the memorials to distress she has built in her writing. Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2005) is a heartwrenching narrative about living with distress following the death of loved ones. Distress is political but it is also personal. It comes from a deeply felt sense of compassion and heartache. Distress has birthed newer forms of writing and artistic expression. Distress is an institution, a laboratory of ideas to genesis further writing.

A challenge for writers

However, the creation of widespread distress, mayhem and disturbance is, in a sense, a conspiracy against writing. It ensures that writing becomes difficult. But that is exactly the challenge that writers must overcome. The oppressors don't want them to write. In such a scenario, there would be one kind of story, a single narrative written by the oppressor about the oppressed. And it is everyone's knowledge what that story would be. In writing sometimes, the wrong can become the right. It is this appropriation that our writing must resist. Despite insurmountable challenges and an all-pervasive ennui, distress shouldn't prevent us from writing. In fact, it should, ideally, spark off collective action to further the spirit of resistance.

Kunal Ray teaches literary & cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune

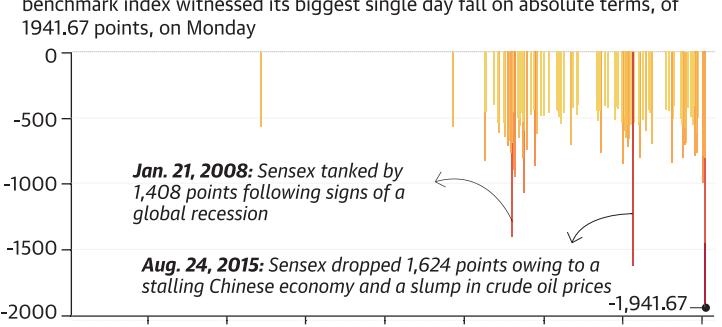


DATA POINT

A history of crashes

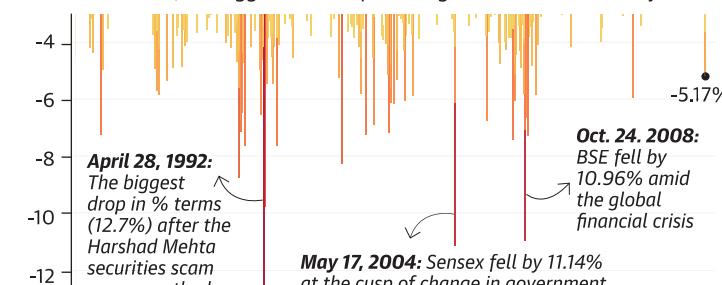
1. SENSEX DROP IN ABSOLUTE TERMS

The chart plots all single-day Sensex falls of over 400 points. The benchmark index witnessed its biggest single day fall on absolute terms, of 1941.67 points, on Monday



2. SENSEX DROP IN % TERMS

The chart plots all single-day Sensex falls of over 3%. On Monday, the Sensex fell 5.17%, the biggest crash in percentage terms in the last five years



A progressive system of taxation

Why reverting to the classical system of taxing dividend is a good move



R. ANAND

This development made tracking of the shareholder much easier. The withdrawal of DDT came as a relief to the corporate sector which has wanted DDT to be removed and the effective corporate tax rate in India to be reduced. Corporates are also required to conserve cash for further growth. This largely prompted the government to revert to the classical system for taxing dividend.

MAXIMUM TAX RATE

However, this means that the starting rate of tax works out to 10% and the highest rate works out to, say, 43%. Tax paid in dividend is out of money earned and received and more often than not represents holding of shares passed on by generations without any cost incurred. On this score, discharging tax at the maximum marginal rate more than justifies the principle of equity and sharing with the government in the overall developmental agenda. Shareholders in other countries with a protective treaty regime can receive dividend attracting tax rates as low as 5%. The distortion in the current regime viz. the foreign shareholder being taxed at a much lower rate than the Indian counterpart is obvious. This would require some correction. The main contention of the high-net-worth individual is that while the classical system is acceptable as a concept, the maximum tax rate is an unexpected extra burden.

Some countries follow the imputation system. The dividend is taxed in the hands of the shareholders but they are also allowed a set-off of a portion of the corporate tax discharged by the company. In many ways, the imputation credit resembles an underlying tax credit granted to non-residents under certain treaties entered into by India. While there are complexities in that system, it mitigates the hardships caused by the double taxation impact of dividend distribution.

Indian promoter groups control a majority of shareholding in Indian companies. For them, the wealth is largely represented by the value of shares and the dividends received over a period of time. These have been passed on to successive generations. These shares can be held by individuals, HUFs, family companies, or family trusts. Any decision to declare dividend is analysed from the standpoint of the company and the standpoint of the entity receiving the dividends. As long as dividends were received tax-free, the structure was irrelevant. But with the current proposal even family trusts can be taxed at the maximum rate. This blow is bound to force companies to revisit their strategy of paying dividends.

The move to the classical system is not only well-conceived but also tilted towards the appropriate progressive system of taxation.

R. Anand is a Chartered Accountant

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 11, 1970

New Prayer song for Tamil Nadu

A poem written by the late Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai, Professor of History in the Travancore University, and a noted Tamil scholar, has been adopted as the prayer song for Tamil Nadu Government functions. It is a two-stanza verse beginning with "Neerarum kadaludutha..." from Prof. Sundaram Pillai's play, "Manonmaniam". Only the first six-line stanza is to be used for the purpose of the State prayer song. An announcement about the prayer song was made by the Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, in his speech at the presentation here [Madras, March 10] early this week of State Awards for the best Tamil films, artistes and technicians of 1968. M. S. Visvanathan (best music director), who composed a new tune for "Neerarum kadaludutha," sang it along with P. Susheela (best female playback singer) for prayer at the colourful Awards presentation ceremony. Singing the fame of Tamil Nadu and the Tamil language the prayer-poem refers to Dravidanadu as the beautiful "tilakam" on the beautiful forehead (Deccan) of the "beautiful face of the world" that is Bharat.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 11, 1920.

Declaration of Rights.

Last evening at the Soundarya Mahal, Mr. A. Rangaswami Aiyengar, Editor of the "Swadesamitran" delivered a lecture on the "Declaration of Rights" for the benefit of students in the city. The Principal of the Law College presided. The learned lecturer discussed his subject from a purely legal and academic point of view, and studiously avoided considering the expediency, the political necessity or otherwise of a Declaration of Rights for Indians...[He] gave the essential limitation of such rights as were understood in the countries of the West. He then took his audience through the different stages in the growth of the constitution of different countries, including Great Britain, France and America and pointed out how after considerable agitation, the principle of the Declaration of Rights of the citizens came to be established. He referred more especially to the struggle between the rulers and the people in England for the recognition of this principle, ever since the time of the Magna Carta, which he said was nothing less than a Declaration of Rights. All progressive constitutions began with providing adequate safeguards against infringement into the fundamental and natural rights of man.

FROM PAGE ONE

Scindia meets Modi, quits Congress

At a meeting of the Congress Legislative Party held in Bhopal, around 92 MLAs turned up (including four independent MLAs) with 21 MLAs having sent in their resignations. The effective strength of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly is 228. If the resignations of the 21 MLAs is accepted, the strength would fall to 211, with the magic number being 106. The Congress will be left with 97 seats while the BJP has 107 seats.

"The BJP is keen that Mr Scindia join [the party] in the presence of former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. And there are two views over the road ahead – one is to emulate what hap-

pened in Karnataka, that is, go for a floor test in an Assembly with reduced numbers and wait for bypolls to complete the circle; the other is to ask for snap polls," said a source.

For the BJP, the defection of Mr Scindia and his supporters is a major shot in the arm in a State they lost after 15 years, which was considered one of the birth places of the Jan Sangh, the earlier avatar of the BJP.

Mr Scindia's grandmother, the late Vijayaraje Scindia was one of the stalwarts of the Jan Sangh and a founder member of the BJP, a point continually emphasised by BJP leaders through the day.

As 22 MLAs quit, Nath govt. on verge of collapse

"They play pressure politics, the Congress doesn't," he added.

Following their resignation, the 19 Scindia loyalists wrote to the Director General of the Police, Karnataka, requesting protection during their stay in Karnataka.

Meanwhile, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who had helmed the BJP government for the past 15 years before the Congress wrested it in December 2018, distanced the BJP from the resignations, terming it an internal matter.

"Our priority at present is the Rajya Sabha election," he clarified at his residence, where Bisahulal Singh, four-

time Congress MLA and former Minister, announced his resignation and pledged support to the BJP.

Another State BJP leader Sanjay Pathak asked how

Mr. Scindia could endure being disrespected within the Congress for so long. "Congress has always indulged in vendetta politics, targeted BJP leaders in the State. Whereas, we have worked for the State's development."

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh, who had last week flagged a purported poaching bid by the BJP, claimed to have proof of the party ferrying the 19 MLAs to Karnataka.

COVID-19 cases surge in country

In Kerala, cinema halls will be shut till March 31 and about 270 people who came in contact with coronavirus patients have been traced. Ninety-five of them are in the "high-risk category," according to officials.

Surveillance has been strengthened after fresh cases emerged in the State. "About 1,116 people are under observation, 976 are under home quarantine while 149 are in hospitals. They include people with symptoms as well," Kerala Health Minister K.K. Shailaja said.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Tuesday appealed to the government to classify the data of the epidemic and take appropriate action with clinical precision. "Sharing of data on daily basis with the public who are clueless as to what is expected of them has created panic across the country," the IMA said. It has also asked doctors to function as a source of credible information in their locality and instil confidence and trust. "It cannot be denied that the high-handed, top-down response in China is part of the reason for this global panic. The nuanced

and balanced approach of the Indian government is certainly better suited to handle the crisis in a country of 1.3 billion people," the IMA said.

The Central government in a release noted that all regular Visas (including e-Visas) which have been granted to nationals of France, Germany and Spain on or before March 11, 2020 and where these foreigners have not yet entered India stand suspended. "Visas of all foreigners already in India remain valid and they may contact the nearest FRRO/FRO through e-FRRO module for extension/conversion etc of their visa or grant of any consular service, if they choose to do so. A notification to this effect is being issued by the Bureau of Immigration," it added.

The Health Ministry said that after the 44 positive cases declared on Monday, three positive cases were reported from Bengaluru (with travel history from the U.S. via Dubai); one more from Bengaluru with travel history from the U.S. via Heathrow; and two positive cases from Pune (travel history from Dubai).

24 arrested for lynching man in Meghalaya

One of the picnickers, identified as Macmillan Kharshandy, died and two others sustained serious head injuries.

"We picked up these people around 4 a.m. They said they presumed the nine men to be kidnappers as they were moving back and forth from one village to another at night. They had apparently been forewarned about the movement of suspicious people via social media," District Superintendent of Police Claudia A. Lyngwa told *The Hindu* from Shillong.

The victims said they got late at the picnic spot and lost their way back at night, driving without a clue. Some villagers stopped and

surrounded their vehicle and assaulted them.

"A majority of those who participated in the lynching have been sent to judicial custody, while six were sent to police custody," Ms. Lyngwa said.

R. Pale, headman of Syntung village, said the elders had tried to control the mob in vain. "Some of the village elders went to the house of the victim in Shillong to pay their respects and apologise for the attack," he said.

East Khasi Hills district has been on the edge since February 28 when a clash between tribal and non-tribal people left a member of the Khasi Students' Union dead. Two more were stabbed to death later.

On March 3, Union Minis-

Tight fight for Gujarat RS seats

BJP determined to deny Congress two seats, to try to split Opposition numbers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

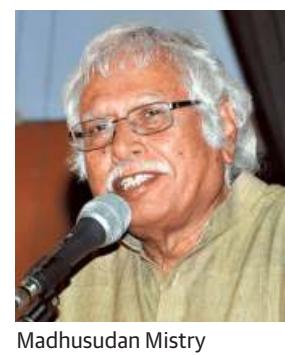
With elections to four Rajya Sabha seats under way in Gujarat, political activity in the State is set to intensify as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) appears determined to retain the three seats despite being short of numbers on its side.

Of the four seats, the BJP holds three, while one is with the Opposition Congress. The arithmetic suggests both the BJP and the Congress can get two seats each in the absence of voting, based on the number of legislators on both sides.

However, the ruling BJP is unlikely to concede a seat to the Opposition party and will instead field a third candidate and try to split the Opposition party's numbers to ensure its victory.

"As of now, the Congress, with 73 legislators, can barely manage to send two candidates to the Rajya Sabha, but even a minor defection of a few legislators can change that scenario," a party leader said, adding there are already talk of a few legislators in touch with the BJP to either cross-vote or abstain from voting.

Neither party has so far



The term of Madhusudan Mistry of the Congress is ending, while from the ruling BJP, Shambhu Prasad Tundia, Lalshin Vadodia and Chunibhai Gohel are completing their term.

According to Congress insiders, in case "proper candidates" are not selected by the party, there will be some defections during the voting for the Rajya Sabha.

Once nomination papers are filed, the Congress is likely to shift its legislators to neighbouring Rajasthan to prevent any attempt at poaching or horse-trading from the ruling party.

declared any candidates for the four seats.

The last day for the filing of nominations is March 13, while voting will be held on March 26.

Bikash is Left-Congress candidate

The former Kolkata Mayor will file his nomination later this week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

CPI(M) leader and former Kolkata Mayor Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya is the joint candidate of the Left parties and the Congress for the Rajya Sabha election from West Bengal.

He told *The Hindu* that he would file his nomination later this week. "Yes, I have been nominated as the joint candidate of the Left and the Congress. I will file it [the nomination] on March 12," he said.

Mr. Bhattacharya, 68, is a prominent lawyer and had been the Mayor of Kolkata



Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya

from 2005 to 2010. His name emerged as a consensus candidate after the CPI(M) Polit Bureau rejected the State unit's request for the nomination of party general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

"Mr. Yechury was our first

preference and when he is not contesting, our MLAs will support whomsoever the CPI(M) leadership nominates," Congress general secretary Amitava Bhattacharya said.

Mr. Bikash Bhattacharya is acceptable to the Congress because he was instrumental in bringing the Saradha chit fund scam and the Narada video tapes before the Calcutta High Court and had pressed for an investigation by Central agencies.

In 2017, the Left parties put him up for the Rajya Sabha, but he could not file the nomination before the dea-

dline. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election, he was the Left Front candidate in Jadavpur and was defeated by Mimi Chakraborty of the Trinamool Congress.

The Left parties and the Congress do not have enough strength in the Assembly to elect a nominee to the Rajya Sabha on their own.

However, if they come together, they can send one member.

The Trinamool Congress has announced four candidates: Mausam Benazir Noor, Arpita Ghosh, Subrata Bakshi and Dinesh Trivedi.

254 Kashmiri Pandits in govt. jobs since 2015

Home Ministry tells parliamentary panel that relief, rehabilitation provided to registered migrants

VIJAYITA SINGH
NEW DELHI

As many as 254 Kashmiri Pandits have joined government service in Jammu and Kashmir since a special package was announced for the displaced community by the Centre in 2015.

Under the Prime Minister's Development Package (PMDP) announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 7, 2015, the government approved creation of 3,000 additional State government jobs for Pandits at a cost of ₹1,080 crore.

A similar employment package was announced by the Manmohan Singh government in 2008 under which 1,474 State government jobs were provided to the migrant youth.

The Union Home Ministry, in reply to a parliamentary standing committee on relief and rehabilitation provided to Kashmiri Pandits, said that "till date, appoint-



Coming together: Kashmiri Pandits staging a sit-in in support of the Citizenship Amendment Act at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on January 19, 2020. ■PTI

ment orders to 528 candidates have been issued and 254 have joined duties."

The special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 was revoked and the State was bifurcated and downgraded into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh by Parliament on August 6, 2019.

The Ministry told the pa-

nel that as per the inputs provided by the government of Jammu and Kashmir, there are 64,827 registered migrant families comprising 60,489 Hindu families, 2,609 Muslim families and 1,729 Sikh families.

"Of the 64,827 families, 43,494 families are registered in Jammu, 19,338 in Delhi and 1,995 families are

settled in other States and Union Territories. Of the 43,494 migrant families, 5,248 families are living in migrant camps," the report tabled in Parliament last week said.

The Ministry said the government had been providing relief and rehabilitation packages to all registered migrants "irrespective of their religion".

"Cash relief to the eligible Jammu and Kashmiri migrants is given at the rate of ₹3,250 per person with a ceiling of ₹13,000 per family a month. The last enhancement was sanctioned in June 2018. In addition, dry ration is also provided," the Ministry told the panel.

Hike in cash relief
The monthly cash relief to the Kashmiri migrants was increased from ₹6,600 per family as sanctioned in 2004 to ₹13,000 per family per month in 2018. The cash al-

Mother, sister visit Omar on 50th birthday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) vice-president Omar Abdullah's mother and sister visited him in the Srinagar sub-jail to wish him on his 50th birthday on Tuesday.

Booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA), Mr. Abdullah's sister Safia Abdullah and mother Molly Abdullah went to see him in the Hari Niwas palace, an interrogation centre that was turned into a guest house and now serves as a sub-jail for the NC leader since August 5 last year.

It was a quiet celebration for the Abdullahs, as NC president Farooq Abdullah remains in detention in his own house under the PSA. "Wishing my brother, Omar, a very happy 50th birthday!" tweeted Ms. Khan.

No spike in arrests on Bangladesh border

In 2019, 1,351 held for bid to cross over

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

There has been no unusual increase in arrests of those trying to illegally enter India through the Bangladesh border in 2019 from the trend observed in the past six years, government data in Parliament show.

The number of those apprehended by the Border Security Force (BSF) came down from 3,426 in 2015 to 1,118 in 2018.

In 2019, there was a marginal increase when 1,351 persons were caught trying to enter India illegally.

Till February 22 this year, as many as 183 such persons were caught.

In 2014, there was a major spike in number of apprehensions when 2,455 persons were caught entering India illegally, compared with the previous year when only 209 people were caught.

India shares a 4,096.7-km border with Bangladesh and all of it is guarded by the BSF.

On March 3, Union Minis-

ter of State for Home Nitin Gadkari said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha: "Some infiltrators are able to enter in a clandestine and surreptitious manner, mainly due to difficult riverine terrain in parts of international border with Bangladesh which are not amenable to physical fencing."

Fencing problems

As per the government reply, the fencing along the 900-km border along Bangladesh could not be completed due to various reasons which include "difficult terrain, riverine and marshy land, short working season, land acquisition problems, public protests and objections by Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB)".

The largest area of 579.65 km remains unfenced along West Bengal as the State shares the longest border with Bangladesh at 2,216.7 km compared with Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.

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Political vacuum in Congress after Scindia's exit

The turmoil in Madhya Pradesh may push other marginalised State leaders to speak out, say analysts

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOJNAGAR

The festering resentment of being overlooked for the post of Chief Minister and later as State Congress chief, coupled with the Lok Sabha election upset, nudged Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia, the second-most popular leader in Madhya Pradesh during the 2018 Assembly election, to abandon the party.

With the elections to three Rajya Sabha seats from the State imminent, Mr. Scindia, anticipating another short shrift from the party, pulled the plug on the Kamal Nath government.

While the decision has plunged the Kamal Nath government into a crisis in the short term, it has created a political vacuum for the Congress in Mr. Scindia's bastion, the Chambal-Gwalior region.

Although former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan



Out in the open: Congress workers staging a protest against Scindia in Bhopal on Tuesday. At right, Gopal Bhargava and other BJP MLAs leaving Bhopal. ■ A. M. FARUQUI



strode ahead in popularity by 10-12% in 2018, Mr. Scindia was close behind, explained Yatinrao Singh Sisodia, Director, Madhya Pradesh Institute of Social Science Research. "Therefore, he should've been the natural choice [of CM] for the Congress. The situation, out of control of the Con-

gress now, could have been addressed timely," he said.

Midterm election

If the remaining Congress MLAs resign en masse, a midterm election will become imminent. That eventually may not go down well with most MLAs, says Sanjay Kumar, Director at the

Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

"Most certainly the government is going out," he said, although he described Mr. Scindia's decision to quit the Congress as "immature". Mr. Kumar said, "There are differences of opinions within any organisation. One should not be taking whimsical

decision. He seems more interested not in the Rajya Sabha seat but in destabilising the Kamal Nath government."

Mr. Kumar further cautioned that the episode might encourage disgruntled Congress leaders in other States to speak out. "If the high command doesn't act in

a fair manner, we might see something of this kind in other States as well," he added.

Meanwhile, Bhagwandas Israni, former principal secretary of the State Assembly, said the BJP was likely to form the government given its numbers, and support from the Central government.

A shell-shocked Congress announces Scindia's expulsion

Before that, the rebel leader posted his resignation letter on Twitter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Moments after rebel Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia drove down to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence on Tuesday morning, party president Sonia Gandhi summoned general secretary K.C. Venugopal to her residence and asked him to announce Mr. Scindia's expulsion.

By then, Mr. Scindia had posted his resignation letter on his Twitter handle. In it, he said it was time for him to "move on and make a fresh start".

His letter was dated March 9 (Monday), though the Congress insisted that it was

hand-delivered at Ms. Gandhi's 10 Janpath residence on Tuesday afternoon.

Aim remains the same

The former Lok Sabha member for Guna made it clear that Tuesday's developments were the culmination of the events that played out over the past one year. "Having been a primary member of the Congress party for the last 18 years, it is now time for me to move on. I am tendering my resignation from the primary membership of the Congress and as you well know, this is a path that has been drawing itself out over the last year," he wrote.

"While my aim and pur-



Rocking the boat: Jyotiraditya Scindia's supporters say the party was indecisive about making him the MPCC chief. ■ PTI

pose remains the same as it has always been from the very beginning, to serve the people of my state and my country, I believe I am unable to do this anymore within this party. To reflect and realise the aspirations of my people and my workers I believe it is best that I now look ahead at a fresh start," he ad-

ded. He also thanked Ms. Gandhi and his other former Congress colleagues for providing him "with a platform to have served the nation".

"The Congress president has approved the expulsion of Sh. Jyotiraditya Scindia from the Indian National Congress with immediate effect for anti-party activities,"

promising star of the party, Mr. Scindia lost out to Mr. Kamal Nath when the Congress chose the veteran for the post of Chief Minister in December 2018. Since then, it has never been an easy relationship. Though Mr. Scindia was the strongest claimant to the post of president of the MPCC, he was ignored because of the reported opposition from Mr. Digvijaya Singh and Mr. Kamal Nath.

From time to time, Mr. Scindia took position that was odd with his party. The breaking point came after all efforts to broker a compromise failed. Sources close to Chief Minister Kamal Nath indicated that the party was willing to offer Mr. Scindia the post of president of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) and a Rajya Sabha seat. But peace efforts failed as Mr. Scindia refused to speak to him saying he had flu, said former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh.

Late on Monday evening, however, Mr. Scindia is learnt to have met Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot in Delhi. Mr. Pilot was reportedly the high command's emissary. This meeting also failed to placate him. Once considered the most

LPG scheme closed, but only 3 States have gone kerosene-free

Parliamentary panel says there is still a lot of ground to cover

SOBHANA K NAIR
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary committee has said only three States and five Union Territories have become kerosene-free, though the government last September met the target of eight crore LPG connections under the Pradhans Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.

The report of the Parliamentary Committee on Petroleum, which was tabled last week, points to the gap between the continuing use of kerosene and the claim of 97% LPG coverage nationwide. The committee is headed by BJP member Ramesh Bidhuri.

The allocation for the scheme has been cut down by 58% from ₹2,724 crore during 2019-20 to ₹1,118 crore during 2020-21. The Petroleum Ministry informed the committee that the government had met the target on September 7, 2019, and 96.9% coverage had been achieved nationwide, except in Jammu and Kashmir. The Ministry said the scheme was no longer running, and the present allocation was meant to meet the arrears in the reimbursement of expenditure.

The 97% coverage has



Left out: Large segments of people in various States still use kerosene and wood for cooking.

been calculated by dividing the number of households – it stands at 2,850.5 lakh as on February 1 this year – and the domestic LPG consumers at 2,772.2 lakh.

The committee was upset at the closure of the scheme, and said there was still a lot of ground to cover. "There are poor households in the general category in urban and semi-urban localities that also need to be covered. The committee, therefore, recommends that the scheme be extended to poor households in urban and semi-urban slum areas, and achieve a higher LPG coverage of the population by providing connections to households that do not have LPG," the report said.

At the same time, the committee said, large segments of people in various States still depended on kerosene for cooking and household lighting. The Ministry has justified the low number of 'kerosene-free' States and Union Territories, saying their consent is critical. Karnataka, Telangana, Haryana, Nagaland, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh and Puducherry have gone for a voluntary cut.

Only three States – Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh – and the Union Territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Andaman & Nicobar Island and Puducherry have become kerosene-free.

Amarinder making false claims on jobs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

While the verbal spat between the ruling Congress and the Opposition Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in Punjab continued, former Education Minister and senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema has hit out at Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, asking him to explain why Punjab was lagging behind in providing jobs to youth.

"It seems that either the Chief Minister is not aware of the standard procedure adopted by the Economic Survey throughout the country or he is trying to mislead the people again. Will the Chief Minister deny the fact that 2.69 lakh applicants have registered themselves with the unemployment bureau, of whom 91% are categorised as skilled and 85% are [Class] X pass or above?" he said.

Mr. Cheema said that in his recent statement, the Chief Minister had accepted that only 57,905 youth had been provided employment and his [the Chief Minister's] "claim made in Delhi" during the recent election campaign, on giving employment to 12 lakh youth, was "false and baseless".

Stop anti-Muslim violence: Iran's Assembly of Experts

Take quick steps to restore peace, says the body considered close to Khamenei

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

An important legislative body of Iran has called upon India to stop violence against Muslims. In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Assembly of Experts, an 88-member body considered close to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, urged for quick measures to restore peace.

"Similar incidents have taken place in India before, but the latest one took place in the backdrop of the visit of the U.S. President. We call upon the Indian government to take immediate measures to ensure protection for the Muslim citizens," said Ayatollah

Ibrahim Jannati, leader of the Assembly of Experts.

Traditionally the Assembly of Experts is considered to be a powerful body of legislators as it has among its functions the task of electing the Supreme Leader.

The Assembly of Experts is considered to be a bastion of the ultra orthodox clerics.

The statement was part of a series of criticism by Iran's top-ranking leaders after the killings of February 24-26.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the group of Shia organisations had criticised India for the riots that left at least 53 persons dead.

KARNATAKA POWER CORPORATION LIMITED

(Raichur Thermal Power Station)

CIN: U85110KA1970SGC001919

No: KPCL/2019-20/PS/WORK_INDENT9562 Date: 09.03.2020

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

(Through e-Procurement Portal only) (Two Cover System)

Sealed bids are invited from competent agencies for "RTPS-Overhauling / Breakdown and Periodical Special Assistance for Maintenance of 6.6KV HT Motors of Unit 1 to 8 and connected Electrical Hoists for a period of one year" at RTPS. The offer of the bidders, who meet the specified pre-qualification requirements, would only be considered for evaluation. The brief bid Notification containing pre-qualification criteria for the bidders, EMD, calendar of events and bid activities and other can be accessed from GoK e-procurement portal : <https://eproc.karnatakapower.gov.in> The last date for receipt of the completed bids : 21.03.2020 upto 17:00 Hrs. Further details can be had from office of the Superintendent Engineer (EM-1), RTPS, KPCL, Shaktinagar - 584170, Raichur District, Mobile : 9449596530, 9449596535, e-mail : seem1rtpskpcl@karnatakapower.com Website : www.karnatakapower.com



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RAJASTHANI ISPAT NIGAM LIMITED

विजयपुर काला बांध विद्युत उत्पादन संस्थान

VISAKHAPATNAM STEEL PLANT

WORKS CONTRACTS DEPARTMENT

REGISTRATION OF CONTRACTORS

Ref. No. VSP/WC/REGN-M/2019-20 Date: 29.02.2020

1. Free applications are invited online for Registration of Contractors for various works in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

2. Registered Agencies having valid up to 31.03.2020 also need to apply for renewal of Registration on no.

3. Last date for submission of 'ONLINE' application or before 4th April, 2020. The applications will be processed on first-come-first-serve basis.

4. Price of the file in online application, duly signed, with all supporting documents alongwith DD-BC for Rs. 1,10/- in favour of RINL payable at Visakhapatnam towards Registration application cost & processing fee, shall be submitted in a file to the office of CGM/Works Contracts, 1st floor, Works Contracts Department, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Visakhapatnam-531 032 on or before 15th April, 2020.

Contact: Sri T Jagadeeswar Rao, DGM & Convener - CRC, Works Contracts, Ph: 081-21-2518765/00; C/o 1377131689 CGM (WC)

For online Application form, other details & corrigendum please visit regularly www.vizagsteel.com ! Contracts & Common Contractors Registration. HAR EK KAAM DESH KE NAAM



KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY & DRAINAGE BOARD

'Jalabhavan', # 5 & 6, I Stage, I Phase, Banerghatta Road,

B.T.M. Layout, Bangalore-29. Tel: 080-41106504.

E-mail: cekwbdng@gmail.com, Website: kuwsdb.org.

CORRIDUM-4

(Through e-Procurement Portal Only)

Tender No. in e-Procurement Portal

KUWSDB/2019-20/EL/WORK_INDENT2484

The Revised calendar of events for following tender which was published in Daily Newspapers "The Hindu" English Daily, All India Edition and in "Vijaya Karnataka" Kannada Edition on 17.01.2020 is as follows: Name of Work: "Supply, erection, electrification and commissioning of pumping machineries at head works, WTP at Bangarpet and Kolar along with allied accessories under providing CWSS to Kolar City, Bangarpet, Malur and 45 en-route villages with Yargol Dam as source". Revised Calendar of Events: 1. Last date and time for submission / uploading of the tender in the e-procurement portal: 16.05.2020 upto 17.30 hours. 2. Date and time for opening of Technical tenders: 20.05.2020 after 11.30 hours. 3. Date and time for opening of Financial bids: 26.05.2020 after 11.30 hours. The other terms and conditions in the Tender Notification remain unaltered.

Sd/-, Chief Engineer (B),

K.U.W.S. & D. Board, Bengaluru.

U.P. yet to decide on moving SC over posters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Tuesday said it was yet to decide on approaching the Supreme Court against the Allahabad High Court's order to immediately remove the posters of those accused of vandalism during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

The posters, bearing the photographs, names and addresses of those accused of vandalism during the protests in December last,

had come up at major road crossings in Lucknow last Thursday.

Highly unjust

The High Court on Monday ordered the Lucknow administration to remove them.

It had termed the posters "highly unjust," saying it was an "absolute encroachment on the personal liberty of individuals."

"Nothing has been decided on this yet. We will decide what we have to do," Avanish Awasthi, Additional Chief Secretary, Home,

said when asked about reports that

Wuhan 'turned the tide' in virus battle: Xi

China reported just 19 new COVID-19 cases as it shut last of 14 makeshift hospitals in the city

REUTERS
BEIJING

Chinese President Xi Jinping made his first visit to Wuhan since the COVID-19 outbreak forced a lockdown of the city of 11 million people, in a sign that authorities' efforts to control the spread of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) are bearing fruit.

Mr. Xi's arrived on the same day that Wuhan shut the last of 14 temporary hospitals that had been opened to manage a surge in COVID-19 patients, news website The Paper reported.

Earlier on Tuesday, China said it had just 19 new infections on Monday, down from 40 a day earlier. That also marked the third straight day of no new domestically transmitted cases in mainland China outside of Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, even as the disease spreads rapidly in other countries, including Italy and the United States.

'Positive results'

"The situation of coronavirus prevention in Hubei and Wuhan has shown positive changes and achieved phased results, initially realising goals to stabilise and turn around the situation," the official Xinhua news service cited Mr. Xi as saying.

He acknowledged that people under lengthy quarantine – Wuhan and much of Hubei province have been under strict controls since late January – may have frustrations to vent.

"We must understand and tolerate them," he was quoted as saying.

During his visit, a masked Mr. Xi was shown meeting with local officials, medical staff and volunteers, state broadcaster CCTV reported. He addressed frontline medical workers and a hospital



Ground zero: Chinese President Xi Jinping waving at a COVID-19 patient and medical staff via a video link at the Huoshenshan hospital in Wuhan on Tuesday. ■ AFP

ised patient by videolink.

Residents of Wuhan were shown cheering Mr. Xi from their apartment windows, while negative comments on China's heavily censored social media were quickly removed.

"Why only come now when the epidemic is almost over?" one comment on the official People's Daily's Weibo feed said before disappearing.

Stocks lifted

News of Mr. Xi's Wuhan visit gave a lift to Chinese stocks, with the blue-chip index ending the day 2.1% higher after falling into negative territory in morning trade.

"It is obvious that Mr. Xi could not have visited Wuhan earlier because the risk of him contracting the virus there was initially too high," Zhang Ming, a professor at Renmin University in Beijing, told Reuters.

"He is there now to reap the harvest. His being there means the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) may declare victory against the virus soon," Mr. Zhang said.

'Containment zone' in New York to halt spread

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALBANY

New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo announced on Tuesday he is sending the National Guard into a "containment area" in New York City suburb to help fight what is believed to be the nation's biggest cluster of coronavirus cases – one of the most dramatic actions yet to control the outbreak in the U.S.

The move came as health authorities contended with alarming concentrations of the disease on both sides of the country and scattered cases in between.

Schools, houses of worship and large gathering places will be shuttered for two weeks in a "containment area" in New Rochelle, and the troops will scrub surfaces and deliver food to the zone, which extends a mile in all directions from a point near a synagogue con-

nected to some of the cases, Mr. Cuomo said.

"It is a dramatic action, but it is the largest cluster of cases in the country," Cuomo said. "The numbers are going up unabated, and we do need a special public health strategy."

The virus has infected over 700 people in the U.S. and killed at least 27, with one state after another recording its first infections in quick succession. New Jersey recorded its first COVID-19 death.

In California, the evacuation of passengers from Grand Princess began on Monday with several hundred people let off the ship. About two dozen people who needed acute medical care were taken off first, though it was unclear how many of them were infected.

About 2,000 passengers were still aboard on Tuesday morning.

168 die in Italy, highest single-day toll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ROME

Italy recorded 168 deaths on Tuesday from COVID-19, its highest single-day toll to date, pushing the number of fatalities outside China to more than 1,000.

Overall in Italy, 631 people have died from the disease and 10,149 have been infected in just over two weeks.

Tuesday's toll raised the total number of deaths outside China to 1,115, according to an AFP tally. The Italian government has imposed a nationwide ban on public gathering and travel restrictions until April 3.

It's beginning of epidemic for France: Macron

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

French President Emmanuel Macron warned on Tuesday that France was "just at the beginning" of the COVID-19 outbreak that has killed 30 people in the country and infected more than 1,600.

"We're just at the beginning of this epidemic," he said in Paris, urging the French not to panic.

France is the second-worst affected country in Europe after Italy. Culture Minister Franck Riester and five MPs are among those who have tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Putin backs amendment that will let him remain in power

Constitutional changes will let him seek re-election in 2024

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday backed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow him to seek re-election after his current term ends in 2024, ending uncertainty about his future.

Putin gave his support to the amendment put forward by lawmaker Valentina Tereshkova, who as a Soviet cosmonaut in 1963 became the first woman to fly to space. She proposed either scrapping Russia's two-term limit for presidents or resetting the clock so Putin's four terms wouldn't count.

Lawmakers in the Kremlin-controlled State Duma quickly endorsed Ms. Tereshkova's proposal, along with a sweeping set of constitutional changes proposed by Mr. Putin.

In a speech to lawmakers on Tuesday, Mr. Putin spoke against scrapping presidential term limits altogether but backed the idea that if the Constitution is revised, the two-term limit only would apply from 2024 on.



Vladimir Putin

The President's current six-year term expires in 2024.

Mr. Putin, 67, has been in power for more than 20 years, becoming Russia's longest-serving leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

After serving two presidential terms in 2000-2008, he shifted to the Russian Prime Minister's office while protege Dmitry Medvedev served as a placeholder President.

Then he dropped the bombshell, saying he positively viewed Ms. Tereshkova's alternate proposal to restart the term count when the revamped constitution enters force.

Mr. Putin reclaimed the presidency in 2012 and won another term in 2018.

A series of constitutional amendments Mr. Putin proposed in January were widely seen by Kremlin foes as part of his efforts to stay in power.

power. However, it wasn't clear until Tuesday how Putin could achieve that goal.

"I propose to either lift the presidential term limit or add a clause that after the revised constitution enters force, the incumbent president, just like any other citizen, has the right to seek the presidency," she said to a raucous applause.

After Ms. Tereshkova spoke, Mr. Putin quickly came to Parliament to address lawmakers.

"The President is a guarantor of security of our state, its internal stability and evolutionary development," Mr. Putin said. "We have had enough revolutions."

In a speech to lawmakers on Tuesday, Mr. Putin spoke against scrapping presidential term limits altogether but backed the idea that if the Constitution is revised, the two-term limit only would apply from 2024 on.

Mr. Putin's statement came as lawmakers were considering the amendments in a crucial second reading when changes in the document are made.

'Russia meddling in MH17 probe'

REUTERS
AMSTERDAM

Dutch prosecutors accused Russia on Tuesday of trying to sabotage the investigation into the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 in Ukraine in 2014, saying this cast "a dark shadow" over the impending trial of four suspects in the crash.

Pre-trial hearings began in Amsterdam on Monday. Prosecutors say the defendants, three Russians and a

Ukrainian, helped arrange the Russian missile system used to shoot down MH17, a civilian aircraft, killing all 298 passengers, most of them Dutch, on board.

"The sum of all the facts casts a dark shadow over this investigation because there is strong indicative evidence that Russian government is keen to thwart the investigation," prosecutor Thijs Berger said.

"Several witnesses in this

investigation have said that they fear for their lives if their identities would come to light... The use of Russian security services to discover the identity of witnesses in the investigation is a very real scenario," he said.

MH17 was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur on July 17, 2014, when it was shot down by a missile fired from territory held by pro-Moscow rebels. Russia has denied any involvement.

Michigan primary decisive for Sanders' campaign

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DETROIT

Bernie Sanders proved his 2016 presidential bid was serious with an upset victory in Michigan powered by his opposition to free trade and appeal among working-class voters. Four years later, the State could either revive the Vermont Senator's campaign or relegate him to the role of protest candidate.

Michigan and five other States already began voting early Tuesday morning in what will be a critical point in the Democratic race.

Former Vice-President Joe Biden is looking to quash Mr. Sanders' hopes and cement his own front-runner status just a week after resurrecting his beleaguered White House bid with a de-

feat victory on Super Tuesday. He played up his underdog story on Monday as he campaigned across Michigan, reflecting on his stutters as a child and the deaths of his first wife and young daughter.

And Mr. Biden wasn't alone. The former Vice-President courted the State's influential African American voters alongside the two most prominent black candidates previously in the 2020 race, Kamala Harris and Cory Booker, who endorsed Mr. Biden in recent days as part of a broader consolidation of support among party leaders.

They all appeared hand-in-hand at Mr. Biden's final Michigan rally on Monday night.

Now his power plays are

The detention of senior royals and the decision to cut oil price show Crown Prince is back in action

DAVID D. KIRKPATRICK
First he ordered the detention of at least four senior members of his own royal family. The next day he plunged Saudi Arabia into a price war with Russia that sent energy and stock markets around the world into free fall.

For a while, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia had appeared to be living down his reputation for dangerous aggression.

Perhaps chastened by the blowback over his connection with the killing of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the 34-year-old Crown Prince had kept a low profile for more than a year.

Now his power plays are



Mohammed bin Salman

back. His sudden, steep cut to the price of oil has rocked a global economy already at risk of falling into recession, threatened to burn through Saudi Arabia's cash reserves and undermined his grandiose promises of new investments to lessen the kingdom's dependence on oil.

Mutual destruction

"It is mutually assured destruction for any oil exporting economy, certainly including Saudi Arabia and Russia and probably the United States as well," said Greg Brew, a scholar of the region and a fellow at Southern Methodist University.

"But this is typical MBS, right?" he added, referring to the Crown Prince by his

es – Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz, the younger brother of the Crown Prince's ageing father, King Salman, and Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, the former Crown Prince and Interior Minister – had once been seen as possible rivals for power. Their arrests stirred anxious speculation among cowed members of the royal family that Crown Prince Mohammed might be sidelining opponents in preparation for taking the throne from his father, who is 84 and has sometimes appeared forgetful or disoriented.

People close to the royal court, though, insisted the Crown Prince had merely lashed out at his uncle and cousins for speaking critical

ly about him. He wanted to teach the rest of the family a lesson. Crown Prince Mohammed slashed the oil price to punish Russia, which he faulted for failing to cooperate in cutting production and propping up prices. The slowdown caused by the coronavirus was already reducing demand for oil.

The timing of the price war was so soon after the round-up of his royal relatives on Friday has aroused speculation that the crown prince sought to contain potential opponents in anticipation of trouble. Perhaps he wanted to pre-empt any foes before economic pain from the downturn made him politically vulnerable, some analysts suggested.

NY TIMES



Pope tells priests to go out and meet the sick

VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis urged Catholic priests on Tuesday to "have the courage" to visit those sickened by the COVID-19 and help medical staff and volunteers in the work they do, hours after Italy was placed on a lockdown. AFP

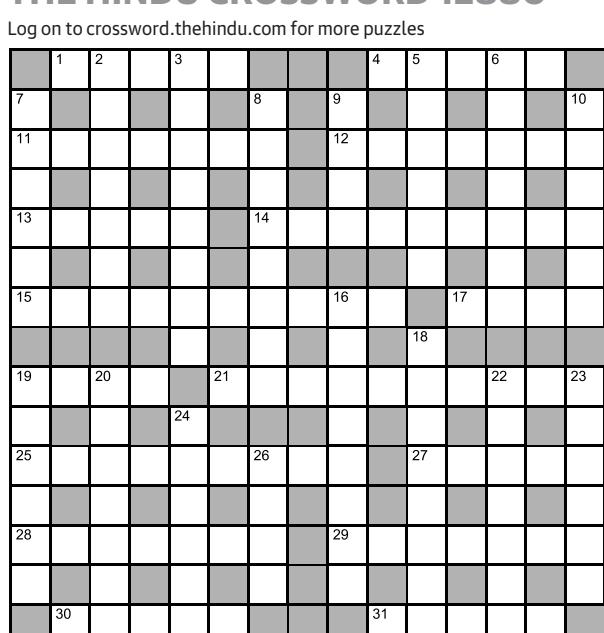
Alcohol poisoning kills 44 in virus-hit Iran

TEHRAN

The death toll from alcohol poisoning in southwestern province of Khuzestan rose to 44 on Tuesday, state news agency IRNA reported, over misguided efforts to ward off COVID-19 by drinking bootleg alcohol. AFP

THE HINDU CROSSWORD 12880

Log on to crossword.thehindu.com for more puzzles



ACROSS

- 1 Dull film in front of diamond (5)
- 4 Girl gets left in city near Dubai once more (5)
- 11 Removing Selenium, engineer separated electrical accessory (7)
- 12 Mark it! Chennai showcases area for food (7)

(set by Hypatia)

- 5 Ditch girl, say (6)
- 6 People stop exchanging tips between iOS and Android (7)
- 7 Badger artist tucking into eats, taking seconds (6)
- 8 Queen wearing stuff that is red on top and more showy (8)
- 9 Type of fabric in beatnik attire (4)
- 10 Going north, recollect capturing good soldier (6)
- 16 Old fashioned diet, incorporating work-out and fast (8)
- 18 How to make bats sell down the river? (8)
- 19 Stable or crazy German? (6)
- 20 Promote a varnam, initially depicted in Bharatanatyam, say (7)
- 21 Ram morphed animated tool (4,6)
- 25 Study about trapping rodents? Forget It! (5,4)
- 27 Initially kept in trust, equity dealer wrote bad cheques (5)
- 28 Hat trimmed from behind with lace at the edges to make dignified (7)
- 29 Small child needs friend – Absolutely! (7)
- 30 Student checked out fancy blazer and one with stripes (5)
- 31 Home Alone: Do baddies keep coming back? (5)

DOWN

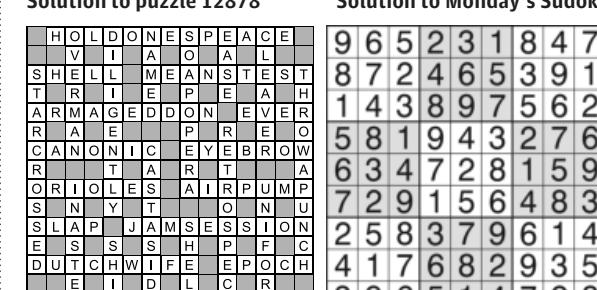
- 2 Stubborn worker follows lady, scratching head (7)
- 3 E-book criticizes guts, perhaps (8)
- 13 Lizard in sacred text (5)
- 14 Person who doesn't tidy up is Spooner's "grumpy bear" (9)
- 15 Places outside had everything except any dishes (10)
- 17 Time in place that's not subject to change (4)
- 19 Represent people around area (4)
- 22 Model model draping model model with a colourful pattern (7)
- 23 Report I studied before long-haul flight (6)
- 24 He tries to corrupt engineer refusing initially to cover crack (6)
- 26 One starts baking with old butter? (4)

SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★

Solution to puzzle 12878



Solution to Monday's Sudoku

FAITH

Srirangam's significance

Mantras have the power to protect

2 more placed in isolation in West Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA

Two more persons were on Tuesday admitted to an isolation ward in a State-run hospital with fever and cough – symptoms associated with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) – a senior health department official said.

Both have travel histories to Indonesia and Malaysia and were admitted to Beliaghata ID Hospital, he said. Blood samples and throat swabs of the suspects have been collected and test reports are expected by evening, the official said. He said three out of four other patients admitted at the isolation ward of the hospital tested negative for COVID-19, while a re-examination would be conducted on the fourth patient, he said.

Another person, who had returned from Saudi Arabia on Saturday and admitted at Beliaghata ID Hospital on Sunday, tested positive for swine flu. "He has been kept under observation," the official said.

COVID-19: Manipur closes international gates at Moreh

District authorities, security forces instructed to close down all entry points

IBOYAIMA LAITHANGBAM
IMPHAL

The legalised border trade with Myanmar came to a grinding halt from Tuesday as the Manipur government closed both the international gates I and II at Moreh, Manipur's border town.

An order issued by H. Gyan Prakash, the special secretary (Home), Manipur, says that the preventive measure was taken to check possible outbreak and transmission of coronavirus in Manipur. Crossing the international gates by all sections of people through these gates is prohibited. The order says that all district authorities and security forces have been instructed to close down all entry points.

On Monday, the troops of 43 Assam Rifles deployed along the border had banned crossing of the border. Only a few people are going to Myanmar and entering Manipur through these



Restricted flow: Only a few people are going to Myanmar and entering Manipur through these gates. ■ FILE PHOTO

gates manned by officials of Manipur and Myanmar. Majority of the traders bring their goods to Manipur through other parts of the border. An official source says that the sealing of the international border will be extended to Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh which have a common border with Myanmar.

There have been local media reports saying that just one or two officials check the people coming from Myanmar. As there is no crowd control system near the international gates, the possibility of contracting the dis-

ease is high. Besides, reports say that those wanting to enter Manipur are stranded for hours as the doctors are yet to arrive from Imphal.

Health officials said that the tests conducted on 12 suspect persons were found to be negative. One Indian coming to Imphal was lodged in the isolation ward of the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences, Imphal. Medical Superintendent C. Arunkumar said the patient was improving and said that he may be discharged soon.

There are two isolation wards in the two medical colleges, RIMS and JNIMS, in Imphal.

Chief Minister N. Biren had already given approval for the construction of a full-fledged isolation ward on the RIMS complex to meet any eventuality.

He also appealed to the people to shorten the Holi festival which is a five-day carnival in Manipur.



Hemant Soren

event on the microblogging site where he is heard asking the saffron-clad attendees to take an oath to boycott "riots" by refusing them jobs and not buying things from them.

Suresh Chavhanke, in his tweet, also said that the

mayor, former Ministers, businessmen and industrialists undertook the pledge at a city hotel. He requested netizens to take a similar oath and share the video.

Shortly after the video went viral, #ArrestSureshChavhanke trended on Twitter, following which Mr. Soren said appropriate action would be taken after investigation.

"The government has taken cognisance of the event & this particular 'speech' @JharkhandPolice is investigating the matter & appropriate action deemed fit will be taken soon. There will be 'Zero Tolerance' for anyone who attempts to disrupt communal harmony & brotherhood in Jharkhand," Mr. Soren tweeted.

Jharkhand police to look into video by news channel editor

Attempt to disrupt communal harmony won't be tolerated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
RANCHI

The Jharkhand police is probing a video doing the rounds on social media where the editor of a Hindi news channel is seen exhorting people to "economically boycott rioters", official sources said on Tuesday.

Taking to Twitter, Chief Minister Hemant Soren said the government has taken cognisance of the event, and asserted that any attempt to disrupt communal harmony will not be tolerated.

A CMO official said Mr. Soren asked police to initiate a probe after the video went viral on Twitter.

Suresh Chavhanke, the editor of Sudarshan News, had shared the video of an

event on the microblogging site where he is heard asking the saffron-clad attendees to take an oath to boycott "riots" by refusing them jobs and not buying things from them.

Suresh Chavhanke, in his tweet, also said that the

Probe ordered into advocate's death

Kin and lawyers allege Roy died due to medical negligence

SYED SAJJAD ALI
AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Biplob Kumar Deb on Tuesday ordered a magisterial probe into the 'mysterious' death of an advocate. He announced the decision after visiting the residence of the deceased.

Bhaskar Deb Roy, 30, was found lying unconscious outside a school at Dhalaswar here on Friday. His motorbike allegedly met with an accident, leaving him injured.

Fire Service personnel took him to the GBP Hospital after being alerted by locals. He died within a few hours.

Mr. Roy's family and advocates alleged that he died due to medical negligence as he was left unat-

tended at the hospital. They also suspected foul play in the alleged accident inflicting injuries in the legs of Mr. Roy.

Protest by lawyers

A large number of lawyers staged a demonstration in front of the police headquarters seeking proper investigation into the death.

They also held candlelight vigil in the city. Police were initially reluctant to register FIR on charge of medical negligence, but later relented after receiving an order from the Chief Judicial Magistrate.

Former Chief Minister Manik Sarkar and incumbent Law Minister Ratan Lal Nath also visited Mr. Roy's residence and consoled the family.

Mr. Deb, during his visit to Mr. Roy's residence, assured the grieving family members of all possible help from the government. He said the West Tripura District Magistrate would probe the issue.

Team set up

The Health department has also constituted a four-member team to look into the alleged negligence committed in the hospital.

Meanwhile, the Tripura High Court on Tuesday began hearing a PIL plea seeking the court's intervention for a high-level probe into the advocate's death. Chief Justice Akil Qureshi asked the police to submit all relevant documents on Wednesday to resume hearing.

10 drown, 3 die in accident after Holi celebrations in Odisha

12 injured in clash triggered by altercation over rash driving in Cuttack district

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BHUBANESWAR

At least 10 people drowned while bathing and three were killed in a road accident after Holi celebrations in Odisha on Tuesday.

Two more people, who were swept away while taking bath in Mahanadi river in Cuttack and in Budalibandha Dam in Balasore district, were yet to be traced.

Separately, at least 12 people were injured in a group clash during Holi celebrations in Athagarh area of Cuttack.

tack district, the police said. Giving details of the drowning cases, the police said three youths drowned at Kenduguda dam in Gunupur in Rayagada district, while two schoolchildren died while bathing in Kathjodi river near Cuttack.

A man drowned in a pond at Aul in Kendrapara district, a woman drowned in Puri canal at Baliah near Bhubaneswar.

A youth was swept away in Mahendra Tanaya river at Parlakhemundi in Gajapati

district and died, while another died in Indravati dam in Nabarangpur district, the police said.

In a similar incident in Salapura area of Cuttack district, a man drowned in the Chitrotpala river following Holi celebrations.

The police said three persons were killed in a road accident while returning home after attending a Holi feast at Kaimati Chhak in Dhenkanal district.

The motorcycle they were riding dashed against a roadside tree and the three

were rushed to a hospital where doctors declared them dead, police said.

The deceased were identified as Shubra Saswat Routray from Rameswarapur area under Town Police limits, Dharmananda Dehuri from Kaimati and Kailash Saha from Achhanda village.

In the clash in Cuttack district, at least 12 people were injured. The clash during Holi celebrations was triggered by an altercation over rash driving. All the injured have been hospitalised.

The children included two siblings.

Four children drown in W.B.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KRISHNAGAR

Four children drowned in a pond in Nadia district while taking bath after celebrating Dol Jatra, the festival of colours in West Bengal, police said on Tuesday.

The children included two siblings.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF GREATER MUMBAI

(Hydraulic Engineer's Department)

No. DyHE/PPC/11495/Panjrapur of 06.03.2020

e-TENDER NOTICE

The Commissioner of Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai invites online tenders for the following works on "Percentage Rate Basis" from the eligible bidders. The Bid Start Date & time and Bid End Date & time is specified in the detailed tender notice on M.C.G.M.'s website under Tender section.

Sr. No.	Bid no.	Name of the work
1.	7100176496 Panjrapur	Protection & Maintenance of Dead and Dangerous trees at Pise Panjrapur Complex for the period of two years.

The intending tenderers shall visit the Municipal website at <http://portal.mcmg.gov.in> for further details of the tender.

PRO/2128/ADV/19-20

Save Water! Avoid Misuse of Water

sd/-
Executive Engineer
(Civil) Panjrapur

WESTERN RAILWAY

VARIOUS WORK

Divisional Railway Manager (WA), Western Railway, 6th Floor, Engg. Deptt., Mumbai Central, Mumbai 400008, invites e-Tender as per details given below:

Sr. No. 1. Executive: Sr.DEN(Co)BCT. Tender Notice No. & Date: BCT/19-20/422 dt. 06-03-2020. Work and Location: CCG-VR Sec. Dewatering during monsoon 2020 in various section of Mumbai division. Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 1,04,81,280/- EMD: ₹ 2,02,400/- Date & Time of Submission and Opening: On 02.04.2020 upto 15.00 hrs. and at 15.30 hrs. Sr. No. 2. Executive: Sr.DEN(Co)BCT. Tender Notice No. & Date: BCT/19-20/423 dt. 06-03-2020. Work and Location: Vasai Road, Naigaon, & Bhayander: Supply of potable drinking water by tanker to Vasai Road colony, stations, service building, Naigaon colony along with newly constructed quarters at Bhayander & Bhayander Rest house for a period of two years. Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 1,65,60,691.20. EMD: ₹ 2,32,800/- Date & Time of Submission and Opening: On 02.04.2020 upto 15.00 hrs. and at 15.30 hrs. For further details, please visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://ireps.gov.in). Manual offers will not be considered.

follows us on twitter.com/WesternRly

GUIDANCE

Nodal Agency for Investment Promotion & Single Window Facilitation

Industries Department, Government of Tamil Nadu

19 A, Rukmani Lakshmi Pathi Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008,

Phone: 91 44 2855 3866 / Fax: 91 44 2855 3856

Email: guidance@tn.gov.in

Request for Proposal -RFP

The undersigned invite (RFP) for the selection of System Integrator.

Last date for submission of Documents is - 20.04.2020 @ 3 PM.

For details please visit :-

- a) www.tenders.tn.gov.in
- b) www.investingtamilnadu.com
- c) www.easibusiness.tn.gov.in

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Guidance, 19 A, Rukmani Lakshmi Pathi Salai, SIPCOT Building, Montieth Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.

Phone: 044 28553866

CENTRAL RAILWAY

SUPPLY, TRANSPORTATION, LOADING,

UNLOADING, STORING AND FILLING OF DRY SCREENED SAND IN SAND BOXES

Tender No. B/T R/S O/S and

Filling/20-22. Name of Work : Supply,

Transportation, Loading, Unloading,

storing and filling of dry screened sand

in sand boxes of Electric / Diesel

Locomotives of the crew changing

Locations and checking of sander

working and attention of Electric /

Diesel locomotive sand gears in

suburban and non suburban area for

period of two years (730 Days).

Location : Mumbai Division;

Estimated Cost : ₹ 13,89,10,368/-

Earnest Money Deposit: ₹ 8,44,600/-

Cost of Tender From : ₹ 10,000/-

Completion Period : 02 years,

Address of the Office : Sr. DEE

(TRSO) BB, 1Ind Floor, Annex

Building, above Reservation Centre,

Central Railway, Mumbai CSMT.

Closing Date of Tender : 30.

TVS Motor dividend at ₹1.40 a share

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

TVS Motor Company on Tuesday said its board had approved payment of a second interim dividend of ₹1.40 per share.

The interim dividend declared will be paid on or after March 20 to the shareholders who hold shares at the close of working hours on March 18, the Chennai-based two-wheeler maker said in a regulatory filing.

"At the meeting of the board of directors of the company held today (Tuesday), the board declared a second interim dividend for the financial year ending March 31, 2020, at the rate of ₹1.40 per share (140%) on 47,50,87,114 equity shares of ₹1 each fully paid up, absorbing a sum of ₹80 crore, including dividend distribution tax," it said. Last month, it had declared a dividend of ₹2.1 per share.

TCS declares dividend of ₹12 per share

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Tuesday said its board had approved payment of an interim dividend of ₹12 per share for the financial year 2019-20.

In a regulatory filing, the company said that "the interim dividend shall be paid on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, to the equity shareholders of the company" existing as on March 20, which is the record date fixed for the purpose.

The company's board of directors met on Tuesday and "have declared an interim dividend of ₹12 per equity share of ₹1 each of the company," it said.

Markets bounce back after crash

S&P 500 futures rally over 4%, treasury yields up sharply; Europe's shares jump 3-4%, Asia ends higher

REUTERS
LONDON



Scope for hope: The Shanghai Composite Index traded 2.1% higher as new domestic COVID-19 cases in China tumbled. ■AP

Oil and equity markets staged solid rebounds on Tuesday after the previous day's pummelling, with signs of coordinated action by the world's biggest economies to cushion the economic impact of coronavirus helping pull investors out of panic mode.

Brent roared back as much as 10% on hopes a supply cut deal could be rescued, while most benchmark government bond yields were off record lows as hopes for stimulus in the face of the epidemic boosted risk sentiment. Wall Street main markets wasted little time in recouping at least 2% of the 7% they had slumped on Monday, one of their worst days on record.

The oil and gas and mining sectors were leading the charge for Europe as oil recovered some of Monday's 25%

holdings, though they were beginning to ease again.

Supporting the mood was a pledge from U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday to take "major" steps to protect the economy and float the idea of a payroll tax cut with congressional Republicans.

Japan said it would spend another 430.8 billion yen (\$4.1 billion) to ease the ef-

fects of the coronavirus outbreak and Italy's deputy economy minister announced that mortgage payments would be suspended as the country deals with the second highest number of cases outside China.

Some of the biggest global investment banks, including JP Morgan, Citi and Barclays, now expect the Federal Reserve to cut U.S. interest rates to zero in the coming months as part of a mass global move to provide some ballast and liquidity to the financial system.

"As of today, we believe that markets have gone from being overly complacent to overly pessimistic," the chief investment officers of Europe's largest asset manager Amundi wrote in a note to clients.

"Our central case, instead, is one of a temporary setback, although more prolonged compared to what we

were expecting a month ago, followed by a recovery," they added.

Brent suffered its sharpest drop since the 1991 Gulf war and global stocks plunged on Monday after Saudi Arabia launched a crude price war with Russia, further rattling investors already anxious about the spread of coronavirus.

Tuesday's market fight back had begun to gain traction in Asia. Japan's Nikkei had ended the day up 0.85%, after earlier touching its lowest level since April 2017.

Australia's index closed up 3.1% as some went hunting for bargains in beaten down stocks.

China's benchmark Shanghai Composite Index traded 2.1% higher as new domestic coronavirus cases tumbled and President Xi Jinping's visit to the epicentre of the epidemic lifted sentiment.



over the company's maximum sustained capacity of 12 million bpd," Mr. Nasser said in a statement.

Joint steps with Russia

Russian Oil Minister Alexander Novak said he did not rule out joint measures with OPEC to stabilise the market, adding that the next OPEC+ meeting was planned for May-June.

But in response, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister said he did not see a need to hold an OPEC+ meeting in May-June if there was no agreement on what steps should be taken to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 on oil demand and prices.

"I fail to see the wisdom for holding meetings in May-June that would only demonstrate our failure in attending to what we should have done in a crisis like this and taking the necessary measures," Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said.

"Price wars and pandemics are nothing new to the commodity markets, but both occurring simultaneously is something we have yet to witness in our careers," RBC analysts said.

Crude was also supported by hopes for a settlement to the price war and potential U.S. output cuts, although analysts warned gains may be temporary as oil demand continues to be hit by COVID-19 outbreak, which has spread beyond China and prompted Italy to implement a nationwide lockdown.

Thermal coal imports for 2019 rise 12.6%

Lower production by Coal India spurs trend; coking coal registers decline

REUTERS
NEW DELHI



Thermal coal imports rose for the second straight year despite attempts by the government to cut imports. ■REUTERS

India's thermal coal imports rose 12.6% to nearly 200 million tonnes in 2019, government data reviewed by Reuters showed, reflecting the second straight year of growth in shipments of the fuel despite attempts by the government to cut imports.

Coal is among the top five commodities imported by India, the world's largest consumer, importer and producer of the fuel.

Imports of thermal coal – mainly used for power generation – jumped 12.6% to 197.84 million tonnes in 2019. However, imports of coking coal – used mainly in the manufacturing of steel – fell marginally, following two straight years of increase, government data showed.

While higher coal imports may be bad news for the Indian government, they benefit international miners such as Indonesia's Adaro Energy,

U.S. coal miner Peabody Energy Corp and global commodity merchants such as Glencore.

Indonesia top supplier
Indonesia accounted for nearly 60% of India's thermal coal imports in the April-December period, go-

vernment data showed, while South Africa accounted for 22% and Russia and Australia accounting for over 5% each.

Rainfall, outages hit CIL

Traders said coal imports grew largely due to lower production by Coal India Ltd., whose output fell for five consecutive months ended November due to the highest annual rainfall in 25 years and frequent outages including strikes by workers and locals.

Higher coal shipments to India were also due to increased imports by Indian utilities, whose imports rebounded after a three-year slide, mainly due to increased purchases by an Adani Power plant in western India.

Yes Bank's IMPS/NEFT services have now been enabled," Yes Bank tweeted.

Yes Bank allows inward NEFT, IMPS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Crisis-hit Yes Bank said customers could now make payments towards credit cards and loans through other bank accounts, days after important banking services were curtailed after the RBI imposed a moratorium on the lender.

The announcement comes as panic gripped the bank's customers, who queued up before ATMs and bank branches to withdraw money. They were not even able to access Internet banking and other services such as digital payments through another party's platform. "Inward IMPS/NEFT services have now been enabled," Yes Bank tweeted.

April's crude supply will be "300,000 barrels per day

Dell and Mindtree confirm one case each of COVID-19

Affected persons are employees who returned from overseas

MINI TEJASWI
BENGALURU



remotely, the company said in a statement.

Paneech Rao, chief people officer, Mindtree Ltd., said, "The employee, along with his family members, is under quarantine and medical supervision. All measures are being taken to provide the best of medical care to him and his family. The employee isolated himself upon return from the trip and did not visit the office or meet any other Mindtree colleagues."

With all the confirmed COVID-19 cases in Karnataka being IT employees and their family members, tech firms across the country are now on high alert.

On March 3, Intel said one of its employees in the city had potentially been exposed and was under quarantine.

ZoloStays to raise \$100 mn for expansion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

ZoloStays Property Solutions, a co-living and home rental start-up, is in talks with private equity investors to raise \$100 million to fund its expansion plans, said a top executive.

"Co-living is one of the most viable and sustainable ways of living that we can create for the future," said Nikhil Sikri, co-founder and CEO, ZoloStays.

The firm had already raised \$35 million through three rounds of funding.

The company is planning to raise \$100 million to fund its expansion plans and investments in technology and talent.

Too early to predict COVID-19 impact on global hiring'

Firms struggle to find people with right skills: ManpowerGroup

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

It is too early to predict the potential impact of COVID-19 on global hiring, says ManpowerGroup India, part of a U.S.-based workforce solutions firm.

The reality today is that unemployment remained low in many markets, the company said and added that organisations globally were still struggling to find people with the right skills.

An employment outlook study it conducted across 5,153 Indian enterprises revealed steady hiring trends for the upcoming three months. As per the study,

mining and construction, wholesale and retail trade, and services sectors would lead the job market and small companies with employee strength in the 10-49 range are expected to hire more than others.

Most of these recruitment efforts will take place in the east and north regions of the country.

Strong hiring trends
Workforce gains are anticipated in seven industry sectors during the coming quarter. Mining and construction employers report the strongest hiring intentions with a net employment outlook of

16% (growth). Respectable payroll gains are also forecast in two sectors with outlook of 15% in the wholesale and retail trade sector and 13% in the services sector.

New jobs in public administration, education, finance, insurance and real estate, transportation and utilities sectors are expected to grow as well. "There is a dearth of talent and companies are ready to pay premium wages for the right talent with the appropriate skills."

Employers are also upbeat about upskilling their existing talent strength," Sandeep Gulati, group MD of ManpowerGroup India said.

Revolt to set up ₹400-cr. e-motorbike unit

Company scouting for a suitable location in south India

N. ANAND
CHENNAI



Revolt Intellcorp launched the RV400 and RV300 e-motorcycles in Chennai. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

power and performance.

Affordable price

"When we gave vehicles at an affordable price with lesser total cost of ownership, maintenance cost and less fuel expenses compared with conventional bikes,

iod for our bikes is three months and this will be brought down by the year end by increasing production," he said.

Hitting full capacity
Going by the trend, Revolt Intellcorp would be hitting full production capacity by the year end. It was time to take a call for setting up the second manufacturing unit, he said.

Company officials were in talks with State governments in the southern part of the country, he said.

Mr. Sharma established the first plant in Manesar, investing close to ₹500 crore.

Investment in the second unit would be in the range of ₹400 crore to ₹500 crore.

Oil surges on hope of economic stimulus

Russia may smoke peace pipe with OPEC

REUTERS
LONDON

Oil prices surged by around 8% on Tuesday, a day after the biggest rout in nearly 30 years as investors eyed the possibility of economic stimulus and Russia signalled that talks with OPEC remained possible.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said he will be taking "major" steps to gird the U.S. economy against the impact of the spreading COVID-19 outbreak, while Japan's government plans to spend more than \$4 billion in a second package of steps to cope with the virus.

Brent crude futures were up \$2.80, around 8%, to \$37.16 a barrel by 7.24 p.m. IST, after hitting a session high of \$38.22 a barrel.

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained \$2.42, or around 8%, to \$33.55 a barrel, after hitting a session high of

\$34.60.

Black Monday

Both benchmarks plunged 25% on Monday, dropping to their lowest levels since February 2016 and recording their biggest one-day percentage declines since January 17, 1991, when oil prices fell at the outset of the first Gulf War.

Trading volumes in the front-month for both contracts hit record highs in the previous session after three years of cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Russia and other major oil producers to limit supply fell apart on Friday, triggering a price war for market share.

Saudi, the world's biggest oil exporter, escalated tensions with plans to supply 12.3 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, well above current production levels of 9.7 million bpd, Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said.

April's crude supply will be "300,000 barrels per day

For many years, India was not a crypto-friendly nation... but a five million-plus strong pro-crypto community is now celebrating its new freedom

Toss a coin to the banker

• DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Akshay Aggarwal had been waiting with bated breath to hear the verdict of the Supreme Court regarding crypto-currency, an encrypted, decentralised and digital medium of exchange. As the founder of Blockchained India, a pan-India community for crypto enthusiasts, this ruling means the most to him in terms of freedom of investment and movement.

Finally, a verdict was made last Wednesday: 'SC rules curb on crypto-currency trade illegal', and thus the ban on trading in virtual currency, crypto-currency and Bitcoins was lifted. Judging from the excitement on social media and relevant online forums, it was as though a cataclysmic election win took place. Plus, with the ongoing Yes Bank crisis, some crypto-lovers such as Rohan Jethi simply tweeted, "Short banks. Long Bitcoin."

India's pro-crypto community is five million-plus strong, and interestingly, despite our population and online presence, India only accounted for around



three percent of the global cryptocurrency market before the ban. Surely, these figures could grow slowly as more currencies are created and more progressive discussions are held.

An excited Akshay admits he was quite nervous in the lead-up to the verdict. "I had a slight positivity though there was still disappointment in the regulators that penalised innovators because of their own narrow thought process."

Shinam Arora, who heads Pune-based Primechain Technologies, which facilitates self-building blockchain ecosystems, says, "I don't understand why RBI couldn't come up with a way earlier to monetise it. If they would have monetised it, it would have helped in our country's growth and economy so much by now. For example, they could have simply imposed a minimal charge towards cryptocurrency exchange."

A vast ecosystem

The umbrella of this technology is so vast that it is just impossible to enumerate the different sub-markets... almost like the fight club of banking, as it exists but not many talk about it.

Crypto has its own exchange market like mainstream currency would, too. Akshay predicts the acceleration of crypto-neo-banks (a type of direct bank) which would speed things along, "I see sophistication and maturity coming in this industry," comments Aggarwal, "mainly because of increased demand, which will lead to increased competition. I am expecting a hundred more exchanges to open up in the next two years."

The entertainment scene could change too. myNK, India's first blockchain-powered global entertainment platform, foresees positivity. Founder Nitin Narkhede says, "The entertainment industry will be one of the early adopters of crypto. Crypto adoption can streamline many processes in film and music industries, create new financing options and improve payment models in the industry, thereby benefiting many smaller artistes and stakeholders. New payment mechanisms will find their way in the existing systems and new companies will emerge to cater to these requirements."

The gaming industry also sees a lot of interaction with crypto. Up until about two years ago, gaming platform Steam



Depiction of Bitcoin being accepted at a shop

Though the battle is won, the war is far from over

operated many transactions through such means but put a stop to it because of its ineffectiveness, and this could change given the massive Indian population on Steam.

What of education? do experts see a potential for schools and colleges to at least inform students about crypto-currency? Wilson Bright, who heads Bengaluru-based BlockSurvey, explains, "I think it would be wonderful to inform young people about the entirety of the banking ecosystem and state that there are alternatives! There is also the myth that to invest in Bitcoin, for example, you have to own one whole Bitcoin, so BlockSurvey hopes to inform and educate people about the value of owning your own transactional freedom and being proud of it. So this is the time to really get the conversation going because people will now be curious, so the first step is to get rid of misinformation."

Be realistic
However optimistic things look, such startups must be patient when it comes to acquiring funding after a barren time. While the situation is clearer *de jure*, the same might not be *de facto*; there are many mindsets to converse with.

Aggarwal says, "Now in this extreme economic vulnerability, I don't think much is going to change with this one early positive indicator. This will definitely restore faith and bring confidence to Indian crypto-entrepreneurs; maybe early adoption results could even convince some investors to take bets on them."

Though the battle is won, the war is far from over. "Post SC ruling, if the review petition doesn't yield a negative result again, we shall push forward our goals of enabling mass adoption towards mobilising support from politicians," avers Aggarwal, "I see a lack of futuristic thinking towards use of technology generally, and I believe we need to identify or elect pro-tech champions to push positive regulations. We need to continually direct these debates to the right problem, that being of prohibiting only the negative use."



POOCH CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



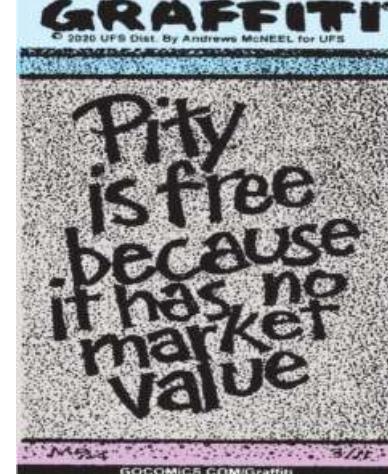
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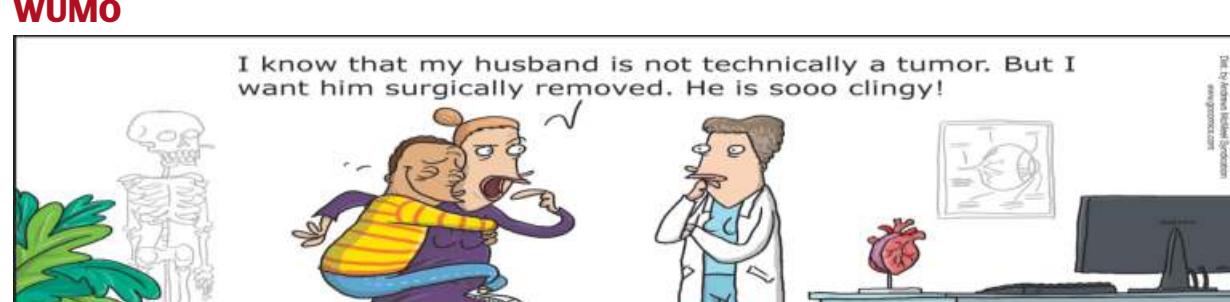
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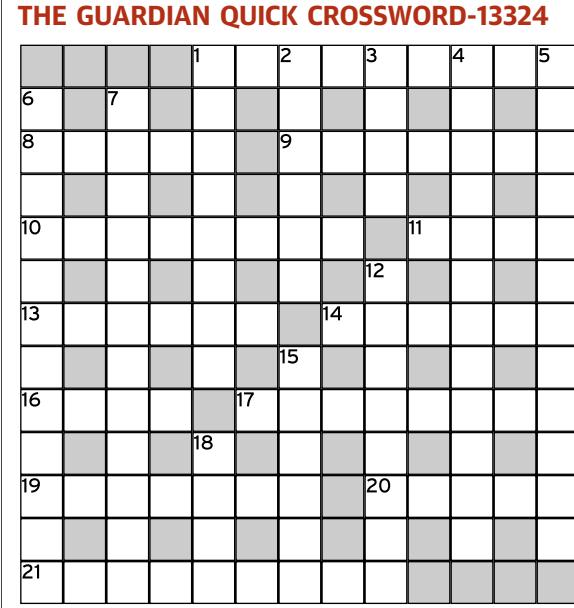
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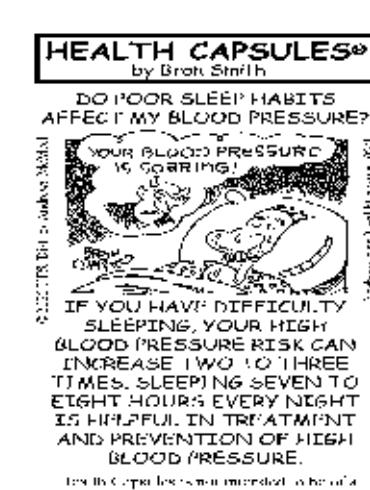


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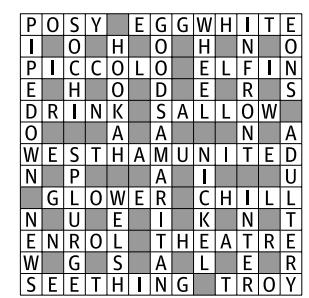
- (12) **7** Nobel stalled (anag) – boxing award (8,4)
- 12** Get plums (anag) – part of a wicket (3,5)
- 15** Struggle (6)
- 18** Precious stones (4)

Solution will appear on March 12, 2020.
Solution No. 13323

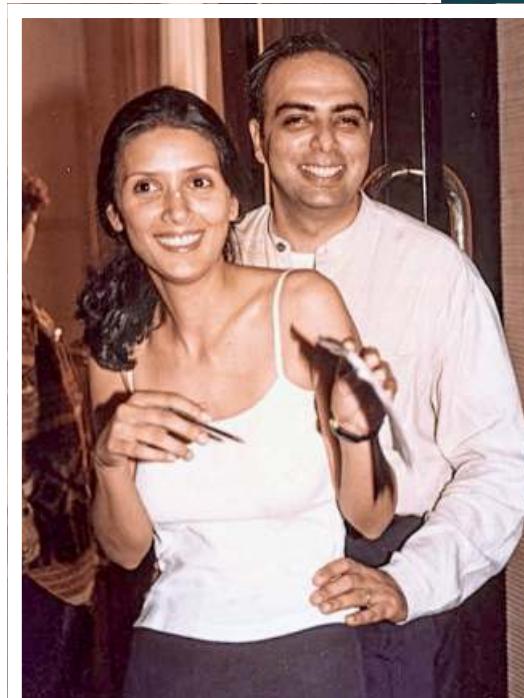
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



- Across**
- 1** US state, capital (9)
- 2** Smell (5)
- 9** Attacked (3,4)
- 10** Miscellaneous (8)
- 11** Bony structure of the foot (4)
- 13** Not far away (6)
- 14** Saying it isn't so (6)
- 16** Look for (4)
- 17** Ask about (8)
- 19** Futile (7)
- 20** Normal (5)
- 21** Drop off (2,2,5)
- Down**
- 1** (Storage for) clothes (8)
- 2** Family member (6)
- 3** Palindromic man's name (4)
- 4** Disdainful (12)
- 5** Casually (12)
- 6** South African city (5)



One night at the Qutub



ROSELLA STEPHEN

Bring your walking shoes, reads the invitation. For an evening stroll in the Qutub Minar Complex. But with Tarun Tahiliani zipping in and out of rooms and nimbly up the stairs at his Gurugram atelier, that should have been a requisite for the entire day. TT (as the Delhi-based fashion designer is known in the industry) runs us through the installations – of recent innovations with brocade (New Brocade, he calls it), Jamdani, key pieces from summer wedding collections, his enviable archive room and 25 signature garments reinterpreted for the 25th year of his eponymous brand. We spot garments and accessories worn by famous actors, royalty and Indian supermodels. He talks about modernising Indian couture by making it lightweight, and encourages closer inspection of a 'new brocade' pink lehenga – soft, weightless and well-suited to the drape he mastered decades ago. Stragglers among the fashion scribes and influencers, lingering over tables bearing embellished clutches (from his mother's collection) and embroidered jewellery, are gently herded on. It is only mid-day, but the rather ambitious itinerary hadn't accounted for Mahashivratri traffic between us in Gurugram and the flagship store in Mehrauli. It appears Tarun's plan to get us to see the different processes, the toiles (mock-ups), and the embroidery units, will have to wait.

Message from the HQ

Designed about 12 years ago, by French architect Stephane Paumier, this expansive studio with exposed brickwork and vaulted skylights is where Tahiliani spends much of his day, with his workforce of about 950. At the entrance, two T-shaped pillars mimic the logo of his brand, while the arches inspired by the Islamic monuments in the capital, point to his passion for architecture and the synthesis of different cultures. Tarun, 57, that rare breed of designer who can promise relevance and longevity with his garments, is typically forthright. The Wharton-educated son of an Indian Navy admiral wishes aloud that the fashion industry would work together than against each other. When someone in the group brings up the legacy of his brand, he says, "Legacy is too pretentious a word. We have understood construction and draping". He talks about a time when specialists who draped (in India), never embroidered, when the tailoring was "so bad and the armholes so tight". He remembers how everyone wanted to design for "women in lyrca petticoats who ate three lettuces a day". That said, his studio is extremely conscious about fit. The TT Bride – he has dressed about 15,000 – wants her lehenga to be light enough to dance in all night. "And while we are not principally bridal, there is a push for us to do more – the boho bride, the gypsy bride,

Infusing his brand with hope and resilience, the rightful king of India Modern, Tarun Tahiliani, makes his 25th anniversary extra special

the khadi bride..." He admits they like to be a little sexy, a little sheer, often with a tulle veil anchored to the head with a single pin. His recent celebrity bride, actor Devika Bhise, who wore Tarun Tahiliani to almost all her Indian ceremonies, might be a case in point.

Open to influences

It isn't just his industry that Tahiliani is outspoken about. He has stated his views on the Citizenship Amendment Act, one of the few designers to do so. Supportive of his embroiderers, most of them Muslim, he recognises individual talent. Of recent reports that kaarigars are going back to their villages, amid growing unrest, he says, "Absolutely not. We are working at full capacity."

Masuma Naqvi, 34, who heads his Embroidery Concepts team, says Tarun encourages new learning, be it with draping, painting, embroidery or digital prints. Trips to museums and monuments in Agra, Jaipur and, last year, Egypt, are organised for a wider view of cultural motifs and architecture, which is then interpreted on the design floor. It is something she, with 10 years in the industry and a stint with Anju Modi, had not experienced earlier. "They bring something of their heritage, their understanding of art, their hand," explains Tarun, whose inspirations are wide-ranging, be it the Kumbh or, this year, the Qutub Minar.

On the one hand he remains faithful to both shape and drape, but he is also open to contemporary design intervention. Former associates like Amit Aggarwal have gone on to find independent success (Aggarwal's futuristic design vocabulary with recycled polymers and

water-finished metallic chiffons, makes him one of the most interesting Indian designers to track today), and Tarun continues to mentor some of them.

Past meets present

The studio has large blow-ups from past photoshoots, mostly of all-time muse, Mehr Jesia. Jesia, who accompanies us later on the Qutub Minar walk, says she finds TT creations as relevant and wearable today as they were 25 years ago. Our visit ends with the big celebration at Tahiliani's home, featuring a South-Indian menu and some of his friends. It is, as his wife, Sailaja (or Sal), puts it, a typical day in her husband's life. "He goes to the studio, then the store, makes time for an evening walk in the Qutub Minar complex, and then comes home." It is a boring life, jokes Tahiliani. Then adds, "I always love, love, love walking in the Qutub Minar. Most of my friends in Delhi have not seen it (lit up at night), and I thought most of you would not have seen it either." It is also the perfect setting to think about divisive politics, our diversity, and a past we are proud of.

What stands out from this journey of 25 years?

● I think fashion is also about a deep engagement with the time and tide we live in. But I am particularly anxious and panicked about trying to keep our Indian-ness because when we are westernised, it is perceived as a higher value, and we have got to change that, we have got to own our Indian-ness. Nothing stands out more than to say you got to just keep swimming upstream with your convictions like the salmon going upstream; might seem suicidal but in a

way you cannot help it, there is nothing else you can do.

Do comment on the hijacking of your India Modern?

● Nobody owns the paisley, nobody

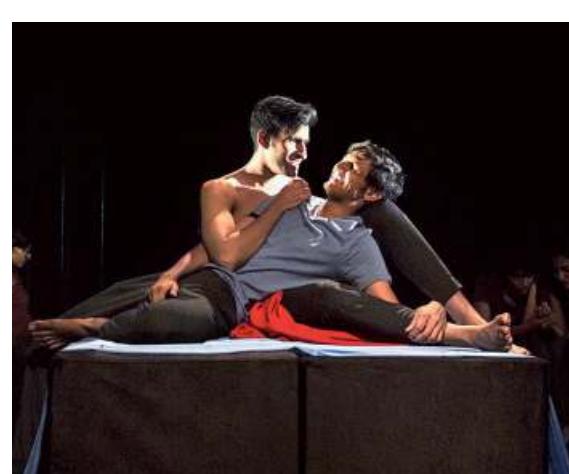
owns the *maang tikka* and nobody owns India Modern. I think that everyone has their own interpretation for lack of a better terminology, or for the fact that it is such a good term, everybody is free, and must engage to define

(From far left) Tahiliani with Jesia, a TT ensemble, and a dress inspired by the outfit of a sadhu he spotted in Varanasi



The writer was at TT's 25 at the invitation of Tarun Tahiliani

4 EVENTS WORTH-YOUR-WHILE

**THEATRE****Even Mists Have Silver Linings**

In this play, we encounter a diversity of people and their stories – transgender parents separated from their children, gender non-conforming adventurers, cloistered housewives opening up to desire, fierce warrior princesses raised as men, and young urban millennials in same-sex love grappling with both loss and fulfilment.

TIME: 8.30 p.m.

VENUE: G5A Foundation for Contemporary Culture, Mahalaxmi

PHONE: 88792 08475

**WORKSHOP****Cupcakes**

Pastry shop, Love Sugar Dough, is organising a cupcake making workshop, where you can learn to bake a variety of frosted cakes such as cappuccino wafer cupcake, mint hot chocolate cupcake, cherry blossom and Red velvet Ferrero Roche cupcake. The workshop is priced at ₹3500 plus 18% GST per person. For details check: foodhallcookerystudio.com

TIME: 3.30 p.m.

VENUE: Foodhall@Linking Road, Santacruz West

PHONE: 9769441711

**CONCERT****Savitri Grier and Tom Poster**

Violinist Savitri Grier and pianist Tom Poster will perform this evening. Grier performs recitals across Europe and has appeared as soloist with the Royal Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players and Welsh National Opera. Poster has performed over 40 concertos ranging from Bach to Ligeti.

TIME: 7 p.m.

VENUE: Experimental Theatre, NCPA, Nariman Point

PHONE: 6622 3737

**THEATRE****Saat Teri Ekvees**

This Gujarati play consists of seven monologues by women, each exploring themes like desire of survival, intimacy, being oneself, overcoming difficulties and love. Directed by Pratik Gandhi, the play features Binda Rawal, Preeta Pandya, Chitralekha Rathod, Tusharika Rajguru, Reeva Rach, Vaibhavi Upadhyay and Ami Trivedi. Entry is at ₹300.

TIME: 9 p.m.

VENUE: Prithvi Theatre, Juhu

PHONE: 26149546

what they think is India Modern. The more they do that the more vibrant our society will be. As long as it is done properly it is terrific!

You have often attempted a synthesis of cultures. The challenges doing this today?

● There is too much sensory overload and everybody is anyway in some bewildered mix... we have more urbanisation, single unit homes, single children and both parents working, there is very little time to transmit culture. Popular culture comes over phones, television and the internet and it is anyone's guess who is watching what. There is also no censorship which used to be there earlier, so peoples' minds are often unhinged. In this context, to keep harping on India may sound didactic, but it is what it is.

What went into creating the archive?

● We started organising [the archive] a few years back. We always stored swatches, sketches. It is an impressive body to look at. We have lost at least 15% of our very good quality swatches because embroiderers would take them and not return them. Now we do not allow anything out. It is also a great thing for an embroiderer or younger designers to look at. Like the brands abroad, if this brand has to survive, a strong archive is a necessity. There are [also] boxes of patterns and artworks, and we have not got to them.

Plans for Jamdani and New Brocade?

● We work with wonderful people in West Bengal who are doing [Jamdani]. They are simple designs, so that the motifs that are used in Chikankari are used in Jamdani. I am dying to see Jamdani with Chikankari. Also, finally I have that softness and the dullness I like in our brocades. I [hope] to see them in every possible form. Some of the brocades I have seen people wear in some of [these] weddings...OMG, I am shocked to see that people [would] like to wear something that garish.

If 2018 was a year of disquiet for you, what is 2020 shaping up as?

● Mad recession, crazy disquiet on internal dissent and now the virus. I just have to roll with the punches.

The writer was at TT's 25 at the invitation of Tarun Tahiliani

Ton-up Vasavada consolidates Saurashtra

His 142-run stand for the sixth wicket with Pujara frustrates Bengal as the host reaches 384 for eight

RANJI TROPHY

Y.B. SARANGI
RAJKOT
Arpit Vasavada, Saurashtra's rescuer in the semifinal against Gujarat, played the role of a consolidator against Bengal to strengthen the host's position in the Ranji Trophy final at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium here on Tuesday.

Vasavada's second consecutive century (106, 287b, 11x4) within a week and his 142-run chanceless stand with childhood friend Cheteshwar Pujara (66, 237b, 5x4) on the second day enabled Saurashtra, resuming on 206 for five, to gather 178 runs in 79.1 overs and aggregate 384 for eight in its first innings at stumps.

Two wickets by Mukesh Kumar and one by Shahbaz Ahmed helped Bengal gain some control in the final session.

After Pujara – who retired on five overnight due to



Rising to the occasion: Southpaw Arpit Vasavada notched up a crucial century on a sluggish and testing track. ■ VIJAY SONEJI

health issues – joined Vasavada, the left-right combination used their experience to make the task of surviving on a testing track look easy.

Tremendous application
The two – looking to wear out the opposition – showed tremendous application on a slow surface even as the Bengal pacers bowled tight lines

to do the containing job. The spinners posed a threat by capitalising on the natural wear and tear, and unpredictable bounce.

In the opening session, Vasavada bravely faced Akash Deep, whose hostile spell was peppered with bouncers on the left-hander's leg-stump, while Pujara had a fascinating duel

with left-arm spinner Shahbaz.

Pujara, troubled by the odd ball that jumped suddenly, stepped out on numerous occasions and survived a few leg-before appeals. Bengal once went for a DRS review too, but in vain.

Vasavada, 29 overnight, played every ball on merit. He cut and drove confidently

on the off-side.

Fourth hundred

Vasavada and Pujara defended solidly after lunch. The left-hander, who got to his half-century with a four, sent part-timer Anustup Majumdar to the point fence to notch up his fourth hundred of the season, including three on the same ground.

"We wanted to bat as long as possible and tire them out," said Vasavada.

Pujara, who narrowly escaped getting run out at the non-striker's end, scored his fifty by cutting Arnab Nandi to the boundary.

Bengal tasted success after 63.1 overs when Shahbaz had Vasavada stumped by a throw in the 66th over of the Saurashtra first innings, completed his duties for the day.

Following a medical check-up on Tuesday, it was decided to substitute

Umpire replaced

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
RAJKOT

him on the field.
Piyush Kakkar, a BCCI umpire from the host association, did on-field duty with K.N. Ananthapadmanabhan in the morning session of the second day. After lunch, TV umpire S. Ravi took Kakkar's place and Shamshuddin took over as TV umpire.

According to SCA sources, Barde will replace Shamshuddin as on-field umpire and Ravi will go back to his TV umpire's role.

Irfan Pathan's day out

Takes India home against Sri Lanka



Cutting loose: Irfan Pathan hit six fours and three sixes in his match-defining innings. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

LEGENDS T20

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NAVI MUMBAI

India lost Sachin Tendulkar off the third ball of the innings and Virender Sehwag shortly after while chasing Sri Lanka's modest 138.

Mohammed Kaif steadied a drifting ship with 46 off 45 balls (4x4, 1x6) before Irfan Pathan took charge.

His unbeaten 57 fashioned a five-wicket win for the hosts in the Unacademy Road Safety World Series on Tuesday.

Pathan blasted six fours and three sixes in 31 balls, batting at No. 6, as India won in 18.4 overs.

The Lanka bowlers were in control till the lefthander

cut loose. With the ball, Pathan had removed the dangerous Romesh Kaluwitharana for 21.

This was after Munaf Patel had sent back Tillakaratne Dilshan (23, 23b, 4x4), the Sri Lankan skipper top-edging to Kaif on the fence.

Marvan Atapattu reacted late to a Manpreet Gony delivery pitched short and the ball flew off the bat for a diving catch by wicketkeeper Sameer Dighe. Kaif and Pragnyan Ojha, too, came up with superb catches.

Munaf was easily the best bowler on view, finishing with figures of 4-0-19-4.

The scores: Sri Lanka 138/8 in 20 overs (Munaf Patel 4/19) lost to India 139/5 in 18.4 overs (Mohd. Kaif 46, Irfan Pathan 57 n.o., Chaminda Vaas 2/5).

Welcome to Dharamshala!



Getting ready: The Indian players train for the ODI series against South Africa beginning at the picturesque venue on March 12. **Below:** Manish Pandey and Kuldeep Yadav landed in the city on Tuesday. ■ BCCI & TWITTER

O'Brien pulls it off for Ireland

India's day will come, but...



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GREATER NOIDA

Kevin O'Brien hit a last-ball six as Ireland clinched a consolation Super Over win against Afghanistan in the third Twenty20 International here on Tuesday.

With three needed for a win off the final ball, O'Brien cleared the long-off fence to end his team's 12-match losing streak in T20s against the Afghans.

Ireland had made 142 for eight after electing to bat and Afghanistan, which won the series 2-1, replied with 142 for seven.

The scores:
Ireland 142/8 (Kevin O'Brien 26, Gareth Delany 37, Harry Tector 31, Naveen ul-Haq 3/21, Qais Ahmed 3/25) tied with Afghanistan 142/7 (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 42, Asghar Afghan 32, Delany 2/21, Simi Singh 2/37).
Super Over: Afghanistan 8/0 lost to Ireland 12/1.



Kevin O'Brien. ■ AFP

"High pressure environments induce a range of brain and body reactions," wrote Sian Bellock in his book on choking. "Your heart rate goes up, your adrenaline kicks in, and your mind starts to race – often with worries."

"When the worries begin, many people do something that seems quite logical on the surface: they try to control their performance. Unfortunately this increased control can backfire – especially for well-learned skills – because bringing your conscious awareness to skills that once operated outside your working memory can disrupt them."

Bellock is a cognitive scientist and the quotes are from *Choke: The Secret to Performing Under Pressure*.

It is not a difficult concept to understand. The speaker who suddenly loses it during a lecture, the model who abruptly seems incapable of taking a few steps on the ramp, the brilliant student who cannot remember his physics formula during an exam – we are familiar with them. "Choking is a suboptimal performance, not just poor performance. It's a performance that is inferior to what you can do and have done in the past and occurs when you feel the pressure to get everything right," according to Bellock.

Tension leads to mistakes
And that sums up the performance of an Indian team that had depth in batting, variety in bowling, yet played like a team that had lost self-confidence. When you are anxious or nervous, you tense up, and that leads to mistakes.

Starting the bowling with full tosses is a symptom of this, as were the two early catches put down by Shafali Verma and Rajeshwari Gayakwad – catches these fielders would have taken smilingly on another day. But that is sport! The real difference between the teams was in the level of fitness. Australia were far fitter, quicker, recovered better and took some terrific catches.

India did extremely well to reach the title round in a format they aren't really comfortable with, and for this credit should go to the coach Wookeri Ramam and the spirit of the players who appeared to be a bunch that trusted one another and had fun together. There was too the unspoken confidence that if the top players didn't get runs, someone lower down would; likewise with the bowling. So what went wrong?

It is a young team which had done so well till that point, and had caused Australia's medium-pacer Megan Schutt to say before the match, "I just hate playing India – they've got the wood over me." It was not Aussie-like, and highlighted India's reputation.

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India did enough to suggest that they are future world champions. Two things need to fall into place, though. This column has been suggesting for a while now that the cricket board needs to seriously consider a Women's IPL. As Melbourne showed, create the excitement and the crowds will come.

India's men haven't won the T20 World title since the IPL was introduced in 2008, so you could point at that and say this is being too facile. But the women need more match practice, and better competition that the entry of players from the top teams promise.

The second issue to be looked at is appointing a psychologist. Modern teams have specialist coaches in the physical aspects of the game – bowling, batting, fielding, fitness. They need to have one who specialises in an equally important aspect – the mental.

Playing a final before a huge audience against a top team is its own pressure even before a ball is bowled. Even a team as experienced as the men's at the 2003 World Cup choked under that kind of pressure.

India have a fabulous women's team. It needs better support from the authorities. Women's contracts need to be looked at afresh. But it's not just the money. We need to look no farther than Australia for guidance.

The Australian model

Last year Australia announced a "parental leave policy". Players are eligible for 12 months' paid parental leave and are guaranteed a contract extension for the following contract year. Also, partners of players who give birth are entitled to three weeks' paid leave.

There's more. Once a player returns after giving birth, travel support is provided for primary carers, including flights, accommodation and other travel expenses. This, till the child is four.

World champions evolve when we care.

Vikas and Simranjit make final

Panghal, Mary Kom, Pooja, Ashish and Lovlina take bronze

BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AMMAN

A resolute Vikas Krishan (69kg) and Simranjit Kaur (60kg) advanced to the final with impressive victories but M.C. Mary Kom (51kg), Amit Panghal (52kg), Lovlina Borgohain (69kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) and Ashish Kumar (75kg) signed off with bronze medals at the Asian Olympic Qualifiers here on Tuesday.

All the seven have secured tickets to Tokyo. Vikas fought with a cut sustained just below his left eyebrow before claiming a

split decision victory over second seed Ablaikhan Zhussupov of Kazakhstan, a two-time World bronze-medallist.

Sachin still in fray

Sachin Kumar (81 kg) beat Manh Cuong Nguyen of Vietnam 4-1 in the first of his two box-off bouts to keep India in the hunt for its highest-ever Olympic quota haul.

However, in a major disappointment, six-time World champion Mary Kom lost to China's Chang Yuan, a former Youth Olympics champion, 4-1.

Also bowing out with a bronze was world silver-me-



Getting through: Vikas Krishan used his jabs effectively to prevail over Kazakhstan's Ablaikhan Zhussupov. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

TV PICKS

NBA: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.
Ranji Trophy: Final, day three, Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 9.30 a.m.
All-England badminton championships: Star Sports 3, 2.30 p.m.
Bangladesh vs Zimbabwe: 2nd T20I, SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 5.30 p.m.
Legends World T20 Series: South Africa vs West Indies, Colors Cineplex (SD & HD), 7 p.m.
Champions League: Sony Ten 1 & Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Thursday)

IN BRIEF



Murray hands Bucks third straight defeat
LOS ANGELES
Jamal Murray scored 21 points as Denver Nuggets sent Milwaukee Bucks tumbling to a third straight defeat with a 109-95 victory on Monday.
The results: Hawks 143 bt Hornets 138 (OT); Nuggets 109 bt Bucks 95; Raptors 101 bt Jazz 92. AGENCIES



Ghosal stuns Rosner, makes last eight
LONDON
Saurav Ghosal stunned fifth seed Simon Rosner of Germany 13-11, 7-11, 11-4 and entered the quarters of the St. James Place Canary Wharf Squash Classic, a PSA World Tour Gold event here late on Monday.



Vardy not ruling out England return
LONDON
Leicester City striker Jamie Vardy refused to rule out a return to the England side for Euro 2020 with first-choice Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford nursing injuries, but the 33-year-old said he had not discussed it with national coach Gareth Southgate.
"Who knows? Gareth and I both agreed the door would still be open for whatever reason and then we would sit down and have a talk about it (if needed)." REUTERS

Abdumalik holds Harika

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA LAUSANNE

Indian Grandmaster D. Harika was held to a draw by Zhansaya Abdumalik of Kazakhstan in the seventh round of the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here. She remained on four points, half a point behind two Russians.

The results: (seventh round):

D. Harika 4 drew with Zhansaya Abdumalik (Kaz) 4; Alexandra Kosteniuk (Rus) 2 lost to Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 4; Alexandra Goryachkina (Rus) 4.5 drew with Mariya Muzychuk (Ukr) 3.5; Nana Dzagnidze (Geo) 4 drew with Pia Cramling (Swe) 3.5 Ju Wenjun (Chn) 3 drew with Marie Sebag (Fra) 2.5; Alena Kashlinskaya (Rus) 4.5 drew with Antoneta Stefanova (Bul) 2.5.

Akbar Travels in last four

MUMBAI: Akbar Travels (Kerala) recorded a 2-1 win against Mumbai United in the quarterfinal of the 3rd late Shri Vishwanath Anchan Memorial Veterans Football tournament at the KSA ground, Cross Maidan. **The results (quarterfinals):**

Akbar Travels 2 (K.T. Asraf, P. Shishumon) bt Mumbai United 1 (Glen Moraes).

Central Railway 3 (Ishrat Kamal, Aziz Qureshi, Chirag Shaikh) bt Xaverites SC (Vile Parle) 1 (Lawrence Pereira).

Bagan regains I-League title in style

Diawara's spectacular strike does the trick; matches Dempo SC's record

AMITABHA DAS SHARMA
KALYANI

Babacar Diawara's spectacular 80th-minute finish ensured Mohun Bagan's crowning glory moment in the I-League at the Kalyani Stadium here on Tuesday. With the clash against Aizawl FC seemingly headed for a tame draw, Diawara's winner ensured the full three points took Bagan's tally to an unsatisfactory 39 from 16 matches.

Bagan thus matched Dempo SC's record – set in the 2009-10 season – of claiming the league title with four rounds to spare. If the NFL – the previous version of the league – and I-League are considered together then Bagan has also equalled Dempo's tally of five titles. Dempo has three I-League and two NFL crowns while Bagan collected its second I-League title to add to the three NFL titles won previously.

Bagan, which will play in the ISL from next season hav-



Champs: Mohun Bagan made it a memorable final season in the I-League when it regained the title with four rounds to spare. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ing being acquired by ATK this year, thus made its last I-League season memorable.

Drab affair

The first half was a drab affair with neither opponent showing enough attacking intent.

The possession-based football that Bagan mastered under its Spanish coach Kibu Vicuna this season was largely absent as the host lacked the initiative to break into the opposition defence.

Aizawl FC, meanwhile, did

a fairly good job in defence employing two towering centre-backs – Ghanaian Joseph Adjei and Ugandan Juvio Richard – whose strong physical presence posed a big challenge for Bagan's tacklers.

CCFC motivated to do something special

Head coach Nawas says it's eager to do well against Maziya Sports & Recreation

AFC CUP

K. KEERTHIVASAN
CHENNAI

Chennai City FC (CCFC) hasn't had a good run in the I-League this season. However, that is not the team's concern now.

The focus is on its maiden AFC Cup campaign against Male-based Maldives team – Maziya Sports & Recreation – to be played at the Nehru Stadium here on Wednesday.

While CCFC qualified for the AFC Cup as the I-League champion last season, Maziya made it by winning the playoffs against Bengaluru FC (BFC) 4-3 on penalties after the two-leg contest ended 4-4 on aggregate.

CCFC head coach Akbar Nawas said his team was more than eager to prove itself.

"We are proud to be participating [in AFC Cup], and being the only Indian team,



The drill: Chennai City FC players hone their skills at a practice session in Chennai on Tuesday. ■ R. RAGU

we are motivated to do something special.

Respect for opponent

"We respect them [Maziya] as they beat BFC, which is a competitive team. We can't underestimate them," he said at an interaction on Tuesday.

CCFC is coming back to Chennai after playing in the I-

League for one season in 2016-17 before shifting base to Coimbatore in 2018-19.

Nawas felt playing here would be a big motivation.

"Everybody is excited to play their first AFC group game because we are playing in Chennai's Nehru stadium.

"It's a good motivation. We are looking forward to it," he

said. Maziya's head coach Marjan Sekulovski said the team was prepared and will go for full points.

"It is our first game in the group stage. It will be difficult and [moreover] we don't know the strength of all the teams. [But] we always we play to win," he said.

Dismal record

Maziya is no stranger to Indian clubs in the AFC Cup. It has played Mohun Bagan and BFC six times across three seasons, but has lost five times.

With four teams in Group-E, including Bashundhara Kings (Bangladesh) and TC Sports Club (Maldives), every side will play three matches each at home and away. The top two will progress to the round-of-32.

Having not met earlier, both CCFC and Maziya will fancy their chances.

Leicester blanks Aston Villa

Vardy ends goal drought to become the league's top-scorer

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES
LONDON

Leicester City's Jamie Vardy ended his long scoring drought with two goals after coming off the bench as it returned to winning ways with a 4-0 drubbing of Premier League struggler Aston Villa at the King Power Stadium on Monday.

Leicester's goal-machine Vardy had not found the net since December but converted a penalty just past the hour to double Leicester's lead shortly after replacing Kelechi Iheanacho.

Harvey Barnes had opened the scoring before half-time after a dreadful misjudgement by Villa 'keeper Pepe Reina.

Vardy struck again after 79 minutes to take his league tally to 19 goals for the season before Barnes claimed his second.



Back in form: Jamie Vardy came off the bench to pump in two goals for Leicester City against Aston Villa. ■ AFP

It was the Foxes first win in five league games, ending a slump that had put its top-four place and hopes of qualifying for Champions League football next season in peril.

Caputo shines

Francesco Caputo scored a double as Sassuolo beat Brescia 3-0 on Monday in a match which could be the last in Serie A for a month

because of the coronavirus epidemic. In an empty Mapei Stadium in Reggio Emilia, Caputo opened the scoring just before half time off a Gregoire Defrel cross. He added a second on the hour to bring his tally this season to 13 goals.

The results: Premier League: Leicester 4 (Barnes 40, 85, Vardy 63-pen, 79) bt Aston Villa 0. **Serie A:** Sassuolo 3 (Caputo 45, 61, Boga 75) bt Brescia 0.

Put the smile back, urges Binotto

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE



M.S. Dhoni...fantastic finisher ■ FILE PHOTO: K.R. DEEPAK

Ferrari Formula One boss Mattia Binotto on Tuesday urged his team to "put a smile on people's faces" at the Australian Grand Prix as Italy went into lockdown to combat coronavirus.

"At a difficult time for Italy and the world as a whole, as part of a global sport, it is our obligation to try and put a smile on people's faces as they prepare to watch the first race of the season," he said.

First thing we need to change are the cars: Aditya

SPORTS REPORTER
CHENNAI

The co-founder of the XI racing league, Indian racer Aditya Patel said new cars would be run in the upcoming season and that one round, as street racing, might be held at a different venue if the Buddh International Circuit (BIC) is unavailable.

BIC and Madras Motor Race Track (MMRT) hosted the league's inaugural season last year. Mechanical issues were reported with the cars used last season.

"We've kind of dissected everything, and realised the first thing we need to change are the cars. We are speaking to multiple people in India and abroad. I think, by the end of next month, we should have an idea [as to] in which direction we are going," he said on the sidelines of the CII Tamil Nadu Fitness & Sports Summit 2020 at the Taj Coromandel here on Tuesday.

"They [the cars] were tested. They came from abroad, actually. And that guy is reputed to have run these cars for many years. He has one of the most successful teams. But we're still waiting for the final report to come, as to what the issues with the cars were."

"We're just waiting for the BIC to come back with their verdict by the end of this month. Because, they have some issues."



Aditya Patel and Vijay Shankar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sindhu looks to overturn a run of poor form

Seven Indians withdraw owing to coronavirus concerns

be seen in action at the Arena Birmingham.

While Sindhu, who is almost assured of an Olympic berth, will look to end a nearly two-decade-old title jinx at the All-England, former silver medallist Saina Nehwal and K. Srikanth will eye valuable points to squeeze inside the top 16 before the deadline for Olympic qualification ends on April 28.

Chief National coach P. Gopi Chand was the last Indian to win the championship, in 2001. Sindhu will look to overturn a run of recent poor finishes and emulate her mentor with the top medal.

World No. 6 Sindhu, who had reached the 2018 semifinals, will need to cut down on unforced errors and strengthen her defence as she opens against USA's Beiven Zhang.

The 24-year-old is expected to take on Korea's Sung Ji Hyun if she crosses the opening hurdle.

However, he is confident that under new head coach Mark Boucher, South Africa will play some competitive cricket.

Langer in search of 'finisher' like Dhoni

CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MELBOURNE

Australia's head coach Justin Langer says his team is desperately looking for a finisher in the mould of Mahendra Singh Dhoni or Michael Bevan in limited overs cricket.

The three-match ODI series against New Zealand, beginning on March 13, provides Australia an opportunity to test the depth in its middle order, and potentially hone in on batsmen who could fill the 'finisher' role.

"We've been fortunate in

the past with a Mike Hussey or a Michael Bevan who are masters at it.

Master

M.S. Dhoni is a master of it, Jos Buttler has been brilliant at it for England," Langer was quoted as saying by ICC.

"What I've learned is everyone in the world is looking for it," he added.

Dhoni has won India innumerable matches from seemingly hopeless positions, and so have the likes of Bevan and Hussey.

Langer feels it is the right time for the potential candi-

dates to seal the spot. The challenge starts with the upcoming ODIs against New Zealand.

"So it's a role that's there for someone to grab hold of," said Langer.

"No one at this stage has absolutely secured it, have they?"

"But there are good opportunities there for someone to do that," he added.

Over the last year, as many as 13 batsmen have occupied positions 4-7 for Australia in ODIs, with nine different batsmen tried out at No.6.

Upbeat: P.V. Sindhu will be hoping to emulate mentor Gopi Chand and claim a maiden title at the All-England championships. ■ FILE PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL

fidence. "We have got some young, exciting guys. Our batting is coming through and there are some young fast bowlers. International cricket is a tough place to learn your trade."

"So, it can also be to our advantage long-term," said Langer, who quit international cricket last year.

"If you're a youngster, you just go out there and play. Whereas, more senior

players might feel a bit more responsibility on their shoulders, and get tied up."

"We've got a good mix. Faf is back, but it's unfortunate that Rabada is injured. He would have added lot to our attack," he said.

Conducive conditions

Langer also believes the conditions in Dharamsala and Kolkata will suit the visiting side, whereas Lucknow – which will host the second ODI – may throw up challenges.

Having played in India in the past, Langer knows the conditions well. "White-ball cricket is a completely different game."

"Normally, in India, the wickets are fantastic for white-ball cricket. The fields are small, and there are high-scoring games."

"That suits the South African style of play. That's why it's gonna be a competitive series," he stated.