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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022

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February 1, 2022

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Kapil Mishra's name used to build narrative around riots, says prosecution
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PM calls for fruitful and meaningful discussions during Budget session
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President Kovind lauds healthcare workers, vaccination drive
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Ranji to begin on Feb. 16, teams divided into nine groups
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IN BRIEF

Punjab polls: Channi files papers from Bhadaur

CHANDIGARH
As many as 559 contestants in Punjab, including Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and SAD patron Parkash Singh Badal, filed their nomination papers for the Assembly election on Monday.
NEWS ▸ PAGE 9

Hindu outfits stage protests across Gujarat

AHMEDABAD
The killing of a person over his controversial social media post has triggered protests by Hindu right-wing outfits in Gujarat. The protesters demanded stern action against the culprits.
NEWS ▸ PAGE 8

Can nixing an exception create a new offence: HC

NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Monday asked if striking down a legal provision, granting immunity to husbands against marital rape, as unconstitutional would lead to creating a new offence.
STATES ▸ PAGE 4

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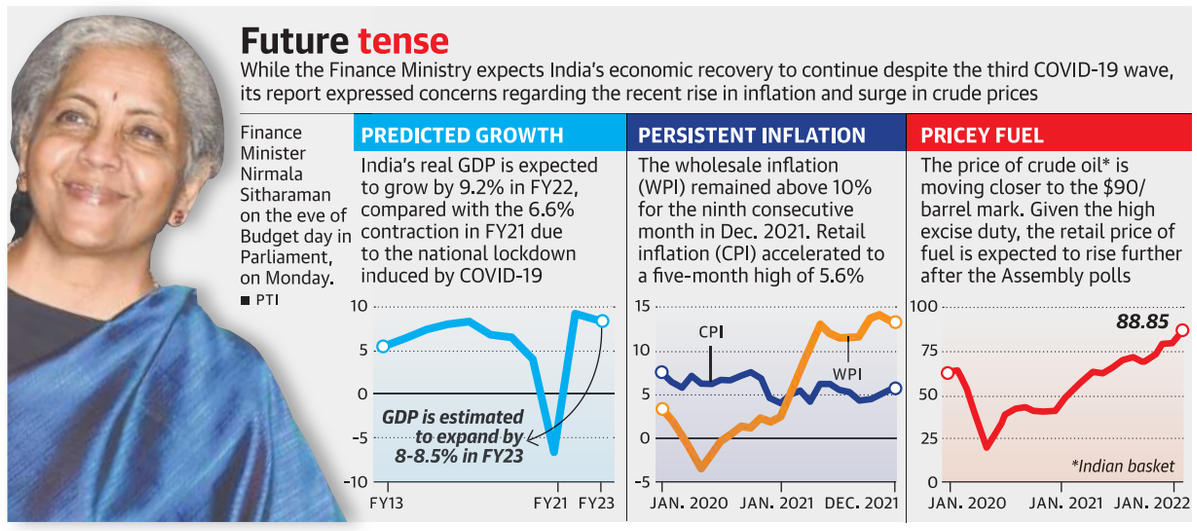
Survey pegs growth at 8-8.5% in '22-23

- Forecast assumes oil prices at $70-75, no pandemic disruptions
- Growth estimate a conservative projection, says CEA Nageswaran
- Concerns remain over hardening inflation, liquidity woes

VIKAS DHOOT
NEW DELHI

India's GDP is expected to grow by 9.2% this year and 8% to 8.5% in 2022-23, though hardening inflation and energy prices along with tightening of global liquidity pose a challenge, according to the Economic Survey for 2021-22 tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on Monday.

Newly appointed Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran termed the 8%-8.5% GDP growth estimate for the coming year as a conservative projection.



Caveats

The growth range hinges on assumptions that "there will be no further debilitating pandemic related economic disruption, monsoon will be normal, withdrawal of global liquidity by major central banks will be broadly orderly, oil prices will be in the range of $70-$75/barrel, and global supply chain disruptions will steadily ease over the course of the year".

While last year's Economic Survey talked of a V-shaped recovery for India's COVID-hit economy, there is no mention of that aspect or the shape of the recovery in this year's 442-page document.

Responding to queries on the V-shaped recovery, Principal Economic Adviser Sanjeev Sanyal, who steered this Survey, said the sharp contraction after the national lockdown was followed by a sharp revival in the second half of 2020-21 followed by some disruption due to the second COVID wave last April followed by yet another uptick.

Doodling a sort of 'W' shape in the air, he said it was up to observers to "decide what letter of the alphabet we prefer to use" to depict the recovery.

Mr. Nageswaran said the theme of the Survey was in line with the policies pursued by the government of providing short-term support to vulnerable sectors while keeping an eye on the medium term fiscal health and undertaking process as well as supply side reforms.

While the 9.2% growth estimate for 2021-22 suggests a recovery above the pre-pandemic level of 2019-20 by 1.3%, private consumption and segments such as travel, trade and hotels are yet to fully recover, as per the Survey. "The stop-start nature of repeated pandemic waves makes it especially difficult for these sub-sectors to gather momentum," it said.

"Latest advance estimates suggest full recovery of all components on the demand side in 2021-22 except for private consumption. When compared to pre-pandemic levels, recovery is most significant in exports followed by government consumption and gross fixed capital formation," the Survey added.

India's investment to GDP ratio has hit 29.6% in 2021-22, the highest level in seven years, the Survey said, attributing this capital formation to the government's policy thrust on quickening the 'virtuous cycle of growth via capex and infrastructure spending' has increased capital formation in the economy.

The Survey acknowledged the risks that have emerged at the time it was being written, such as Omicron, the new COVID-19 variant, sweeping across the world, inflation jumping up in most countries, and the cycle of liquidity withdrawal being initiated by major central banks.

"Growth in 2022-23 will be supported by widespread vaccine coverage, gains from supply-side reforms and easing of regulations, robust export growth, and availability of fiscal space to ramp up capital spending," it said.

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POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT IGNORED: OPPOSITION ▸ PAGE 8

INSIDE

MGNREGA demand dropped from June 2020 peak PAGE 10
Fortified rice supply in government schools raised PAGE 10
Data lacking to assess pandemic's impact on learning PAGE 10

1,000 people allowed at election meetings

EC relaxation follows plateauing cases

A Samajwadi Party election campaign in Ghaziabad. ▪ PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Monday allowed up to 1,000 people at public meetings of political parties and candidates contesting all phases of the Assembly elections. Earlier, the ECI had allowed public meetings with up to 500 people for candidates of the first two phases only.

The ECI took the decision after reviewing the COVID-19 situation in poll-bound Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh with officials of the Health Ministry and the States. "All the State Chief Secretaries informed the Commission about reports of COVID-19 infection either plateauing out or tapering as on date," the ECI said.

"They also said the positivity rate is showing a decline with the number of hospitalisation cases also registering a declining trend. The State officers, however, said COVID protocol precautions needs to be continued to be observed so that no undue spurt takes place due to intense public contact because of heightened political activity," the statement said.

The ECI extended the ban on roadshows, vehicle rallies and processions till February 11.

"Commission has now decided to allow physical public meetings of political parties or contesting candidates in designated open spaces with a maximum of 1,000 persons or 50% of the capacity of the ground or the prescribed limit set by State Disaster Management Authority, whichever number is lower, from February 1, 2022," the statement said.

The ECI raised the limit for door-to-door campaigning from 10 to 20 people, excluding security personnel. For indoor meetings, it increased the limit from 300 to 500 people.

Irked Mamata blocks Governor on Twitter

'He is targeting me and govt. officials'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said she had blocked State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on social media platform Twitter.

Addressing presspersons at the State Secretariat, she said she had been forced to take the decision because the Governor was issuing tweets every day targeting her and officials of the State government to work as per his "instructions".

"I am sorry for this. Every day he was issuing tweets targeting and threatening me and other government officials as if we are his bonded labourers," Ms. Banerjee said.

The development marks a new low in relations between the Chief Minister and the Governor. The war of words between Raj Bhavan, the State Secretariat and the ruling Trinamool Congress has been making headlines for quite some time.

Mamata Banerjee at a press conference in Howrah. ▪ PTI

Reacting to the developments, the Governor tweeted it was "mandated under Article 159 of the Constitution to ensure no one in the State "blocks" Constitutional norms and rules of Law and those in authority "bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India".

Mr. Dhankhar shared on Twitter the details of Article 159 of the Constitution with the title "Oath or affirmation by the Governor".

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

Supreme Court lists plea on Gurugram namaz issue

Petition seeks contempt action against Haryana authorities

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana on Monday agreed to immediately list for hearing a plea to initiate contempt action against Haryana authorities for not reining in 'hooligans' who have created an 'atmosphere of communal hatred and terror' for worshippers offering Friday prayers in Gurugram.

The petition, filed by former Rajya Sabha MP Mohammad Adeeb, was mentioned by senior advocate Indira Jaising for urgent hearing. "I will look into it and put it up before an appropriate Bench immediately," the CJI, who was heading a three-judge Bench, addressed Ms. Jaising.

The petition condemned the inaction of the Haryana officials in violation of a Supreme Court judgment of 2018. The ruling mandated that authorities should not be either silent spectators or tolerate communal violence and should use the law against hate crimes.

The petition said the malicious attacks and false narratives on the Friday prayers were made through social media platforms.

It said the prayers were held in the open "due to compulsion". However, its conduct was portrayed as illegal and "some sort of encroachment".

'Police didn't intervene'

The petition said the objections to the prayers had grown louder and more frequent. The police had not intervened despite complaints made. It has sought action against the Chief Secretary and the Director-General of Police of Haryana. The petition drew attention to how a large group of people were chanting communally divisive slogans at namaz sites in Gurugram on December 3 last year.

Farm unions threaten to resume agitation

Promises not kept, says Samyukt Kisan Morcha as it observes *vishwasghat diwas*

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Farm unions said they would be forced to resume their stir if the Union government failed to fulfil its written commitments on withdrawal of cases against protesters, compensation for those who died during the agitation and the establishment of a committee on minimum support prices (MSP), according to a memorandum submitted by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) to President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday.

The unions observed January 31 as *vishwasghat diwas* (day of betrayal) with protests in various districts.

"Once again the farmers of the country have been cheated. The Government of India has not fulfilled any of the assurances in its letter dated 9th December," said the memo to the President. "If the government reneges on its written assurance, the farmers would be left with no option but to resume their agitation," it warned.

Farmers protesting in Amritsar on Monday. ▪ AFP

> **Once again the farmers of the country have been cheated**
>
> MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED BY SKM TO THE PRESIDENT

"The reality is that the government has neither announced the formation of the committee on this issue, nor has given any information about the nature of the committee and its mandate."

'Cases not withdrawn'

It noted that no action had been taken to withdraw cases by the Union government, which holds jurisdiction in Delhi, or by the governments of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. In fact, farmers were constantly getting court summons in these cases, said the SKM. Only the Haryana government had issued orders to withdraw cases. Regarding compensation, the U.P. government had not initiated any action, while Haryana was yet to announce the amount and nature of compensation.

The SKM also raised fresh issues, including ongoing negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Australia, which the unions say will threaten the existence of dairy farmers, and new rules on genetically modified food.

RELATED REPORT ▸ PAGE 3

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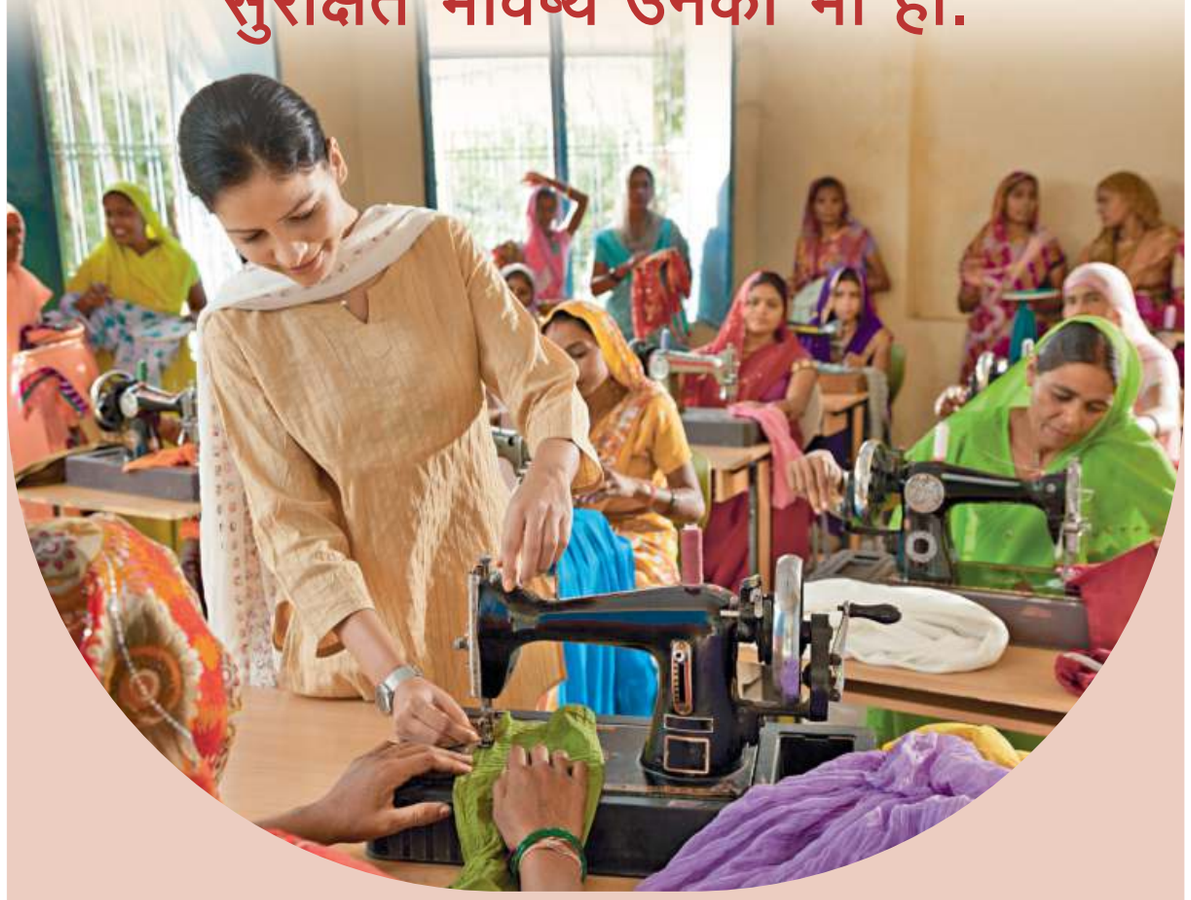

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Kapil Mishra's name used to build a narrative around riots: prosecution

SPP opposes Umar Khalid's bail plea, says accused planned, executed violence

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Opposing former JNU student leader Umar Khalid's bail plea in the Delhi riots "larger conspiracy" case, the prosecution on Monday told a city court that BJP leader Kapil Mishra's speech had not surfaced when the accused were discussing how to "incite violence" in their WhatsApp conversations.

Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad argued before Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat that the accused only used Mr. Mishra's name to "build a narrative".

"There was a proposal to incite violence on February 17, 2020, which is the time when you [accused] drew a narrative that Kapil Mishra came there [north-east Delhi]... Where was Kapil Mishra then? He had not even surfaced anywhere and your proposal to incite violence had surfaced... there was your [accused's] proposal to block roads and incite violence," SPP Prasad said.

Umar Khalid

During the course of the hearing, the prosecution also described how the riots were "planned and executed". "You have a grievance against a legislation, you are well within your rights to express your grievance, but there was no reason to cause damage and destruction of property and attack police officers," Mr. Prasad told the court.

The prosecution also argued how the "first phase of riots during late 2019 and January 2020 was a failure" and how the second phase, in February 2020, "was used to execute the conspiracy". To this effect, Mr. Prasad showed the court that there was a common pattern between FIRs lodged in December 2019 and those lodged in 2020, where the sole intention was to "attack police personnel and cause destruction to public property".

"People involved in both the phases were common... meetings which happened, Umar Khalid was sitting there with Sharjeel Imam. Presence of Sharjeel Imam was admitted in his own speech, Umar Khalid's presence was there in the picture," SPP Prasad argued, referring to the chargesheet.

He further argued that the Jamia Awareness Campaign Team was constituted to create awareness about the protest sites and mobilise people for that purpose. Mr. Prasad told the court that several groups such as Jamia Coordination Committee (JCC) and Delhi Protest Support Group (DPSG) were formed on WhatsApp where the accused persons were coordinating information about the protest sites.

"From United Against Hate [campaign against hate crimes], Umar Khalid was there, Devangana [Kalita] and Natasha [Narwal] from Pinjra Tod were also there. People from JCC were also there in DPSG. The idea was to point out that there were supervisors," the prosecution submitted.

The prosecution will continue its argument in the next hearing on Wednesday.

Govt. announces ₹55 cr. relief for farmers

CM Kejriwal hands over 11 cheques

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government announced a compensation of ₹55.35 crore for farmers who suffered losses due to unseasonal rain in October last year that damaged crops planted over 30,000 acres.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday handed over the compensation cheques to 11 farmers and said Delhi's farmers were getting the highest relief across all States in the country.

"If crops have suffered less than 70% damage, we will pay 70% compensation; if over 70% crops have been damaged, we will pay 100% compensation," Mr. Kejriwal said.

He added that the government will provide compensation for damage suffered by mustard farmers this month. Officers have been instructed to conduct surveys so that the farmers can be compensated as soon as possible for the losses they suffered due to unseasonal rain, he said.

Respectable amount

Saying that India's progress was linked to the progress of farmers, Mr. Kejriwal added that before the Aam Aadmi Party came to power, Chief Ministers of Delhi were unaware about farming in the city. "Unlike other States that have the audacity to hand over ₹10-₹20 as compensation to their farmers, the Delhi government is paying a very respectable amount. A lot of these cheques are for over ₹2 lakh-₹3 lakh," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Addressing the farmers, the Chief Minister said in Punjab, the cotton crop was ruined in October 2021 but the government there announced a measly compensation of ₹12,000 for each farmer despite knowing the fact that the input costs were much higher.

A woman gets vaccinated at a centre in Delhi on Monday. ▪ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

GoM formed to examine COVID compensation cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Cabinet on Monday approved the formation of a dedicated 'Group of Ministers' which will handle COVID-19 compensation cases of all government employees, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, healthcare and frontline workers.

The Cabinet amended the procedure of dispensing compensation to employees, which was earlier being done at the departmental level and was causing delays, sources said.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had earlier announced a "Samman Rashi" of ₹1 crore for employees who died on COVID-19 duty. The Group of Ministers will be headed by Deputy CM Manish Sisodia and will include Health Minister Satyendra Jain and Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot. This group will examine every case and send its recommendations to Mr. Kejriwal for approval.

Shahdara assault: cases filed to quell rumours

Action against those revealing identity

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Monday registered three cases for spreading misinformation about the Shahdara sexual assault victim on social media.

The police said legal action would be taken against those found revealing the identity and spreading rumours about the victim who was sexually assaulted, abducted and paraded by a family. The accused held the woman responsible for their son's death in east Delhi's Kasturba Nagar.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) R. Sathiyasundaram said, "A false narrative is being made and the incident is being given a communal angle on social media by deliberately posting distorted facts of the unfortunate incident".

He said rumours about the victim taking her own life were also posted without verifying facts. "Some Twitter handles and a YouTube channel also disclosed the identity of the victim which is prohibited by the law," he added.

> **The incident is being given a communal angle on social media by deliberately posting distorted facts**
>
> R. SATHIYASUNDARAM
> DCP (Shahdara)

Three cases

The police said two cases have been registered against two Twitter accounts for spreading rumours and one case against one man who posted a video in which he disclosed the identity of the victim. "Investigation is ongoing in the three matters," said the DCP.

On January 26, the 20-year-old victim was sexually assaulted, tonsured, publicly shamed and paraded with a blackened face in a colony in Shahdara.

Anganwadi workers begin indefinite strike

They are demanding a hike in salary

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of anganwadi workers and helpers began an indefinite strike near Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence in north Delhi on Monday, demanding an increase in their monthly honorarium.

The police stopped the protesters a few hundred metres away from the CM's house.

Poll-bound States

The workers, belonging to the Delhi State Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, also warned that they would go to Punjab and other States, which are going to the polls. "Both the Delhi and Central governments have not helped us. We will send teams of workers to Punjab, Goa, U.P. and Uttarakhand to expose both AAP and the BJP, as they are the ruling parties in Delhi, and tell people not to vote for them," said Vrishali, spokesperson of the union.

Anganwadi workers protesting near Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence on Monday. ▪ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

"In Punjab, Arvind Kejriwal had said that he will double the honorarium of anganwadi workers and ASHA workers. He also said that in Delhi, the government has been paying ₹1 crore as compensation to families of front line workers who succumbed to COVID-19. But in Delhi, anganwadi workers are not even given face masks, let alone face shields and PPE kits," she added.

The honorarium for anganwadi workers in Delhi was last increased in August 2017 after 58 days of strike. The present honorariums of anganwadi workers and helpers in Delhi are ₹9,678 and ₹4,839 respectively, as per the union.

"On September 7, 2021, we had met Delhi's Women and Child Development Minister and were assured that our demands would be addressed within a week. But he never got back. On January 6 this year, we tried to meet him again at the Delhi Secretariat, but did not get an appointment," the spokesperson said.

When contacted, the Delhi government spokesperson declined to comment.

Students protest against cow shelter

Land was designated for a girl's hostel

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Several students gathered outside Hansraj College in Delhi University on Monday to protest against the construction of a 'gaushala' on the land designated for a girl's hostel.

The college authorities, however, said that they have only kept a single cow at the college for the purpose of research, as a part of the Swami Dayanand Cow Protection and Research Centre. The college added that the centre has been set up in an area that is not designated for the hostel.

The Students' Federation of India (SFI), which organised the protest, said that there has been a long struggle led by the students on the issue of accomodation for women students.

The group expressed anger at the manner in which the administration allegedly constructed the 'gaushala' arbitrarily when the students were not on the campus.

"The attempt at saffronisation of educational institutions is obvious with the latest move by the present administration of Hansraj College. The decision clearly puts in perspective the priorities of the administration and those of the government which has placed the security of cows over the safety of women," the SFI said.

COVID positivity rate continues to decline

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The downward trend in COVID-19 cases continued in the city. The test positivity rate dropped to 6.2% from 6.37% on Sunday, according to a Delhi government bulletin on Monday.

The number of new COVID-19 cases over 24 hours decreased to 2,779 from 3,674 on Sunday, mainly due to a dip in the number of tests. A total of 38 new deaths were reported on Monday, taking the total to 25,865.

3 held for cheating by posing as govt. officials

They hacked victim's WhatsApp accounts by pretending to facilitate COVID doses

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Three persons have been arrested for cheating the public by posing as government officials facilitating COVID-19 booster doses, and then hacking their WhatsApp accounts, the police said on Monday.

DCP (Cyber Cell) K.P.S. Malhotra said the accused have been identified as Manish Kumar, Rohit Singh and Kaushlendra Singh Tomar.

The police said a complaint was received that someone's WhatsApp account was hacked and messages were sent to the person's friends and relatives asking for money. It was revealed that 20 similar complaints were lodged on the cybercrime portal. The modus operandi of the crime was same in all the cases.

The caller was identified as Manish Kumar. A raid was conducted in Agra and he, along with his accomplices, was arrested. Manish disclosed that a year ago, he learnt WhatsApp hacking on YouTube and thereafter, he started cheating people on different pretexts.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that this person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** Approx 50 Years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'2", **Built**: Thin, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Wearing:** Black Jacket & Black Pant, was fount Dead at Footpath infront of St. Stephen's Hospital, Near Gate No. 4, Tis Hazari, Delhi on 27.01.2022.

In this regard a DD No.12-A, Dated 27.01.2022 has been lodged at P.S. Subzi Mandi, Delhi.

The Dead Body has been preserved in Subzi Mandi Mortuary for 72 hours for identification.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following.

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2	Tender issuing Authority	Director, Information and Public Relations Directorate, Government of Jharkhand, Suchana Bhawan, Ranchi.
4	Date of issue of tender document	31/01/2022
5	Last date and time of submission of tender document	04/02/2022 at 01 PM
6	Date of opening of Bids	04/02/2022 at 03 PM
7	License Renewal & relevant work Tenure	3 Years (Three Years)
7	Address of communication / submission of proposal	Director, Information and Public Relations Directorate, Government of Jharkhand, Suchana Bhawan, Ranchi. **0651-2282458**
8	Contact Person	Shri. Rashid Akhtar (Asst. Director)

Following documents need to be attached with the financial proposal:
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b) Name, Postal Address, e-Mail ID, Phone / Mobile Nos. of Office.
c) Photo copy of GST Certificate.
d) Photo copy of PAN / TAN Certificate.
e) Bank Account details.

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पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल,साहेबगंज

CORRIGENDUM (प्रथम शुद्धि पत्र)

इस कार्यालय द्वारा आमंत्रित निविदा सुचना सं0– DWSD/SAHIBGANJ- 23/2021-22, Dt.- 12.01.2022, P.R.No.- 261592 में प्रकाशित निविदा में निम्नलिखित संशोधन किया जाता है।

Sl. No	Section	Clause	Page No	Subject	Existing Clause	Revised Clause
1	Section 1 ITB	2	9	Source of Funds	The expenditure on this project will be met from the State Fund of Jharkhand.	The expenditure on this project will be met by Jal Jeevan Mission (Central – 50% & State – 50%)
2	ITB	4.5 A b (iii)	12	Quantities	(iii) For work value more than 50.00 cr. **Floating Jetty** - (25%) 1 job WTP - (25%) -------- GSR - (50%) 5905 killo liter Pipe line (M.S.) - (25%) 9087.50M.T. Pipe line (D.I.) - (25%) 11575.0 M.	(iii) For work value more than 50.00 cr. **Intake Work / Floating Jetty** - (25%) 1 job WTP - (25%) --------- GSR - (50%) 5905 killo liter Pipe line (M.S.) - (25%) 9087.50M.T. Pipe line (D.I.) - (25%) 11575.0 M.
3	Section 3 Conditions of contract	26	67	**Price Adjustment - Steel**	So = The all India wholesale price index for steel Rods on 28 days preceding the date of opening of Bids as published by the Ministry of Industrial Development, Government of India, New Delhi Si = The all India average wholesale price index for steel Rods for the month under consideration as published by Ministry of Industrial Development, New Delhi	So = The all India wholesale price index for **Mild Steel Long Products for Reinforcement steel** on 28 days preceding the date of opening of Bids as published by the Ministry of Industrial Development, Government of India, New Delhi Si = The all India average wholesale price index for **Mild Steel Long Products for Reinforcement steel** for the month under consideration as published by Ministry of Industrial Development, New Delhi
4	Section 3 Conditions of contract	26	67	**Price Adjustment - Steel**	Adjustment for steel component i/c MS Price adjustment for increase or decrease in the cost of steel rods procured by the Contractor shall be paid in accordance with the following formula	Adjustment for steel component **i/c Reinforcement Steel** Price adjustment for increase or decrease in the cost of **Mild Steel Long Products for Reinforcement steel** procured by the Contractor shall be paid in accordance with the following formula
5	BOQ	152, 157 & 162	-	Diameter of MS Pipes	Dia of Pipe : 1321.00 mm (O. D.) Thickness of pipe : 10 mm	Dia of Pipe : **1320.00 mm** (O. D.) Thickness of pipe : 10 mm
6	Break Up Schedule for Payment	10. Item no – 6.	157	Payment terms	Rising mains & Distribution main (Supply of DI pipes	**Rising mains & Distribution main (Supply of pipes)**

निविदा की अन्य शर्तें यथावत रहेंगी।

कार्यपालक अभियंता
पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल,
साहेबगंज

PR 262889 Drinking Water and Sanitation(21-22).D

EDMC to inaugurate rejuvenated lake complex in Shahdara today

It will have amphitheatre, eateries and boating facility

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) on Monday said the much-awaited lake complex in Shahdara would be inaugurated on February 1.

EDMC Commissioner Vikas Anand said the inauguration would largely focus on the rejuvenated lake spanning 6.8 acres.

Officials at the civic body said other facilities under the project include eateries, an open-air theatre and boating as the EDMC aims to make it a tourist hub.

"The total area of the project is 30.74 acres, of which 14 acres comprise the lake complex. The remaining space will house the amphitheatre, administrative blocks and other facilities. Close to 80% of these projects have been completed and they would be wrapped up by March," a senior EDMC official said.

The rejuvenated lake in Shahdara spans 6.8 acres. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The project is being executed under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation.

Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri and Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta will be present at the inauguration.

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THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

AAP alleges corruption in transfer of MCD land

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Monday alleged that BJP councillor Manju Khandelwal had "handed over" land worth ₹50 crore, belonging to the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, to her husband. The BJP dismissed the allegations, saying the councillor had allotted the land for five years to an organisation that has eminent citizens of Ashok Vihar, including her husband, after "fulfilling all rules and regulations".

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, FEB. 01		
RISE	07:10	SET 18:01
RISE	07:24	SET 18:09
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 02		
RISE	07:09	SET 18:02
RISE	08:10	SET 19:17
THURSDAY, FEB. 03		
RISE	07:09	SET 18:02
RISE	08:49	SET 20:21

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	22	06
Safdarjang	22	06
Palam	23	09

Delhi Palam Today
23°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cold with fog and mist. Day will be pleasant but windy. Night will be cold and hazy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
23°C A dry weather to prevail. Morning will be cold with fog and mist. Day will be cool and misty. Night remains cold and hazy.

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THE HINDU
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Farmer unions respond to SKM protest call in U.P., Haryana

BKU reiterates demand for dismissal of Ajay Mishra from Union Cabinet

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Farmers belonging to various outfits held protests in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana on Monday over the non-fulfilment of promises made to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) at the time of suspension of their year-long agitation.

The protests, held as part of the nationwide 'Vishwasghat Diwas' (Betrayal Day) called by the SKM, elicited a mixed reaction in Uttar Pradesh. Farmers led by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) presented a memorandum addressed to President Ram Nath Kovind at the tehsil and district headquarters across the State.

Scores of farmers organised sit-in protests in Rampur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Mathura, Kushinagar, and Ayodhya.

"Cases lodged against farmers have not been withdrawn. The compensation promised to families whose kin died during the agitation has not been paid. The committee on MSP (minimum support price) has not been formed and there has been no talk on the proposed electricity Bill," said BKU national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait.

Farmers at Singhu border during their protest against farm laws last year . ▪ FILE PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The farmer body also reiterated its demand for the dismissal of Ajay Mishra Teni from the Union Cabinet for his alleged role in Lakhimpur Kheri violence. "The SIT report has said there was a conspiracy but the chief conspirator is still holding a constitutional post. It is like rubbing salt on the wounds of farmers," the memorandum said.

'Hamstrung by MCC'

On the rather low-key response to the call in western U.P., Dharmendra Malik, BKU media in-charge, said the farmers limited themselves to tehsil and district headquarters because the model code of conduct was in place and the administration was lodging cases against those violating COVID protocol. "The memorandum was served in every district of the State and it reflected the anger in the farmer community. It should not be seen as indifference towards electoral process or any particular political party," he said.

In Haryana, the speakers at the protests warned the Centre and the Manohar Lal-led State government to honour the written assurances in letter and spirit or be ready face "fresh agitations".

While addressing the protesters at Jhajjar, All India Kisan Sabha vice-president Inderjit Singh said the crisis in agriculture sector was bound to deepen in view of the rising cost of production and declining returns.

(With inputs from Special Correspondent in Gurugram)

Students take to streets, seek cancellation of offline exams

Maharashtra Police looking for YouTuber who 'provoked' them

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

Several groups of youngsters, a majority of them students of Class 10 and 12, hit the streets across Maharashtra on Monday in a surprise protest demanding online Board exams.

In Mumbai, police had to use force in Dharavi – also the constituency of the School Education Minister Varsha Gaikwad – to disperse the crowd. While the Opposition alleged lathicharge on students, the authorities have denied the claim. The police is also investigating reports of a YouTuber, known as Hindustani Bhau, for allegedly inflammatory comments and provoking the students.

State Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil said, "This seem to be created purposely as a part of conspiracy. We will investigate the incident."

The State education department has announced offline exams for Class 10 and 12. Last week, a proposal to postpone the exams by a month was reportedly mooted, creating some confusion. Ms. Gaikwad and Minister of State Bachchu Kadu, have maintained that offline exams will be held as per the timetable. Several comments in the media too have given rise to confusion.

Flash mob: Students protesting in Mumbai. ▪ SPECIAL ARRENGMENT

On Monday, students took to the streets in groups demanding online exams. Police and local authorities were taken by surprise at the protests which took place in Mumbai, Nagpur, Aurangabad, Osmanabad and other parts of the State in violation of COVID-19 protocols. In Mumbai, the police initially asked students to follow procedure of registering protest and those who refused to budge were removed forcefully.

'No representation'

Ms. Gaikwad said that the department has received no representation demanding cancellation of offline exams. "Still, we will consult with experts and a final call will be taken," she said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Zone V, Pranay Ashok, said police was probing the role of provocative videos by one Vikas Phatak also known as Hindustani Bhau, who is a former contestant of TV show Big Boss.

Leader of Opposition Pravin Darekar said lathicharge on students is a condemnable act of the government.

High Court dismisses plea to defer elections

'Are you living on Mars?' it asks petitioner who wanted polls postponed in 5 States

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday declined to entertain a petition by Congress leader Jagdish Sharma seeking deferment of the upcoming Assembly elections in five States in view of the third COVID-19 wave.

In his plea, Mr. Sharma claimed that there was a growing health concern, with the emergence of new variants of COVID-19, for the entire country.

Chiding Mr. Sharma for his "frivolous petition", the Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Jasmeet Singh said, "Are you living on Mars? Delhi is now dealing with a declining number of cases. You withdraw it or we will dismiss it with cost".

Following the Bench's remark, the counsel for Mr. Sharma withdrew the plea.

The petition had stated that with the elections scheduled in the five States – Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Goa – "almost all Ministers of the government are busy in elections" and not as concerned about the health emergencies in their respective States as they ought to be.

Mr. Sharma had sought directions to be issued to the government and other authorities to "review the preparations and assure the citizens of this country about the available precautionary measures to handle the third wave of COVID- 19".

'Promises not fulfilled'

He went on to state, "our health infrastructure is dangerously outstretched, understaffed and under-resourced". He claimed that the Central government as well as many State governments had made assurances to the people of creating infrastructure to meet challenges posed by pandemics in future. However, he added in his petition, that these promises had not been fulfilled.

"The Chief Minister of Delhi said in May 2021 that his government will install 44 oxygen plants in Delhi in the next one month, but there is no update or improvement on that promise till date," the petition, filed through advocate Rudra Vikram Singh, had stated.

Punjab Governor has asked DGP to probe illegal sand mining: AAP

'We appeal to police not to come under political pressure'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday said that Punjab Governor Banwari Lal Purohit has asked the Director General of Police (DGP) to investigate the allegations of illegal sand mining at village Jindapur in Chamkaur Sahib, the constituency of Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi.

AAP Punjab affairs co-incharge Raghav Chadha said that the party had recently submitted a letter to the Governor and demanded an inquiry into the illegal sand mining.

Decision welcomed

Welcoming the decision of the Governor, Mr. Chadda said the Governor has directed the DGP to conduct an investigation in the matter at the highest level and intimate about the action taken.

Referring to the letter related to the order of inquiry, Mr. Chadha said that the Governor has taken cognisance of the matter and has ordered the investigation into allegations of illegal sand mafia at village Jindapur in Chamkaur Sahib constituency.

"We appeal to the DGP and Punjab Police not to come under any kind of political pressure and register an FIR against Chief Minister Channi after conducting a fair and independent investigation into the whole matter," said Mr. Chadda.

SC stops arrest of Majithia till February 23

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday protected Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia from arrest in a drugs case till February 23 even as the Congress government in Punjab said the case was not motivated by political vendetta and the State was sinking under the weight of a narcotic trade, which was leading youth on the path to damnation.

The court's protection would allow Mr. Majithia to participate in the Assembly election on February 20. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana ordered Mr. Majithia to surrender before the trial court on February 23 and seek regular bail. The top court said the trial court should consider Mr. Majithia's request for bail expeditiously. The court urged senior advocate P. Chidambaram, for Punjab, to advice the State government to not use criminal action to serve political motives.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for Mr. Majithia, said the case foisted against his client was an effort to politically humiliate a mainstream Opposition leader. "He has never dealt in drugs or anything... The allegations are completely bogus. This is a case of political vendetta. A man having a clean record is being humiliated," he argued.

Mr. Chidambaram countered that this was a "gross case of an international drug racket". Investigation in it was delayed because Mr. Majithia was in power. "Now, finally the investigation is moving," he submitted.

CBI books IAS officer for graft

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has booked a serving Indian Administrative Service officer, currently a Director in the Punjab Roadways on graft charges. The accused, Paramjit Singh, is posted in Chandigarh.

Complaint by official

The case was registered against him on a complaint from an official who was due for promotion to the rank of General Manager, for which a Departmental Promotion Committee was constituted in January.

It is alleged that Mr. Singh demanded ₹5 lakh from the complainant for recommending his name to the Principal Secretary, Transport Department in the Punjab government. Following negotiations, the amount was scaled down to ₹2 lakh.

Back in business

Shops open in Srinagar on Monday after the weekend lockdown. ▪ NISSAR AHMAD

Congress, RJD spar over Bihar Council elections

They are yet to seal the deal for polls

AMARNATH TEWARY
PATNA

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar may have sealed the deal for the upcoming State legislative council poll on 24 seats with little murmuring from Mukesh Sahani-led Vikashil Insaan Party but the Opposition mahagathbandhan (grand alliance) allies – Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal – are engaged in a spat over seats.

While the date for the Council polls is yet to be announced, they are likely to take place in late February or early March.

'RJD to contest all seats'

The Opposition mahagathbandhan alliance partners were in Delhi few days ago for seat distribution talks but the meeting turned bitter when RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said that his party would contest the upcoming poll on all 24 seats "on its own strength".

> **We support the party at the national level**
> TEJASHWI YADAV
> RJD leader

"We've made it clear that we support them (Congress party) at the national level. What more can be asked for," Mr. Yadav added.

The senior Congress leaders – State president Madan Mohan Jha, party's Rajya Sabha member Akhilesh Kumar Singh and leader of Congress legislature party in State Assembly Ajit Sharma – have been waiting to meet RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav in Delhi to finalise the seat distribution But, RJD sources told *The Hindu*, that Mr. Prasad told them categorically that only Mr. Yadav would take a final call on the issue and they should now speak to him.

No 'moral policing' if 2 adults stay together: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JABALPUR

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has held that no "moral policing" can be allowed if two adults are willing to stay together by way of marriage or a live-in relationship.

Justice Nandita Dubey made the observation on January 28 while disposing of a habeas corpus petition filed by Jabalpur resident Guljar Khan, who stated that he had married Arti Sahu (19) in Maharashtra and she had willingly converted to Islam.

Mr. Khan had alleged in his plea that Arti was forcibly taken away by her parents to Varanasi and illegally detained.

Arti was produced before the court on January 28 through video-conferencing from the Advocate General's office.

The High Court noted that the State has raised an objection in view of provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2021.

The court noted that the woman clearly stated that she had married the petitioner and wants to stay with him.

She is a major person and her age is not disputed by any of the parties, the court said.

"The Constitution gives a right to every major citizen of this country to live her or his life as per her or his own wishes," it observed.

HC orders CBI probe into school student's death

Police statement denying attempt at conversion was unwarranted, says judge

STAFF REPORTER
MADURAI

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Monday transferred to the CBI the probe into the death by suicide of a girl, who was studying at a Christian missionary-run school in Thanjavur district.

The court was hearing the petition filed by the parents of the girl, who alleged that she was forced to do domestic chores at the hostel. They said the girl was asked to convert to Christianity. The parents first sought a CB-CID probe. Later, they sought a CBI probe.

Justice G.R. Swaminathan observed that the State Ministers had expressed their opinions and taken a stand on the issue. The Thanjavur Superintendent of Police asserted at a press conference that the conversion angle was not made out in the preliminary inquiry. Such a statement was unwarranted because by then the private video had already been in circulation. The parents had given a complaint alleging that there was an attempt to convert the child to Christianity. By stating that the conversion angle stood ruled out, the Superintendent of Police had brushed aside the parents' complaint. After all, an allegation was made that there was an attempt to convert. The school in question is run by a congregation.

The judge said the person who shot the video of the girl did not commit any offence.

The Holy Bible says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Jesus says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned". This is called in Christian theological terms the Great Commission, the judge observed.

Further, the judge observed that the person who shot the video of the girl did not commit any offence as such.

(*Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is available on the State's health helpline 104 and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050*).

Child rights panel conducts inquiry into girl's death

'Team went through school records'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on Monday conducted an inquiry into the recent alleged death by suicide of a Thanjavur schoolgirl.

The team, led by NCPCR Chairperson Priyank Kanoongo spoke to revenue, health and police officials involved in the investigation.

Thanjavur Superintendent of Police C. Ravali Priya Gandhapuneni, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Vallam, Brinda, revenue officials and doctors who treated the girl at Thanjavur Medical College Hospital and performed the autopsy deposed before the Commission.

Some villagers, the victim's schoolmates, representatives from the parent-teacher association, social activists -Piyush Manush of Salem and V. Jeevakumar of Budalur in Thanjavur-grandparents of the victim and P. Muthuvel of Ariyalur, who shot the video of the girl at TMC hospital, appeared before the Commission.

After hearing and recording their submissions, the team left Thanjavur around noon.

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Usha Sharma is Rajasthan Chief Secretary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
JAIPUR

Senior bureaucrat Usha Sharma was appointed the Chief Secretary of Rajasthan on Monday following the retirement of Niranjan Arya, who has been made an adviser to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. Ms. Sharma is the second woman to hold the top bureaucratic post in the State.

A 1985-batch IAS officer, Ms. Sharma has been on Central deputation since 2012. She was Secretary of Sports and Youth Affairs Ministry and was also Additional Director General of Tourism and D-G Archaeological Survey of India.

Ministry cancels broadcasting licence for MediaOne channel

Ministry of Home Affairs denies security clearance

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting denied broadcasting licence to Madhyamam Broadcasting Limited to uplink and downlink the Malayalam news channel MediaOne after the Ministry of Home Affairs denied "security clearance".

The Ministry in its order on Monday, says that the "uplinking guidelines stipulates that security clearance to the company and its directors is a prerequisite condition for grant of permission for TV channels."

MediaOne has been operational since 2013. They got the broadcasting licence first on September 30, 2011. The channel had moved an application for renewal of permission. "Whereas, the Ministry of Home Affairs has denied the security clearance to M/s. Madhayamam Broadcasting Limited for renewal of permission for uplinking and downlinking of News and Current Affairs TV channel MediaOne," the Ministry order says.

Show cause notice

The Ministry had served a show cause notice to MediaOne on January 5, asking them why the permission granted to them should not be revoked.

In response, on January 19, MediaOne said that they are "unaware of the grounds for denial of security clearance". The order does not clarify what are the grounds for denying the security clearance, except saying that the security clearance is based on "parameters" set by MHA.

This is the second instance when the telecast of MediaOne was suspended. In 2020 too their telecast was suspended temporarily for their coverage of the Delhi riots.

HC defers Centre's order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Monday deferred for two days the implementation of the order issued by the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) revoking the licence of the MediaOne TV channel and removing the name of the channel from the list of permitted channels.

Justice N. Nagaresh passed the interim order on a writ petition filed by Madhyamam Broadcasting Limited, Kozhikode, challenging the Centre's order.

S. Manu, Assistant Solicitor General, submitted that it was not an essential service. Nor did it enjoy any unbridled fundamental right.

The court posted the petition for further hearing on February 2.

Kerala HC has posted the petition for further hearing on February 2. ▪S

Crowd-puller

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi during a door-to-door campaign for Pankhuri Pathak, party candidate for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, in Noida on Monday. ▪PTI

Municipal corporation polls likely to be postponed in Maharashtra

Mumbai and Pune will get govt.-appointed administrators

ALOK DESHPANDE
MUMBAI

Continued delay in reorganisation of wards due to COVID-19 pandemic is likely to result in the postponement of elections to municipal corporations in Maharashtra, including those in Mumbai, Pune and Thane, to April-May this year.

The corporations where the tenure of the elected bodies ends by mid-March are likely to get government-appointed administrators.

The municipal corporations and zilla parishad elections will be a test of the sitting tripartite Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. The ongoing row after Supreme Court scrapped the political reservation for OBCs has also put the State government on the back foot. The government, however, was given a breather by the court after it directed State to provide data on OBCs to State Backward Class Commission and asked the commission to submit an interim report. All parties in the State are unanimous in their demand to not hold elections until OBC reservation is restored.

The BMC headquarters in Mumbai. ▪FILE PHOTO

The delay in restructuring of wards after an increase in the total number of wards in many corporations is being seen as a boon to the State government. The five-year term of municipal corporations in Aurangabad, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan-Dombivli, Vasai-Virar, and Kolhapur ended in 2020 and they are since being governed by an administrator.

The five-year term of Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Solapur, Amravati, Akola and Nagpur municipal corporations end in mid-March. As per the law, corporators will not get any extension. Subsequently, an administrator – to be appointed by the State government on the recommendation of the State Election Commission (SEC) – will look after the functioning of the respective local body. The tenure of Ulhasnagar and Chandrapur corporations will end in April 2022.

According to SEC sources, the work of restructuring of wards was delayed due to the pandemic and elections can now be held only in April or May. "There will be an administrator for a short period of time," an official said.

Can striking down an exception create new offence: HC

Until marital rape becomes an explicit crime, it will remain condoned, argues counsel

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked if striking down the provision in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which grants immunity to husbands against marital rape, as unconstitutional would lead to creating a new offence.

A Bench of Justices Rajeev Shakdher and C. Hari Shankar posted the query to advocate Karuna Nundy, who is representing two petitioners -- RIT Foundation and All India Democratic Women's Association -- that are seeking to strike down the exception granted to husbands under the Indian rape law.

The Bench's query came in view of arguments raised by some parties in the case that courts cannot create new offence. It asked Ms. Nundy whether there were precedents where courts had struck down a statutory provision even if it led to creation of a new offence.

The Bench elaborated that today if a wife files a complaint of rape against her husband and gets an FIR registered, the husband can move the court to strike it down. "Once she says he is her husband, there is no offence...," the Bench remarked.

However, if the exception is struck down, the same relief is not available to the husband any more, the Bench said, adding, "So the question again is are we not creating an offence?"

Bunch of petitions

In India, marital rape is not defined in any statute or law. The High Court was hearing a bunch of petitions seeking to strike down the exception granted to husbands under the Indian rape law.

The exception says sexual intercourse by a man with his wife aged 15 years or above is not rape even if it is without her consent. In October 2017, the Supreme Court increased the age to 18 years.

Govt.'s stance sought

During the hearing, the court also asked the Centre's counsel to clarify the stand of the government on the issue.

Ms. Nundy argued that until marital rape becomes an explicit offence it will remain "condoned". "This case is about the moral right of a married woman to refuse unwanted, forcible sexual intercourse. It is about respecting the right of a wife to say no and recognising that marriage is no longer a universal licence to ignore consent," she said.

Referring to a Supreme Court judgment, Ms. Nundy argued that women cannot be treated as a commodity and marriage does not make a "rapist a non-rapist". "Not only do consequences to a specifically labelled offence deter it, they elevate the consciousness of those who understand where the boundaries are," she argued.

Ms. Nundy further argued that the Indian Constitution is "transformative" in nature and this case is about "people versus patriarchy and bigotry". The court will continue hearing the case on Tuesday.

'My son was tied, blindfolded by Chinese Army'

Indian Army hands over Miram Taron, returned by PLA, to his family in Tuting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

An Arunachal Pradesh teenager was tied and blindfolded while in the custody of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) for more than a week.

He was also kicked and given electric shock with a device, Opang Taron said after son Miram Taron was reunited with his family at a function organised on Monday by the Indian Army at Tuting in the State's Upper Siang district.

Tuting is about 170 km north of district headquarters Yingkiong.

"He is still disoriented from what we went through across the border. He was kicked in the back and given a mild electric shock initially," Mr. Opang said.

"He was kept blindfolded most of the time and his hands were tied during captivity. They untied him only when it was time to eat or answer nature's call. But they provided him with adequate food," the father said.

Miram, a resident of Zido village in the Upper Siang district, went missing while hunting close to the vague Line of Actual Control separating the two countries on January 18. The PLA returned him on January 27, more than 500 km away at the Damai border in the State's Anjaw district.

Tapir Gao, the BJP's Arunachal East constituency MP, had first tweeted about the "abduction" of the teen by the Chinese soldiers on January 19.

Actor Dileep hands over phones to HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

Mobiles phones of actor Dileep and other accused in a case relating to a conspiracy to do away with the investigation officers in the actor sexual assault case were handed over to the Registrar General of the Kerala High Court on Monday as directed by the court. Six phones were produced before the Registrar General in sealed boxes by counsel for Dileep and the other accused.

However, in a statement filed before the court, counsel submitted that Dileep was not able to comprehend which of the phones the Crime Branch wanted, going by the International Mobile Equipment Identity number mentioned by the police.

The actor had not been in possession of such a phone at present or in the recent past. It could be the mobile phone taken from his residence during the search on his house on January 13.

When their anticipatory bail case was taken up for hearing, Director General of Prosecution T.A. Shaji sought an early disposal of the petitions and lifting of the protection given to Dileep and other accused against their arrest.

JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Indira Circle, Jawaharlal Nehru Marg, Jaipur-302004

No. : JDA/EE(Garden-II)/2021/D-260 Dated : 28.01.2022

NOTICE INVITING BID
NIB No. : JDA/EE(Garden-II) 05 / 2021-22

Online Bids are invited upto 6.00 PM of 21.02.2022 for **"Construction and Development of compound wall, Steel Railing, Fencing/Gates, Footpath in Loha Mandi Scheme, JDA, Jaipur (Phase-1)"** estimated cost of Rs.331.00 Lacs. The last date for applying Bid and making online payment on JDA portal is up to 6.00 PM dated 21.02.2022. Details may be seen in the Bidding Document at our office or the website of the State Public Procurement Portal **www.sppp.rajasthan.gov.in**, **www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in** and **www.jda.urban.rajasthan.gov.in UBN No. JDA2122WSOB00548**

To participate in the bid, bidder has to be:
1. Registered on JDA website **www.jda.urban.rajasthan.gov.in** for participating in the Bid, the Bidder has to apply for the Bid and pay the Bidding Document Fee, RISL Processing Fee online only. The bid Secutity may be deposited through online or Bank Gurantee.
2. Registered on e-Procurement Portal of Government of Rajasthan **www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in** for online e- Bid submission.

Raj. Samwad/C/11165/2021-22 **Executive Engineer (Garden-II)**

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION REGARDING ENERGIZATION

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the undernoted section of South Eastern Railway that **25000 Volt, 50 Hz AC overhead traction wires will be energized on or after 03.02.2022.** On and from 03.02.2022, the overhead traction line shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line. **Date of Energization :** 03.02.2022.

(Km/Chainage)

Section	FROM		TO	
	Loc. No.	Chainage	Loc. No.	Chainage
Bhanjpur (excl)–Bangriposi (incl) section including all yards and completed switching stations in this section of the Kharagpur Division in South Eastern Railway.				
Bhanjpur (excl)–Bangriposi (incl) section	55/17 (From Rupsa)	Km 55/940.00 (From Rupsa)	89/21 (From Rupsa)	Km 89/957.00 (From Rupsa)

Chief Project Director, Railway Electrification, Kolkata
EASTERN RAILWAY
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Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

INTRODUCTION OF 25 kV A.C. TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS"

It is notified for information of the public that in connection with introduction of 25 kV AC electric traction over the **section Bhanjpur (excl)–Bangriposi (incl) Kharagpur Division of South Eastern Railway,** height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear **maximum height of 4.78m** above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire **(Contact Wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 m above the rail level at level crossings.** Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances. **The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows :** (i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as to the railway line. (ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself. (iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Chief Project Director, Railway Electrification, Kolkata
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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

DEATH ANNIVERSARY
T.V.LAKSHMINARAYANAN Born: 03/02/1929 Passed : 01/02/2020 Retd Sr. DM, United India Insurance, Founder- Decibel Audiology Center, Pondicherry
SAROJA LAKSHMINARAYANAN Born: 03/07/1933- Passed: 20/08/2003
We Live his Values - We live his Spirits
You were a symbol of kindness, noble qualities, mother's love, piety and generosity
Ramesh, Kalpana, Venkat - USA
Dr.T.L. Vasudevan -Pondy & T.L.Arunachalam-Chennai,
And all our family members and friends from Tharamangalam, Vengarai, Salem, Pondicherry
Email: decibelaudiology@gmail.com

DEATH

Obituary
Malathi Bhaskaran, 93
W/o Late Dr K Bhaskaran
(Lucknow, Coonoor & Chennai)
Passed away peacefully on 31.01.2022 at Chennai
Mourned by
Prasad & Uma
Sita & Ram
Sheila & Shiv
and their families
9445367184/9444454812

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY
21.09.1932 - 01.02.2014
T.S.KANNAN
I.A. & A.S (Retd.)
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PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice
This is to inform to all concern that Sh. Ramendra Pal S/o Late Sh. Bhubaneshwar Pal R/o B- 93/94, H.B. Towan Purbayan, Sodepur, under Police Station Ghola, Distt. 24 parganas (North) West Bengal who was the original allotee fo Type-II, Dwelling Unit bearing No. 236, Block-N, Sector-25, Jalvayu Vihar-II, Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. has sold through General Power of Attorney basis in favour of Sh. Jasbir Singh Virdi S/o Late Saroop Singh R/o N-236, Sector-25, Jalvayu Vihar-II, Noida Distt. G.B. Nagar, U.P. GPA Duly registered in Book no.4, CD Volume no. 10 pages from 3165 to 3174 bearing no. 06530 dated 06.11.2012 registered with Additional Registrar of Assurance-III office of the A.R.A-III Kolkata West Bengal and the Agreement to Sell was not registered because the AGREEMENT TO SELL is not registered it is informed to all concerned that the said Type-II, Dwelling Unit bearing No. 236, Block-N, Sector-25, Jalvayu Vihar-II, Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. is going to be sold and transferred in favour of MS. SIMRAN VIRDI & MS. SABREEN VIRDI both D/O MANJEET KAUR VIRDI R/O N-236, Sector-25, JALVAYU VIHAR-II, NOIDA Distt, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P.
If anyone has/have objection he/she may file his/her objection alongwith sufficient proof in the Housing Department, Noida Authority within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Signature Jasbir Singh

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PUBLIC NOTICE
ENTIRE FREEHOLD PLOT OF LAND BEARING NO. 4, ON ROAD NO. 'A-13', MEASURING 420 SQ. MTRS. (OR SAY 502.32 SQ. YDS. APPROX.), SITUATED AT DLF QUTAB ENCLAVE COMPLEX (DLF CITY) PHASE-I, GURUGRAM, HARYANA
"Be it known to all that the Entire Freehold Plot of Land Bearing No. 4, On Road No. `A-13', measuring 420 Sq. Mtrs. (or say 502.32 Sq. Yds., approx.), situated in the residential colony known as DLF Qutab Enclave Complex (DLF City) Phase-I, Gurugram, Haryana [say **'said plot']** was owned by Late Shri Paramjeet Yadav, who died intestate on 11.02.2015, leaving behind his widow Mrs. Vidya Yadav and his sons **Shri Pravir Yadav and Shri Kunal Yadav** as his only legal heirs. Subsequently, by way of registered relinquishment dated 21.09.2016, Mrs. Vidya Yadav released her entire share in the said plot in favour of her sons (1) **Shri Pravir Yadav and (2) Shri Kunal Yadav**, who thus became the absolute owners and in **exclusive possession of** the said plot.
That accordingly, the said plot is being mutated/noted in the names of the said (1) Shri Pravir Yadav and (2) Shri Kunal Yadav in the records of M/s DLF Limited as owners of the said plot. If anybody has any objection to this, he or she may approach m/s dlf limited or the undersigned with documentary evidence within 21 days of publication of this notice.
AMIT GUPTA (Advocate)
C-13, Pamposh Enclave, New Delhi-48.Tel: 26284741, 26284569

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आप की सरकार

CORONA ISN'T OVER YET! REMEMBER TO GET VACCINATED

Children in the 15-18 age group must get the Covid-19 vaccine

(All those born before 31st December, 2007 are eligible)

Health care workers and front line workers must get the Precaution Dose of Covid-19 vaccine

(On completion of 9 months/39 weeks from the date of 2nd dose)

60 years + with co-morbidities must take the Precaution Dose of Covid-19 vaccine

(On completion of 9 months/39 weeks from the date of 2nd dose)

"According to experts, Omicron spreads very rapidly, but there is no need to panic. Continue to wear your mask, follow all covid norms and when it's time, remember to get your Precaution Dose of the Covid-19 vaccine"

- Arvind Kejriwal

www.delhifightscorona.in

Directorate of Health & Family Welfare, Government of NCT of Delhi

DIP/Shabdarth/D/0199/21-22

M ND-NDE

Turbulence ahead

Air India will need all the managerial expertise it can get to turn into a successful buy

The Tata Group's consummation of its acquisition of Air India last week marks both the culmination of the airline's return to its original founders after an almost seven-decade hiatus, as well as the start of an arduous long-haul flight for the loss-making, formerly state-owned flag carrier. The Tatas' enthusiasm for winning back what was once the country's iconic airline brand notwithstanding, the skies in which the industry operates have changed considerably. A look at the market share data from the domestic air passenger segment clearly shows that budget or low-cost flights now hold a dominant position, commanding about four-fifths of the market. The Tata group's full-service venture, Vistara, with no less a partner than Singapore Airlines on board, has struggled to establish a foothold and with Air India's addition, the Tatas find themselves saddled with a bulk of their combined domestic market share of 23% (as of November) being in the less-in-demand full-service segment. Nor is the group's newly combined share from the low-cost segment, comprising Air Asia India's 5.9% and the fractional share that Air India's Air India Express has, significant enough at the moment to give it scale in the high-volume business. That the group is said to be considering consolidating Air India's domestic low-cost services along with Air Asia India's operations is a clear indication that the Tata bosses realise the need to optimise the varied aviation resources that are now in the group's fold so as to enhance viability.

On the international front too, Air India faces multiple challenges, not the least of which is the Government's current pandemic-related curbs on commercial international flights. With foreign carriers restricted to limited capacity under the 'Air Transport Bubbles' arrangement, Air India too has found itself constrained in the number of overseas flights it can operate under the bilateral arrangements with counterpart countries. The Tatas, though, could use the current curtailment of overseas services as an opportunity to undertake a long overdue overhaul of Air India's inflight experience. Also, with Vistara now operating to a few select overseas destinations, the Tatas will need to decide if they would want a younger in-house competitor to Air India once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and normalcy restored as regards international flights. For the Tata group, the choices going forward will need to be strategic. With the domestic market set to see more churn with at least one new budget airline set to enter and other rivals struggling for capital, the group needs to decide whether it wants to add capacity to budget offerings or stay a predominantly full-service carrier at a time when the more lucrative business class travel has been hit. And with aviation fuel costs set to soar further, Air India will need to tap into all of the Tata group's vaunted managerial expertise if it is to turn into a successful buy.

Another one

Nadal keeps overcoming the challenges posed by age and injury

In legendary sporting careers, there comes a moment which perfectly encapsulates the champion's relentless pursuit of transcendent brilliance. For Sachin Tendulkar it was reaching a hundred international hundreds and for Kapil Dev it was getting to 432 Test match wickets to become the then highest wicket-taker. It spells consistency, across decades and geographies. On a balmy Sunday evening in Melbourne, it was the turn of Rafael Nadal to attain similar nirvana with a record 21st men's singles Grand Slam title, passing Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic in the all-time tally. The 35-year-old is only the fourth man in history (after Roy Emerson, Rod Laver and Djokovic) to win all four Majors at least twice. Nadal was not best placed to achieve what he did. For much of the second half of 2021 he was in exile and a chronic foot injury had him considering retirement. In Australia, he was physically sub-prime and in the final against Daniil Medvedev – a 6'6" albatross, who barely five months ago felled Djokovic at the 2021 US Open with a blindingly devastating performance – he was on the cusp of defeat, down two sets and three break-points. But what came to the fore was Nadal's greatest trait, the uncanny ability to thrive when barely allowed to live, culminating in what he called his "greatest comeback" and the "most unexpected achievement" of his already glittering career.

The previous decade in Australia has been one of disappointment for the Spaniard, having lost four finals, including two from winning positions. A repeat seemed in the offing when deep in the fifth set he failed to serve out the match. But such was the rarefied heights he reached that he quickly left a bad service game behind, relaxed into the moment and earned another opportunity for a shot at history that he would not miss. There was a history-maker among women too as the classy Ashleigh Barty, a player with indigenous Australian heritage, won her maiden Major on home soil, a first for an Australian since 1978, and third overall after the 2019 French Open and 2021 Wimbledon. Adept on grass and clay, courtesy her first-rate footwork and outstanding racquet skills, Barty seamlessly transitioned to the acrylic, adding some aggression while keeping her finesse and variety intact. Even in the crowded marketplace that global tennis is, there are no styles and personas quite like Nadal's and Barty's. It was apt that the event ended with rousing victories for the duo, despite the fog of Djokovic's deportation saga that had settled pre-tournament. For Indians, Sania Mirza's announcement of retirement at the end of the season will bring a tinge of sadness. But the year ahead will be another opportunity to relive and celebrate her stunning achievements and trailblazing legacy.

The mind and the state of Russia's President

In a sense, Putin is seeking to rewrite history, with an attempt to push NATO back and restore Russian stature

RAKESH SOOD

In early January, there was a flurry of diplomatic activity beginning with talks in Geneva between United States Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, shifting to Brussels for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-Russia Council meeting on January 12, with the finale being the 57-member Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) meeting in Vienna the following day. The immediate provocation was the presence of 1,00,000 Russian forces, backed by heavy artillery, tanks and armoured personnel carriers on the Russia-Ukraine border, generating apprehensions about an imminent invasion. The diplomacy has continued with meetings and phone calls at the highest levels. In the absence of any forward movement, the situation in Ukraine remains tense as analysts try to read Russian President Vladimir Putin's mind about Russia's next move.

Russian problems

In 2008, the Bucharest NATO summit declaration offered an open-ended timeframe for membership to Georgia and Ukraine. Russia was quick to pick up the gauntlet. Months later, citing Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's actions in South Ossetia as a provocation, Russia intervened taking over the Georgian provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

As protests mounted in 2013 against Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych who was seen as pro-Russia, Russia annexed Crimea, legitimising it with an estimated 94% vote in a referendum in 2014. For the last seven years, the eastern provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk have seen pro-Russian militias fighting the Ukrainian forces in a civil war that has claimed over 10,000 lives.

However, troubles come in multiples. Even as Mr. Putin tries to dampen the Ukrainian tilt to the West, he has had to shore up Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko whose move to get a sixth term in office sparked widespread protests, creating new uncertainty on Russian borders.

In the South Caucasus, fighting had broken out between Azerbaijan and Russian treaty ally Armenia over the disputed area of Nagorno-Karabakh. In end-2020, Russia brokered a ceasefire that has proven to be tenuous. Turkish President Recip Tayyip Erdoğan has been expanding his regional role and provided vital military support to enable Azerbaijan to gain the upper hand. In Ukraine too, Turkey has sold drones and other military hardware to bolster President Volodymyr Zelensky's ability to resist Russian advances. All this even as Mr. Erdoğan engages with Russia in the Astana process on Syria and is a client for the S-400 missile defence system.

In Central Asia in early January, protests against the fuel price increases in Kazakhstan led to violence, prompting President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to issue shoot-at-sight orders to the security forces. Mr. Tokayev took over in 2019 from Nursultan Nazarbayev who had ruled for 29 years but public protests forced him to resign. However, he remained influential, as Chair of the National Security Committee, controlling the defence, intelligence and police sectors through his loyalists. He has since quit and his right-hand man, former Prime Minister Karim Massimov, was sacked as head of National Security Committee and arrested for treason. Mr. Tokayev also reached out to Mr. Putin and for the first time since it was set up in 2002, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) has sent a Russian-led 4,000-strong military contingent to restore law and order and protect key government facilities. CSTO was a Russian initiative and includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

AP

Notwithstanding the multiple eruptions in its borderlands, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov captured the Kremlin sentiment when he described the former Soviet territories not as "free, sovereign and liberated nation-states" but as "territories that lack ownership".

Seeking lost glory

In a sense, Presidents Biden and Putin are both seeking to rewrite history. The U.S. would like a return to the 1990s, its unipolar moment when it set into motion the eastward expansion of both NATO and the European Union as the instrument for ensuring European security. It engaged Russia through NATO's Partnership for Peace that grew into the NATO-Russia Council with over two dozen working groups covering arms control, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, logistics, peacekeeping, civil emergencies, etc.

Mr. Putin thinks differently. He considers the break-up of the USSR the biggest tragedy of the 20th century and has called the eastward expansion of NATO that added 14 new Baltic and Central and East European member states (in stages) an existential threat. At the 2007 Munich Security Conference, Mr. Putin raised the issue of security guarantees for Russia for the first time. He has also described the protest movements (colour revolutions) in the former Soviet republics as western attempts at bringing about regime change. He seeks to push back NATO and restore Russian stature and influence to what USSR enjoyed during the bipolar era.

On December 17, Russia had presented two parallel drafts on security guarantees with the U.S. and NATO. These included a prohibition on any further NATO expansion, removal of all U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe and U.S. troops to be restricted to NATO territory prior to the expansion as in 1997. These would also have curtailed U.S. naval vessels from the Black Sea, the Barents Sea in the north and the Okhotsk Sea in the east. These demands were dismissed by the U.S. as "non-starters"; in turn, it proposed talks on arms control, missile deployments, constraints on military exercises and confidence-building.

While declaring that "Russia had no intention to invade Ukraine", Russian Deputy Minister Sergei Ryabkov reiterated that "Ukraine must never, never, ever join NATO" and warned of "military and technical consequences that could put European security at risk." Ms. Sherman maintained that "NATO's open-door policy was non-negotiable" while Washington hinted at crippling economic and trade sanctions if Russia intervened in Ukraine. The talks in Geneva, Brussels and Vienna ended in a stalemate and brinkmanship continues.

Risks of over-reach

On January 14, over 70 Ukrainian government sites were subjected to a cyber-attack with a warning, 'Be Afraid and Expect the Worst'; Ukraine has attributed it to Russia. The same day, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki disclosed intelligence that Russia had pre-positioned special forces and operatives to undertake false flag operations in eastern Ukraine, warning Russia against using it as a pretext for intervention. On January 27, Mr. Biden said he expects Mr. Putin to make a move in February.

In the recent past, former U.S. President Donald Trump was calling NATO a drain on the U.S. and French President Emmanuel Macron had called NATO "brain-dead". While U.S. President Joe Biden has sought to rebuild alliances, the messy withdrawal from Afghanistan left NATO allies doubting long-term U.S. commitments. Barely six months ago, France recalled its Ambassador from Washington and Australia, protesting against the creation of AUKUS (a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the U.S. in 2021) that led Australia to cancel its multi-billion submarine deal with France. There were fewer and fewer NATO candidates ready to host U.S. nuclear weapons. The 2008 declaration about expanding NATO to include Georgia and Ukraine was seen as a rash promise that NATO was keen to forget. Even Russia's takeover of Crimea had been overlooked. But Russian actions in Ukraine have revived NATO, giving it a new lease of life by restoring its original purpose.

On China

The U.S. focus on China and the Indo-Pacific was an opening that Russia sought to exploit but Mr. Biden cannot afford to ignore Europe or be accused of appeasing Russia. Mr. Putin is shrewd enough to know that shifting U.S. focus away from China cannot be in Russian interest; it makes Russia more dependent economically on China because the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline remains frozen and sanctions isolate it from European markets. Further, it gives China a free hand to expand its influence in Central Asia. An overtly antagonistic relationship with the U.S. and Europe may also limit Russian options in West and South Asia.

Ultimately, a war in Ukraine is something that neither Russia nor the U.S. want. Both need a way out of the escalatory spiral. The recent talks have brought Russian concerns about NATO's eastward expansion centre-stage. Now, Mr. Putin has to decide which is a greater challenge – a liberally oriented Ukraine or confrontation with a rejuvenated NATO together with an unconstrained China. The choice is clear.

Rakesh Sood is a former diplomat and currently Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation

The case for vaccinating children against COVID-19

Protecting all children, especially those who have risk factors, should be a humanitarian priority for the Government

DHANYA DHARMAPALAN & T. JACOB JOHN

There is a general misconception that vaccination ought to be reserved against diseases that cause death in large numbers. COVID-19 is generally a mild disease in the large majority of healthy young children infected with SARS-CoV-2.

However, children living with diabetes, chronic heart/lung/kidney/neurological diseases, obesity, and with an immunocompromised state due to immunodeficiency syndromes or immunosuppressant therapies are at high risk of severe disease, need for hospitalisation and expensive treatments, even of mortality. Older children and adolescents have a higher risk of severe COVID-19, approximating adult risk levels. All such children deserve COVID-19 vaccination to preserve good quality of life.

MIS and diabetes

Four to six weeks after COVID-19, irrespective of severity, some among otherwise healthy children develop Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS). Statistics available in India showed 5% mortality among 800 children hospitalised for MIS; more than half required intensive care and prolonged hospital stay. Without a national registry of MIS, we do not know its real burden. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 91% protective effectiveness of two doses of Pfizer's mRNA vaccine against MIS in children 12 to 18 years. COVID-19 vaccination prevents MIS.

Another post-COVID-19 disease in adults and children is diabetes, starting within weeks. In a report from the CDC on 80,893 children (below 18 years), the incidence of post-COVID-19 diabetes was 31 per 10,000 versus control, 11.8/10,000 after other respiratory infections. India already has a heavy burden of diabetes in children. COVID-19 vaccination will prevent post-COVID-19 diabetes.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's COVID dashboard (January 13, 2022), showed 16,426 total deaths, of which 19 were in children below 10, and 43 in children between 10 and 18 years (total of 62 or 0.38%). January data from UNICEF show that 0.4% of a total 3.5 million COVID-19 deaths were in children and adolescents. India's reported deaths were 4.86 lakh till January 17, 2022 – child deaths at 0.4% rate would amount to 1,944. Independent analysis by expert epidemiologists (*Science*, January 6, 2022) estimated a six to seven-fold higher number of deaths, suggesting a far higher number of child deaths.

Other factors

It is estimated that 2,00,000 children are born with congenital heart defects every year in India. New cases of cancer in children are about 50,000 per year. A huge

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

number of children have neurological disorders. As in a United Nations estimate, about 40 million in India are disabled due to various diseases, among whom over 7% are children. India has the second highest number of obese children in the world (~14.4 million). The burden of childhood nephrotic syndrome annually is about 1,40,000. Sickle cell disease is highly prevalent in the tribal populations in India. The Indian Society for Primary Immune Deficiency estimates that over a million children have primary immune deficiency disease. These are all conditions that are known as risk factors for severe COVID-19. Protecting them with COVID-19 vaccination is a humanitarian priority.

India's third COVID-19 wave began from December 28, 2021. On January 3, 2022, children above 14 years are allowed vaccination, undoubtedly a step in the right direction. They become eligible for the second dose four weeks later – thus, children are not getting the benefit of protection during the present wave. Although we have not been able to protect children with vaccination so far, the Government of India must now plan for protection against the inevitable future endemic COVID-19. Paediatricians caring for children with the above listed conditions associated with high risk of COVID-19 and its complications, need approval to protect them with vaccination.

SARS-CoV-2 (except the Omicron variant) invades many body tissues and organs. Damage to the pancreas is the reason for new onset diabetes. COVID-19 is a new disease and the extent of damage to the health of children will be known only in due course. All facts considered, rolling out vaccination with vaccine(s) of assured safety is the right way forward.

Vaccine safety

Since the risks of severe COVID-19, its related complications and mortality are much higher in adults, a risk-benefit comparison has so far favoured vaccination, even with vaccines with some known serious adverse reactions. Globally, both mRNA vaccines and Adenovirus vectored vaccines are recognised to cause some specific and defined diseases that need to be immediately diagnosed and treated in order to prevent mortality

Since risk of COVID-19 severity is low in children, only vaccines with little or no risks of serious adverse reactions are justified in them. Thus, vaccine safety is the most crucial criterion for approval. Fortunately, the indigenous inactivated virus vaccine with adjuvant promoting cell-mediated and antibody arms of immunity had been investigated for safety in children at and above two years, and found to be safe without any serious adverse reaction. Obviously for this reason the Government has allowed it for exclusive use in children between 15 and 18 years. We argue for vaccinating younger children also with the same vaccine.

The urgency for vaccination is the continued high risk of disease, complications and death in children who, on account of their chronic diseases or prolonged treatments are vulnerable. Selective vaccination of high-risk groups will not be feasible under the emergency use approval (EUA) of vaccines in children. Once safe vaccines are licensed for general use, health-care givers can vaccinate selected children under their care.

Age of eligibility

As of now, the ethical, scientifically sound and wise decision ought to be step-wise lowering of age of eligibility: first to above 12 years, then to above five years and eventually to above two years, in rapid succession, ensuring safety in each age group. Expanding the age range for EUA of the vaccine does not necessarily mean that all families may opt for their otherwise healthy children to be vaccinated. However, without EUA, children who need prophylaxis against COVID-19 will continue to be denied the benefit of vaccination.

Dr. Dhanya Dharmapalan is a paediatric infectious diseases specialist in Navi Mumbai. Dr. T. Jacob John is a former (retired) Professor of Virology, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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Getting to the truth

Nothing stops the Government from suing *The New York Times* if it feels the contents in the said report have no grain of truth. Instead of a flurry of denials of any wrongdoing, it should submit a factual and comprehensive report before the expert committee constituted by the Supreme Court of India to probe the matter. To maintain secrecy over the issue under the garb of national security is unacceptable since it concerns the constitutionally guaranteed rights and privileges of citizens, who are entitled to know the truth.

V. JOHAN DHANAKUMAR,
Chennai

■ The Narendra Modi government needs to come clean. Dismissing allegations of any kind of surveillance, saying that there is no concrete basis or truth associated with it whatsoever is not enough. It is the abuse of Pegasus that is at the centre of the row now. If India has established robust protocols when it comes to surveillance, as the Government claims, stonewalling the damning revelations only adds fuel to the fire.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,
Bengaluru

Think poll reforms

While a voter cannot exercise his/her franchise from two places in the same election, it is an irony that a candidate can contest from two constituencies in the same election. It is wasteful expenditure in terms of tax-payers' money and valuable resources. It is high time that electoral reforms are discussed and debated by all stakeholders to uphold the value of democracy and the rights of voters.

A. JAINULABDEEN,
Chennai

Blockbuster tennis

What sets Rafael Nadal apart from his contemporaries is not only his uncanny and inspiring ability to find new ways to adapt to different surfaces and younger opponents but also his exemplary demeanour of remaining grounded and not courting controversy which he has displayed with ease throughout his storied career. His determined fight against frailties will continue to serve as the greatest source of inspiration for all budding tennis players.

M. JEYARAM,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

■ Rafa's win proves that the basic qualities of hard work, grit and resilience still hold good at all times.
Daniil Medvedev does look to be a very worthy successor to the great trio. There were other notable performances – even among the women players – which resulted in quality tennis. Many congratulations to Ashleigh Barty and Nadal.

SUBASH BALAKRISHNAN,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

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A hazy picture on employment in India

The trends in employment have not shown any clear and consistent patterns over the years

RAMESH CHAND & JASPAL SINGH

RITU RAJ KONWAR

The two important indicators of structural transformation in any economy are rates of growth and changes in the structural composition of output and the workforce. India has experienced fairly consistent changes in the first indicator, especially after the 1991 reforms, but the trend in employment has not revealed any consistent or clear pattern.

The growth rate of the economy, measured by gross value added (GVA) at constant prices, accelerated from 4.27% in the 20 years before the economic reforms to 6.34% in the 20 years following the reforms and to 6.58% between 2010-11 and 2019-20 at 2011-12 prices. This growth trajectory was accompanied by a steady decline in the share of agriculture from 30% in 1990-91 to 18% in 2019-20 and a steady increase in the share of non-agriculture output in total economic output.

Employment patterns

But when it comes to deciphering trends in employment pattern in India, there are wide variations in the conclusions drawn by experts and studies on employment. This is partly due to economical, sociological and technological factors that have brought about changes in the workforce and employment and partly due to gaps in data on various aspects of employment.

Two major sources of data on workforce and employment have been the decennial population census and the nationwide quinquennial surveys on employment and unemployment by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). The last available data from the Census refer to 2011. Similarly, the quinquennial NSSO data on employment and unemployment are available up to 2011-12. This was replaced by the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), started in 2017-18 on an annual basis. The PLFS data set is now available for three consecutive years i.e., 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20. The PLFS is based on a different sampling framework and uses s different analytical approach vis-a-vis NSSO surveys on employment. As a result, the time series data on employment and unemployment available from NSSO surveys are not comparable with PLFS data. At best, the NSSO data can be used as a reference point.

Though the PLFS data cannot be used to infer an underlying trend, as they are available only for three years, they can be used to reveal the effect of various policies and developments during the current NDA regime as well as to understand and shape the employment scenario based on concrete statistics.

PLFS data show an increase in the worker to population (WPR) ratio from 34.7% in 2017-18 to 38.2% in 2019-20. This is a reversal of the previous trend which showed a decline in WPR after 2004-05. The change also implies that employment has increased at a much faster rate than growth in population. The increase in WPR has been reported in the rural and urban population and in the male and female population. This increase in WPR is even more significant as it has occurred in the midst of an increase in the labour force participation rate.

It is interesting to note that the data from the PLFS surveys do not support the assertion that women are going out of the workforce. Female WPR ratio increased from 17.5% to 24% between 2017-18 and 2019-20. When this ratio is multiplied by the female population, it shows an annual increase of 17% of women workers. Another positive indication from PLFS data is that the gap between the male and female worker participation rate is narrowing down. As against 100 male workers, there were 32 female workers in the workforce in 2017-18. This number increased to 40 in 2019-20. Women constituted 24% of the workforce in the country in 2017-18 and 28.8% in 2019-20.

Also, the unemployment rate in the female labour force in rural areas is far lower than the male labour force, whereas the opposite holds true in urban areas. This is despite the fact that the female labour force participation rate in rural India is 33% higher than the rate in urban areas. The reason could be that there is less gender discrimination in informal jobs, which dominate rural areas, than in the formal sector which dominates urban areas.

The unemployment scenario

PLFS data show that the unemployment rate based on principal status plus subsidiary status declined from 6.1% in 2017-18 to 4.8% in 2019-20. This shows that the number of jobs increased at a faster rate than the increase in the number of job seekers between 2017-18 and 2019-20. But despite this, the number of unemployed persons has increased by 2.3 million between 2017-18 and 2018-19, mainly because of an increase in the number of job seekers (52.8 million) in these two years.

The sectoral composition of the workforce shows that 45.6% of the workers in India are engaged in agriculture and allied activities, 30.8% in services and 23.7% in industry. According to PLFS data, there is no increase in the share of industry and services in total employment. This means that the labour shift out of agriculture is not happening. Between 2019-20 and 2017-18, 56.4 million new jobs were created. Out of this, 57.4% were created in the agriculture and allied sectors, 28.5% in services and 14.5% in industry. Within the broad industry group, employment in the manufacturing sector showed a meagre increase of 1.8 million in two years; and construction activity added 6.4 million new jobs.

That a majority of the new entrants to the labour force between 2017-18 and 2019-20 got absorbed in the agriculture sector has serious implications. The young labour force, which is getting increasingly educated, sought more remunerative work outside agriculture but only a few succeeded. This is because the industry and services sectors have adopted capital-intensive and, in many cases, labour-displacing technologies and production strategies. This is getting further aggravated with the rising adoption of modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things. This raises a big question about the future of new entrants into the labour force.

That there is a dichotomy between the rising share of industry and services in national income without a sizeable increase in employment share is a fairly well-established fact for post-liberalisation India. This puts a serious question mark on the relevance of conventional models of economic growth and development (like the dual-sector model of Arthur Lewis centred on the large-scale shift of the labour force from agriculture to industry. Perhaps it is pertinent to question the conventional economic development models and their applicability for emerging economies like India. Instead, should we rethink our strategy of striving for an industry-led growth model and explore a more relevant agri-centric model of economic transformation to create more attractive, more remunerative and more satisfying employment in and around agriculture?

Besides this there is also an urgent need to generate much more employment in the manufacturing and services sector compared to the number of jobs they have offered in the recent past. This should include (i) changes in labour laws which discourage industry to adopt labour-intensive production (ii) employment-linked production incentives and; (iii) special assistance for labour-intensive economic activities.

Ramesh Chand is Member of NITI Aayog and Jaspal Singh is Consultant at NITI Aayog. Views are personal

The supreme failure

By failing to decide key constitutional cases in a timely way, the apex court has not acted as the 'sentinel on the qui vive'

PRABHASH RANJAN

American lawyer James M. Beck described the U.S. Supreme Court as a lighthouse whose gracious rays of justice and liberty light up the troubled surface of the water, making America a free and strong nation. M. Jagannadha Rao, a former Indian Supreme Court judge, citing Beck, said that what is true of the American Supreme Court is equally true of the Indian Supreme Court. In the 73rd year of our Republic, it is time to put this belief to test especially in the wake of mounting majoritarianism and surging ethnocultural nationalism.

In the last few years, the Indian Supreme Court has delivered some judgments of far-reaching consequence. It declared the right to privacy a fundamental right; decriminalised consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same sex; recognised transgender persons as the third gender; and outlawed triple talaq. These decisions shore up the belief in republican values like liberty and equality reified in our Constitution.

Black marks

Notwithstanding these bright spots, there are several black marks on the Supreme Court's record. The Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy has developed an excellent comprehensive tracker of all the pending cases before the five-judge, seven-judge, and nine-judge constitution benches of the Supreme Court. According to this tracker, there are 25 main cases pending before the five-judge constitution bench and five cases each pending before the seven-judge and nine-judge benches. These cases relate to significant constitutional and other legal matters that can have serious repercussions on the fundamental rights of ordinary citizens and our core republican values. Related to these main cases, there are more than 500 connected cases. These cases cannot be decided till the legal issues in the main cases before the constitutional benches are addressed. Some of the important cases gathering dust in the Supreme Court are as follows.

First, a deluge of petitions was filed before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, that provides non-Muslim communities from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan a fast-track route to Indian citizenship. More than two years later, the matter continues to languish in the apex court. Second, innumerable petitions have been filed challenging the Presidential Order of August 5, 2019 that effectually diluted Article 370 of the Constitution and split Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories. To date, the court has done precious little to decide this vexed question of law.

Third, petitions challenging the constitutionality of the Constitution (One Hundred and Third Amendment) Act, 2019 that provides reservations in public educational institutions and government jobs for economically weaker sections are also languishing in the Supreme Court. It is shocking that the case has not been heard since August 5, 2020, while the law has already been implemented.

Fourth, a momentous case known as *Vivek Narayan Sharma v. Union of India* is in the Supreme Court for more than five years. This case relates to the legality of demonetisation of all ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes aimed at curbing black money. It was the most audacious economic experiment in the life of the Indian republic that went horribly wrong because more than 99% of the cash came back into the banking system, according to the Reserve Bank of India. Appallingly, the Supreme Court hasn't heard this case since September 2, 2019.

Fifth, the Supreme Court has failed to accord proper hearing in the last four years to the constitutional challenge to the electoral bonds scheme. This scheme strikes at the heart of our polity because anonymous funding of political parties is the root cause of corruption in public life.

Constitutional duty

Granville Austin, a distinguished constitutional scholar, said, "the Supreme Court is ...custodian of the equality under the law that lies at the heart of the country's constitutional democracy. Unless the Court strives in every possible way to assure that the Constitution, the law, applies fairly to all citizens, the Court cannot be said to have fulfilled its custodial responsibility". By abjectly failing to decide key constitutional cases in a time-bound manner, the Supreme Court has not acted as the "sentinel on the qui vive". The Court should perform its constitutional duty of being a formidable counterforce to brute majoritarianism. The power of judicial review that the Chief Justice of India, N.V. Ramana, calls as critical to democracy should be exercised assiduously. Or else, India's hard-fought constitutional democracy would be in grave peril.

Prabhash Ranjan is Professor and Vice Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O P Jindal Global University. Views are personal

STATE OF PLAY

Strained ties in Tamil Nadu

Unfriendly relations between a head of state and head of government can have unsavoury consequences

D. SURESH KUMAR

Early strains have appeared in the relationship between Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi and the M.K. Stalin-led DMK government. Mr. Ravi has invited the ire of the ruling party for seemingly advocating policies that are in conflict with popular political ideology in the Dravidian heartland. In his Republic Day address, Mr. Ravi subtly pushed for a three-language policy. "While it is important that [the] Tamil language is given wider spread in the rest of the country, it is also important that our school students learn other Indian languages like students in other States. Depriving our students of knowledge of other Indian languages is unfair to all," he contended. This came as a surprise since in Tamil Nadu, any attempt to tinker with the time-tested two-language formula is akin to treading on a landmine. As recently as June 2019, a clause recommending mandatory Hindi teaching in schools was dropped from the Draft National Education Policy (NEP) following a backlash, primarily from Tamil Nadu.

The State government's first counter to Mr. Ravi was diplomatic and through the official channel. The Minister for Tamil Official Language and Culture, Thangam Thennarasu, responded, "Those who are aware of the history of protests for language in Tamil Nadu would realise that 'other Indian languages' is only another terminology for pushing Hindi." He argued that the two-language policy has not prevented students from acquiring educational qualifications or holding major positions. However, this was followed by a sharp attack in the DMK's mouthpiece, *Murasoli*, which not only questioned Mr. Ravi's performance in his previous gubernatorial assignment in Nagaland but also conveyed to the former IPS officer that politics is a different ball game. "He [Mr. Ravi] is not a politician who experienced the climate of politics before becoming a Governor. He was a police officer who was appointed Governor after his retirement. The police department may require methods of threat and intimidation, and they may yield results there. But they will be of no use in politics...," the article with the byline Silandhi, usually penned by a member of the DMK first family, said.

The government and the DMK were also upset with Mr. Ravi for seemingly backing the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET), while not forwarding for presidential assent a Bill seeking to dispense with the NEET in Tamil Nadu. MPs from Tamil Nadu protested against Mr. Ravi's inaction on this in the joint sitting of Parliament on Monday.

This was not the first time Mr. Ravi had spoken on these lines, especially on matters relating to education, a Concurrent List subject, where the State government differs with the Central government. While Mr. Stalin declared that Tamil Nadu will not implement the NEP, Mr. Ravi hailed it as a revolutionary document that is inevitable for the higher education system in a dynamic scenario. Going a step further, at the convocation of Bharathidasan University, a State-run institution, he sought to link the NEP's objectives with the "new India" dreams of iconic Tamil poets Subramania Bharathi and Bharathidasan.

Relations between Raj Bhavan and the Secretariat thrive on understanding and mutual respect. Mr. Ravi's intentions in advocating an alternative policy could perhaps be well meaning, but the popular view is such matters are best left to an elected government. At the same time, there is a perception that Mr. Stalin, known for his amiable politics, must ensure that any differing viewpoint is tackled diplomatically, lest the issue escalates into a full-blown cold war.

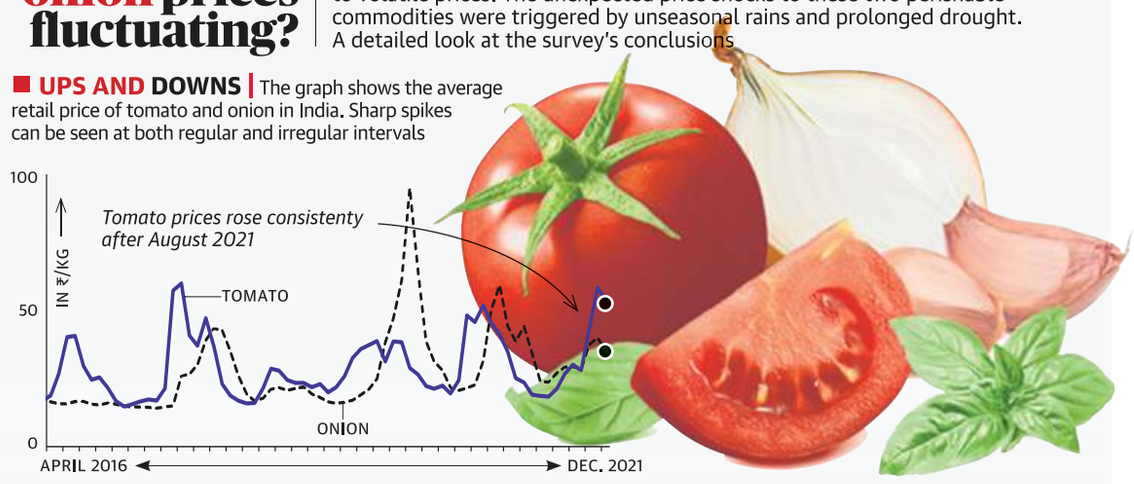
Unfriendly relations between a head of state and a head of an elected government can have unsavoury consequences as the current developments in West Bengal show.

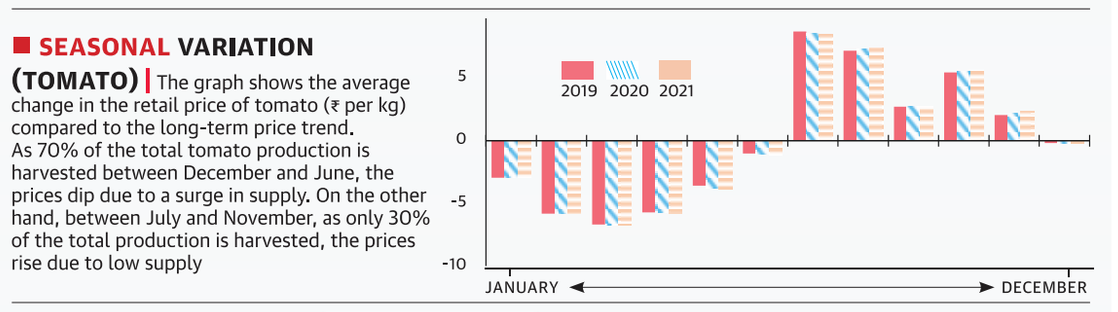
sureshkumar.d@thehindu.co.in

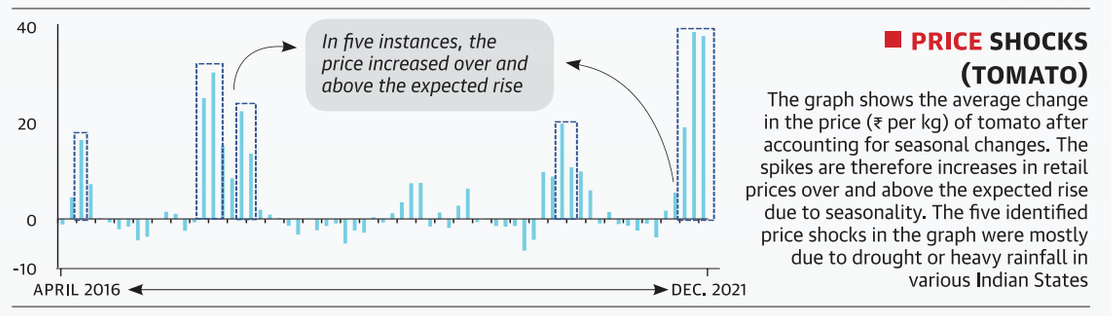
DATA POINT

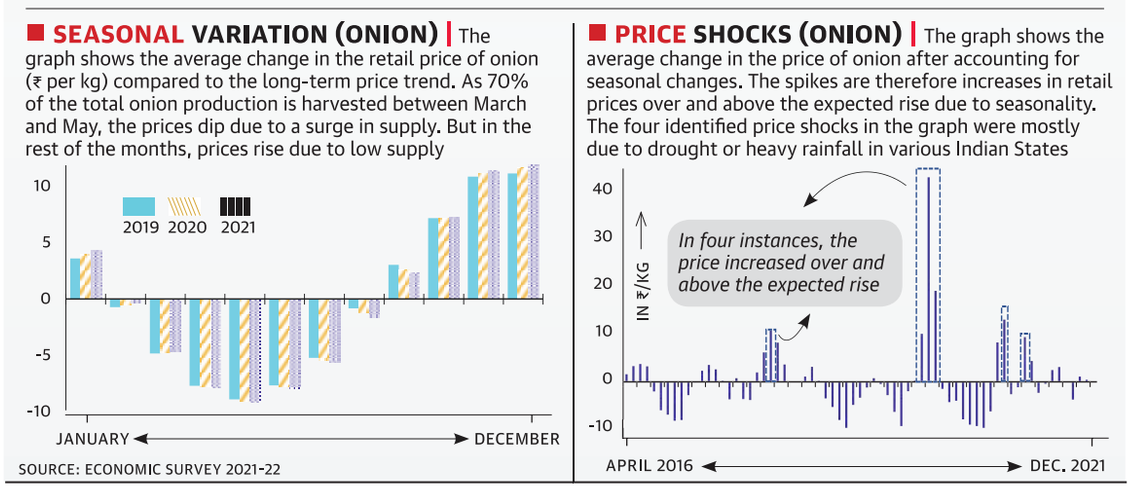
Why are tomato and onion prices fluctuating?

The prices of tomatoes and onions are the most volatile in Indian markets. The Economic Survey 2021-2022, released on Monday, explores the reasons behind the variations in the prices of these two staple vegetables. The survey argues that seasonality in production and irregular shocks contribute equally to volatile prices. The unexpected price shocks to these two perishable commodities were triggered by unseasonal rains and prolonged drought. A detailed look at the survey's conclusions









SOURCE: ECONOMIC SURVEY 2021-22

The Hindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 1, 1972

King Mahendra of Nepal dead

Kathmandu, Jan. 31: King Mahendra of Nepal died of a heart attack early to-day at Bharatpur, 200 kms. from here. The King had gone to Bharatpur for rest, but he was taken ill suddenly yesterday. A team of doctors was rushed to Bharatpur immediately after the King was taken ill but they could not save him. Within hours of King Mahendra's death, Crown Prince Birendra was enthroned as the new King of Nepal, the only Hindu kingdom in the world.

Soon after the King suffered a heart attack yesterday the Government of India was contacted by the Indian Ambassador in Kathmandu and a cardiologist was immediately flown to Bharatpur. The end came at 3:45 a.m. to-day. Queen Ratna was at the side of the 51-year-old King, when he breathed his last. Only two months ago, King Mahendra had returned from a medical check-up in London. The King had suffered a heart attack early in 1968 too.

Crown Prince Birendra was sworn-in King by the Chief Royal Priest amidst chanting of hymns with traditional Hindu rituals at a brief ceremony in the ancient Hanuman Dholka Palace, where his predecessors had been enthroned. A formal coronation ceremony will be held later on a date to be fixed by astrologers in accordance with traditions.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 1, 1922

The Asiatic peril

The Asiatic peril to the average western mind is mainly a menace of numbers. The increasing millions of India, China and Japan in spite of all the natural and unnatural checks on the growth of population is being watched by Europe, America and Australia with a degree of anxiety which seems to make them almost despair of their future when these teeming 'human hives' would have organised themselves into efficient self-governing states. With the example of their own unscrupulous expansion into and exploitation of the East in the past in their minds, they fear that the next turn of the wheel marked by the awakening of Asia and the coloured people all over the world will work against the future of the west in general and the Whites in particular. It is this psychology that makes many a western thinker oppose the very idea of Asiatic emigration to the west or their sacred preserves in other parts of the world.

FROM PAGE ONE

Survey pegs growth at 8-8.5% in '22-23

"The year ahead is also well poised for a pick-up in private sector investment with the financial system in a good position to provide support to the revival of the economy," the economic research division of the Department of Economic Affairs noted in the Survey.

It highlighted that India's macro-economic stability indicators on the external front, fiscal front as well as financial sector health and inflation, are well-placed to take on the challenges of 2022-23. 'One of the reasons' for this comfortable position, the Survey argued, is the government's unique response strategy that didn't 'pre-commit to a rigid response' but 'opted to use safety-nets for vulnerable sections' based on information.

"Inflation has reappeared as a global issue in both advanced and emerging economies.... India does need to be wary of imported inflation, especially from elevated global energy prices," the Survey has noted, even as it suggests that the double-digit wholesale price inflation in recent months will 'even out'. However, an equally strong recovery was seen in imports, rendering India's net exports negative for the first half of the year, from a surplus in 2020-21.

India has thus recorded a modest current account deficit of 0.2% in the first half, but robust capital flows in the form of continued inflow of foreign investment were sufficient to finance it, the Survey pointed out.

Taking on criticism that the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat approach' marks 'a return to old school protectionism', the Survey stated that "...the focus on economic resilience is a pragmatic recognition of the vagaries of international supply-chains".

Irked Mamata blocks Governor on Twitter

"Under Article 167, it is the "duty" of the Chief Minister to furnish such information relating to the administration of the affairs of the State and proposals for legislation as the Governor may call for. Why "block" information to Guv [Governor] now for two years," Mr. Dhankhar said on Twitter. The Governor also shared screenshot of Article 167 on social media.

The Chief Minister said she had written four letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to withdraw the Governor from the State. "I will still appeal for the same," she said.

Ms. Banerjee stressed that interfering in the policy decisions of an elected government is not the work of the Governor and said the Governor is seeking details of subsidised meals provided to the people through State government run "Maa" canteens. "We have been tolerating this for the past one and a half years. He has blocked every Bill. Even the appointments of State's Human Rights Commission Chairperson and members of the Information Commission is pending," she said.

She went on to accuse the Governor that with his "direct support", some BJP leaders were indulging in violence in the State. She alleged that the Governor was tapping phones of State government officials using Pegasus spyware.

"Pegasus is being operated from Raj Bhavan. There is an all-India Pegasus... and from Raj Bhavan, phones are being tapped," she said.

Ms. Banerjee said that despite not being consulted about the appointment of Governor, she had extended all courtesies but now "enough is enough".

"In future, I will not take any decision. The State Assembly and Parliament will take a decision on that," she said. During the day, Trinamool Congress Leader in Lok Sabha Sudip Banerjee said he had urged President Ram Nath Kovind to withdraw Governor from the State.

Expanding ambit of NCW need of the hour: Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In order the address the evolving needs of women in the country the National Commission for Women (NCW) must broaden its ambit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

He was speaking at the 30th Foundation Day of the NCW. "Expanding the role of NCW is the need of the hour. The State Commissions must also widen their ambit, Mr. Modi said.

Entrepreneurship

He emphasised that there was a need to promote women entrepreneurs. "Women's participation in the growth cycle of New India is on the rise. Women's commissions must ensure that women's role in entrepreneurship is recognised and promoted," Mr. Modi said.

The Prime Minister noted that the strength of self help groups in the country had increased by three times in the past six or seven years, which he likened to the burgeoning of start-ups in the country.

Survey ignores poverty, joblessness: Opposition

Chidambaram calls for 'contrition, change of approach'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Monday were critical of the findings of the Economic Survey, with Congress leader and former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram saying it is a time for "contrition and change of approach, not for boasts and no change".

In a series of tweets, Mr. Chidambaram said the Economic Survey repeats "*ad nauseum*" that at the end of 2021-22, the economy would have recovered to the pre-pandemic level. "In plain language, it means that on 31.3.2022 the GDP will be at the same level as it was on 31-3-2020. It means that it has taken two years to go back to where we were on 31-3-2020. The two years have impoverished people: millions of jobs have been lost; 84% households have suffered loss of income; 4.6 crore have been pushed into poverty; India ranks 104 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index," he said.

In a separate series of tweets, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala claimed that the Survey revealed "intrinsic weakness" of the economy' and the "gross economic mismanagement" by the Narendra Modi Government as 4.6 crore people were pushed into abject poverty.

> In plain language, it means that on 31/3/2022 the GDP will be at the same level as it was on 31/3/2020. It means that it has taken two years to go back to where we were. The two years have impoverished people: millions of jobs have been lost; 84% households have suffered loss of income; 4.6 crore have been pushed into poverty
>
> **P. CHIDAMBARAM** Congress leader

Fails to assess

"#EconomicSurvey2022 fails to assess the brutal impact of high prices on Indians – with massive job losses & erosion of incomes! It ignores the divide – as income of richest Indians increased by 13 Lakh CR, the poorest 15 CR households have seen income reduction of 53%," Mr. Surjewala said.

"Self serving cheerful assessment of economy raises doubts about what the Budget is set out to achieve – which should be to stimulate the ailing economy, revive sectors, boost consumption, encourage investment & create jobs – none of which the survey insists is a problem at all!" he added

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury tweeted, "Economic Survey - "Modi in Wonderland" Ground Realities - job gap of 200 million - 4/5th of households had income loss - 230 million additionally pushed to poverty - global hunger index, India falls further - 'country with serious level of hunger'."

Kovind lauds health staff, vaccination drive

President addresses both Houses

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ram Nath Kovind

President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday lauded healthcare professionals, the government's massive vaccination drive against COVID-19 aided by the indigenous production of vaccines and the citizens "who displayed profound faith in the democratic values, discipline and sense of responsibility" during the pandemic entering its third year, in his address to the joint Houses of Parliament at the start of the Budget session.

Mr. Kovind's term will end mid-year and this was possibly his last address to the joint Houses of Parliament.

"The COVID pandemic affected the entire world and in India too many of our loved were snatched away from us. In these circumstances, the Central government, State governments, local governments and administration, our doctors, nurses and health workers, our scientists and entrepreneurs have worked as a team," he said.

A major part of the speech was on the spread of the vaccination drive undertaken by the government and the free grain programme, the largest such programme in the world, which he said was an act of a "sensitive government" towards the most marginalised.

He also referred to the various policy interventions by the Central government to increase farm incomes.

At the start of the President's speech, the DMK and the Congress MPs raised slogans in the Central Hall protesting the delay by Tamil Nadu Governor N. Ravi in forwarding the Bill related to NEET, which was recently passed in the Assembly. No walkouts, however, took place.

Pegasus sub judice, no need for Parliament debate: govt.

Opposition calls for statement from PM on reports of spyware purchase; Venkaiah appeals for a productive session

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Amid Opposition demands for a discussion on the Pegasus spyware issue, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said the issue is *sub judice* and there need not be a separate discussion on the issue in the Budget session of Parliament.

At an all-party meeting convened virtually by the government, several Opposition leaders suggested that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should give a statement on the issue, if a full-fledged discussion is not possible. There was, however, no assurance forthcoming from Mr. Joshi or any other government representative.

Mr. Joshi, however, said that members can raise any issue while speaking on the Motion of Thanks to the President for his Address to the joint sitting of both Houses. Floor leaders of 25 parties attended the meeting in which the government was represented by Defence Minister and Deputy Leader of the Lok Sabha Rajnath Singh.

The government's stance set the stage for a confrontation between the Opposition and Treasury benches as a number of senior Opposition leaders like Congress's Rajya Sabha member K.C. Venugopal have moved a privilege motion against Information Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for "misleading the House".

All set: President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla arriving to attend the Budget session on Monday. ▪ R.V. MOORTHY

Senior Opposition members, including Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Trinamool Congress leader Sudeep Bandopadhaya, and DMK's T.R. Baalu, raised the Pegasus issue at the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the Lok Sabha and conveyed their intention to raise it on the floor of the House.

However, the BAC, chaired by Speaker Om Birla, allotted 12 hours to discuss the Motion of Thanks to the President and another 12 hours for the discussion on the Budget. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to the Motion of Thanks by next Monday (February 7).

"Leaders of all parties promised that in this important Budget Session, they will cooperate in running Parliament. I also urged them that extensive discussion can be held on President's Address and Budget. We can raise issues of the nation and discussions can be held," Mr. Birla told reporters after the BAC meeting.

Meaningful contribution

Separately, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu held a virtual meeting of the floor leaders to decide on the business of the House for the next 10 days.

Apart from Zero Hour, Question Hour and Private Members' Business, 23 hours will be available to have two separate discussions on the Motion of Thanks and the Union Budget. There will be no legislative business in the first part of the Budget session that ends on February 11.

Appealing to the floor leaders, Mr. Naidu said, "The Budget session provides guidance to help the national economy recover from the impact of pandemic. I earnestly appeal to all the leaders to enable a productive Budget session."

SC collegium recommends Bhandari for Chief Justice post

It also recommends the elevation of seven advocates

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Supreme Court collegium has recommended the elevation of Madras High Court Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) Munishwar Nath Bhandari as its Chief Justice. He would take oath after the issuance of a Presidential notification.

ACJ Bhandari, hailing from Rajasthan, assumed office in the Madras High Court on November 22, following his transfer from Allahabad High Court, where he had served as its ACJ. At the time of his transfer, two senior judges, Justices Raghvendra Singh Chauhan and Mohammad Rafiq, from his parent High Court (Rajasthan), were already serving as Chief Justices.

Munishwar Nath Bhandari ▪

Since Justice Chauhan retired on December 23, the Supreme Court collegium-passed resolutions recommending the elevation of Justice Bhandari as the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. Further, in the meeting held on Saturday, the collegium recommended the elevation of seven advocates – Konakani Sreenivasa Reddy alias Srinivasa Reddy, Gannamaneni Ramakrishna Prasad, Venkateswarlu Nimmagadda, Tarlada Rajasekhar Rao, Satti Subba Reddy, Ravi Cheemalapati and Vaddiboyana Sujatha as judges of the Andhra Pradesh HC.

Budget session important, make it constructive, fruitful, says PM

There should be free, meaningful discussion, Modi says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, the first day of the Budget session, asked Members of Parliament to set aside concerns over the Assembly election in five States and ensure that the current session of Parliament is fruitful and constructive and the discussions are meaningful and based on humanitarian concerns.

Making his customary remarks at the beginning of the session, Mr. Modi said: "While it is correct that frequent polls do affect the conduct of the Parliament session, but I would like to request all honourable MPs that elections aside, the Budget session is a sort of road map for the entire year and is therefore important. We must, with all our intellectual resources, ensure that the session is fruitful and the upcoming year sees us scale new heights as far as the economy is concerned."

Narendra Modi

"There should be free, meaningful discussion, keeping humanitarian concerns front and centre," he added.

"Our deliberations have an impact not just for our country but globally," he added.

Follow laws of the land or pack up: A.P. HC to Twitter

Social media giant warned against disregarding court orders

> I would be forced to direct the police to initiate criminal proceedings as a punishment for contempt
>
> PRASHANT KUMAR MISHRA
> Chief Justice Andhra Pradesh HC

STAFF REPORTER
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh High Court Chief Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra told Twitter Inc. to pack up its business if it has the intention to violate the laws made by Indian Parliament.

He also warned the social media giant against disregarding the orders passed by the High Court, during a hearing of the cases related to abuse of judges through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube etc., along with Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy on Monday.

'Hide and seek'

Justice Mishra said the Social Media Intermediaries (SMI) appeared to be playing hide and seek with the court and that he would be forced to direct the police to initiate criminal proceedings as a punishment for contempt.

While advising Twitter to mend its ways, he ordered that it should give an explanation in the form of an affidavit by next Monday, to which day the cases were posted for further hearing.

Appearing for the CBI, Additional Solicitor-General of India S.V. Raju informed the court that there were devious ways in which the mischief-mongers could access the URLs by submitting fake identities and continue targeting the judiciary. He insisted that the SMI should tell how they planned to deal with such technicalities hampering the investigation.

While promising that YouTube would comply with the court orders and it has already pulled down most of the subject URLs, senior advocate Sajan Poovaiah said the presence of TV news channels on YouTube was causing it tremendous problems as the objectionable content telecast by them was being viewed by millions. Therefore, notices should be issued to the news channels also, he suggested.

Advocate N. Ashwani Kumar pointed out that Virtual Private Networks were providing surreptitious means to post malicious content on social media.

Contempt plea closed

In a related case, the High Court closed a contempt petition filed against Gopala Krishna Kalanidhi, an advocate practising in the High Courts of A.P. and Telangana, for making disparaging remarks on some Judges in the Supreme Court belonging to Andhra Pradesh, upon the tendering of an unconditional apology and giving an undertaking that he would not do such things in the future.

Hindu outfits stage protests across Gujarat

Shops vandalised, police van set afire

MAHESH LANGA
AHMEDABAD

The killing of a person over his controversial social media post has triggered Statewide protests by Hindu right-wing outfits in Gujarat.

The protests, demanding stern action against the culprits allegedly involved in the murder of Kishan Boliya on January 25, turned violent at many places.

Thousands of protesters gathered near the Police Commissioner's office in Rajkot on Monday. Several shops and a police van were vandalised, forcing the police to resort to lathi charge.

Incidents of violence and clashes were also reported in Kathlal, Anand and Chhota Udepur too. The police have so far arrested five persons, including a cleric from Delhi, in connection with the murder.

Functionaries of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Hindu Jagran Manch and the Bajrang Dal organised vehicle rallies and foot marches in several cities. Protest marches, shutdowns and prayer meets were also held in Surat, Gandhinagar, Tankara, Jetpur, Modasa, Morbi, Porbandar, Rajula, Mahuva, Deesa, Siddhpur, Karjan, Dabhoi and Padra.

India, Russia hold discussion on UN Security Council agenda

Moscow to assume Presidency of Council in February

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ahead of Russia's upcoming Presidency of the United Nations Security Council this month, India and Russia on Monday held consultations on the UNSC issues during the visit of Ambassador Sergey Vasilyevich Vershinin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (DFM) of the Russian Federation. The discussion came in the backdrop of tensions between Russia and Ukraine over possible eastward expansion by NATO.

"The Russian delegation briefed India on its priorities during the 76th session of the U.N. General Assembly. Both sides also agreed to work closely together, given the common challenges faced and in keeping with their long standing special and privileged strategic partnership," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

Both sides held wide-ranging discussions on issues on the UNSC agenda and related developments. They agreed to deepen cooperation on issues of mutual interest at multilateral platforms. India has maintained a cautious position over the military tension bordering eastern Ukraine where Russia has rushed around a lakh additional soldiers and heavy armaments in the past weeks.

Official spokesperson of the Ministry Arindam Bagchi said last week India supports "peaceful resolution" of the crisis through "sustained diplomatic efforts". Apart from close strategic ties with both Russia and Ukraine, India is also concerned about the wellbeing of a large number of its citizens who are resident in Ukraine.

'Take stand on petition on minorities'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday criticised the government over its reluctance in taking a stand on whether religious minorities should be identified on a State-wise basis rather than nationally.

The government, despite being given a "last opportunity" to file an affidavit earlier in January, has not done so, saying its officers were down with COVID-19. A Bench, however, did not accept the excuse for not submitting the affidavit, insisting that the Centre cannot shirk from taking a stand on the issue.

Rahul playing a 'farce', says Amarinder

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Lok Congress (PLC) chief Captain Amarinder Singh (retd.) on Monday dubbed former Congress president Rahul Gandhi's claims of deciding the chief ministerial face with inputs from the ground as a farce and just theatrics.

After filing his nomination papers from Patiala Urban, Capt. Amarinder said that as per procedure, people elected their MLAs and then the CLP elected the Chief Minister "and so all this talk is just drama."

Asked to comment on farmers' decision to contest the polls, he said it was their right to do so. He personally had always supported them. His government had announced jobs and ₹5 lakh to the kin of each of the farmers who died during the agitation against the Central farm laws.

Capt. Amarinder exuded confidence of the PLC-BJP-SAD (Sanyukt) alliance would form the next government in Punjab.

SP allowed mafia gangs, rioters to operate at will in U.P.: Modi

PM says BJP government made them understand the meaning of the law

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his first virtual rally for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election, on Monday, launched a sharp attack on the Samajwadi Party (SP) on its record on law and order while in power.

He accused the party of allowing mafias and rioters to operate at will.

"Five years ago, *dabang* [muscle men] and *dangai* [rioters] were a law unto themselves. Whatever they said, became the government order. Traders were looted, and daughters could not come out of their homes in that period. The mafia used to roam freely under government patronage," he alleged.

Raising the issue of alleged exodus of a particular community and riots during the previous SP regime in western Uttar Pradesh, he said, "The people of western U.P. can never forget that when this area was burning in the fire of riots, the previous government was celebrating. Five years ago, illegal occupation of house, land and shops of the poor, downtrodden, backward, was a symbol of socialism. There used to be news of exodus of people every day."

> The people of western U.P. can never forget that when this area was burning in the fire of riots, the previous government was celebrating. Five years ago, illegal occupation of house, land and shops of the poor, downtrodden, backward, was a symbol of socialism
> NARENDRA MODI, Prime Minister

On law and order, he said that mafia and goons, who considered themselves to be bigger than the law, have been made to understand the meaning of the law under the BJP rule. "Today, let they be farmers, employees, traders, mothers, sisters or daughters, everyone is getting protection and respect. Seeing our *kaam* [work] and their *karname* [misdeeds], this time also, the people of U.P. are going to give full blessings to the BJP," he said.

Farmers' dues

Mr. Modi also reached out to the farmers of western U.P., especially those in the sugar cane belt, stating that his government's direct benefit transfer scheme had plugged leakages in payments due to farmers and on welfare programmes. "Understanding the problems of sugar cane farmers, we have also targeted to clear their dues at the earliest," he said.

Attacking former Chief Minister and SP president Akhilesh Yadav, who allegedly avoided visiting Noida due to a superstition, he asked, "Can those who hesitate to come to Noida, a place for aspirations of youth, due to superstition represent dreams of youth."

Vaccination programme

He condemned statements with the term "BJP vaccine", undermining the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

"Those who don't believe in the country's own COVID-19 vaccine and those who fuel rumours, can they respect the talent and innovation of the youth of U.P.," he asked.

The virtual rally covered 21 Assembly constituencies in Baghpat, Shamli, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur districts.

Punjab polls: CM Channi files papers from Bhadaur

Amarinder in Patiala Urban, Parkash Singh Badal in Lambi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

As many as 559 contestants, including Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) patron and five-time Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, filed their nomination papers for the Assembly election in Punjab on Monday.

Punjab's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) S. Karuna Raju said 559 nominations were filed on January 31 and with this, the total number of nominations filed has reached 1,178.

Mr. Channi, who was announced as the Congress candidate from the Bhadaur (SC) constituency in Barnala district on Sunday, filed his nomination papers. Mr. Channi is contesting from Chamkaur Sahib seat as well, which he has represented thrice in the Assembly.

Poll mode: Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi files his papers from the Bhadaur constituency on Monday. • PTI

Former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal filed his nomination papers from the Lambi constituency. At 94, he is the oldest candidate in the election.

Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal, former Deputy Chief Minister, filed his nomination from Jalalabad constituency.

Former Chief Minister and Punjab Lok Congress (PLC) chief Amarinder Singh filed his nomination papers from Patiala Urban.

Punjab will go to the polls on February 20. The nomination process, which started on January 25, will continue till February 1.

The scrutiny of nominations will be done on February 2 and the last date of withdrawal of candidature is February 4.

In the 2017 Punjab Assembly election, the Congress registered a resounding victory by winning 77 seats in the 117 member Punjab Legislative Assembly. The Aam Aadmi Party won 20 seats, while the SAD finished third with only 15 seats to its credit. The BJP won three seats.

Union Minister to take on Akhilesh

BJP has decided to field him from the Karhal seat for the U.P. Assembly election

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

Springing a surprise, the BJP has fielded Union Minister Satya Pal Singh Baghel, who is the Lok Sabha member for Agra, against Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav in Karhal seat in Mainpuri.

Mr. Baghel, a five-time MP, filed his nomination in Karhal, considered a stronghold of the SP and its ruling Yadav clan, soon after Mr. Yadav filed his on Monday.

Mr. Baghel, who belongs to the Dhangar community (SC), won the Lok Sabha election thrice from Jalesar from 1998 to 2008. In the 2009 Lok Sabha election from Firozabad, then in BSP, he lost to Mr. Yadav. He was elected to the Rajya Sabha as a BSP nominee.

Mr. Baghel then joined the BJP, which nominated him as

Satya Pal Singh Baghel

the head of its OBC Morcha. He contested the 2014 election from Firozabad but lost to SP's Akshay Yadav, Mr. Yadav's nephew.

Mr. Baghel contested the 2017 Assembly election from Tundla in Firozabad and won. He was appointed Cabinet Minister for Animal Husbandry in the Yogi Adityanath-led government. In 2019, Mr. Baghel was elected to the Lok Sabha again this time from the reserved constituency of Agra. He holds the portfolio of Union Minister of State for Law and Justice.

Senior leader Sobaran Singh Yadav won the last three elections from Karhal, one of them on a BJP symbol. In 2002, he contested as a BJP candidate and defeated the SP by a narrow margin. From 1986 to 2002, Ram Babu Yadav held the seat on the symbols of various socialist parties – Lok Dal, Janata Dal, Janata Party (Secular) and the SP.

Mr. Yadav said his nomination from Karhal was a "mission because this U.P. election will write the history of the next decade of the State and the country." "Come let's participate in this movement for positive politics with progressive thinking. Defeat negative politics, but remove it too," he tweeted.

Mr. Baghel took a dig at Mr. Yadav and said "in a democracy those who refer to their region as ancestral were insulting democracy".

Talking to presspersons in Karhal, when asked about the daunting caste equation where the Yadav community has a sizeable population, Mr. Baghel said the constituency also had a good number of "good voters" and "lakhs of beneficiaries" of the government's schemes.

Many forts have been breached in the past, he said, referring to the Samajwadi Party's defeats in Firozabad, Kannauj and Budaun in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

BJP jabs SP as CM takes vaccine credit

Adityanath says his government will wipe out COVID-19 in Uttar Pradesh

ANUJ KUMAR
GHAZIABAD

Effective management of COVID-19 is emerging as an important factor in the Bharatiya Janata Party's electoral pitch in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, something the Opposition has not been able to counter aggressively.

In the run-up to the Assembly election, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been visiting dedicated COVID hospitals in different districts of western Uttar Pradesh that will vote in the first and second phases of elections. He supervises the preparations to control the third wave, shares the number of active cases and vaccinations completed in the district with the local media and then holds political rallies in the Assembly constituencies of the district.

Big promises: U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during an event in Bulandshahr district. • FILE PHOTO

On Sunday, while addressing political rallies in Bulandshahr and Hapur, he said just as the BJP government in the State controlled the riots, it would wipe off the coronavirus as well.

He highlighted the "free vaccine and free ration" that are being provided during the pandemic.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav's statement describing the COVID vaccine as a "BJP vaccine" continues to haunt him. In Hapur, Mr. Adityanath said if it was a BJP vaccine then more than 90% population of the State had received it for free and they would now vote for the party. According to official figures, more than 70% of the State's eligible population had received both doses of vaccines.

On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Mr. Adityanath for taking time out for supervision of the hospitals during the election season.

According to official documents, 23,164 people have succumbed to COVID-19 but these numbers are always written with an asterisk, signifying the actual number will be shared after death audit. At present there are 59,601 active cases in the State.

Observers feel it was part of the BJP's electoral strategy to make people forget the alleged mismanagement during the second wave by raising the free vaccination and free ration pitch.

Shiv Sena throws in its lot with Utpal Parrikar

Party withdraws its Panaji candidate

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

In keeping with its promise of backing Utpal Parrikar, son of the late Manohar Parrikar, former Chief Minister, in the Goa Assembly election, the Shiv Sena on Monday withdrew its candidate from the Panaji seat where he is contesting as an Independent candidate.

The Sena, which is contesting the 40-seat Assembly election slated for February 14 in alliance with the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), not only pulled out its candidate, Shailendra Velingkar, on the last day of withdrawal of nominations but also said it would actively support Mr. Parrikar.

In a bid to queer the pitch for the ruling BJP, Shiv Sena MP and party's Goa in-charge Sanjay Raut had, earlier this month, exhorted all non-BJP parties to support Mr. Parrikar's candidature by not fielding any candidate against him.

The Sena's chief spokesperson had also promised that his party would withdraw its candidate from the seat held almost continuously by the late Parrikar from 1994 to the time of his demise in 2019. "We are keeping our word. The Shiv Sena is withdrawing its candidate Shailendra Velingkar from Panaji. Not just that, our workers will fully support Utpal Parrikar. We believe that the battle for Panaji is not just about an election but also about the purification of Goan politics," said Mr. Raut.

India records 1.65 lakh new COVID cases

Active cases cross 18.2 lakh mark; Kerala reports most deaths at 729, followed by Karnataka 56

THE HINDU DATA TEAM
CHENNAI

The country recorded 1,65,119 new COVID-19 cases on Monday. The total number of infections has reached 4.13 crore, and the active cases have crossed the 18.2 lakh mark.

The figures are based on the State bulletins released until 10 p.m. on Monday. However, Ladakh, Tripura, Jharkhand, and Lakshadweep had not yet released data for the day.

Kerala recorded 42,154 infections on Monday, followed by Karnataka (24,172) and Tamil Nadu (19,280).

On Monday, 1,185 deaths were recorded in India, considerably higher than the average levels recorded in the last week. The total number of recorded fatalities has reached 4,95,107.

A COVID-19 vaccination drive under way at a centre at Dhaka village, in New Delhi on Monday. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Kerala reported the most deaths with 729 fatalities (638 were from a backlog), followed by Karnataka (56). Maharashtra and Punjab recorded 39 deaths each.

On Sunday, 13.3 lakh tests were conducted (the results for which were made available on Monday). The test positivity rate (the number of cases detected per 100 tests) was 12.4%.

As of Monday, 92.6% of the eligible population has been vaccinated with at least one dose, while 69.8% have received both doses. In the 15-17 age cohort, 63.4% of the population have received their first dose. Altogether, 94,35,05,015 first doses, 71,08,97,268 second doses, and 1,19,25,197 booster doses have been administered across India.

Andhra Pradesh's tally

The number of new COVID cases in Andhra Pradesh fell sharply from 10,310 on Saturday to 5,879 in the last 24 hours ending Monday morning. A total of 25,284 samples were tested on Sunday against 39,296 the previous day.

The death toll came down

COVID-19

from 12 to nine, according to a COVID bulletin issued by the Health, Medical and Family Department.

Two persons each died in Kurnool and Nellore and one each in Chittoor, Kadapa, Krishna, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam districts on Sunday.

The cumulative number of samples tested in the State so far reached 3,24,70,712 and 11,384 persons recovered from the viral infection in 24 hours. The death toll and tally of positive cases recorded so far increased to 14,615 and 22,73,475 respectively. The number of active cases stood at 1,10,517 on Sunday.

Anantapur district recorded the highest number of new cases at 856. It is followed by East Godavari - 823, Kadapa - 776, Krishna - 650, Kurnool - 483, West Godavari - 456, Guntur - 421, Nellore - 366, Visakhapatnam - 340, Prakasam - 321, Chittoor - 295, Srikakulam - 80 and Vizianagaram - 12.

'Loyalty pledge' for Cong. MLAs

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUNE

Smarting from the defection of several of its MLAs to the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2019, all Congress candidates for the Goa Assembly elections will be taking a 'loyalty pledge' with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during his visit to the coastal State on February 2.

Earlier this month, all 37 Congress candidates had taken a similar pledge at a temple, dargah and a church, vowing not to defect to other parties in the event of winning the elections slated for February 14.Despite the Congress emerging as the single-largest party with 17 MLAs after the 2017 Assembly elections, it failed to form the government.

Over half of all news shows have aggressive content: study

Panels moderated by men are far more hostile, it finds

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

A study by Network of Women in Media, India (NWMI) of 31 primetime television news and talk shows in 12 languages including English, found aggression in more than 50% of all news shows and in 85% of talk shows.

The focus of this study was not on news bias or framing but on the performance of the reporter or the anchor. It also found the biggest expression of aggression was in tone of voice (76.76%), while sound, visual effects came in at 60%.

The number of male anchors with an aggressive tone of voice (78.13 %) was marginally higher than that of their female counterparts (75.28%); panels moderated by male anchors showed far higher (54.55%) aggressive behaviour on several metrics than those moderated by women (12.07%). Panels moderated by male anchors revealed relatively more (54.55%) aggressive masculinist behaviour than those moderated by female anchors (12.07%).

More shouting by speakers was also observed in male-moderated panels (48.75%) as compared to female-moderated panels (15.52%).

23,500 FIRs filed in connection with polls

70% cases related to alcohol, drugs

DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

A little over 1% of the FIRs filed in connection with the ongoing Assembly elections were related to violation of COVID-19-related safety norms, while just over 70% of the cases were lodged under Acts dealing with alcohol and drugs, according to Election Commission sources on Monday.

After the announcement of the elections in Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Assemblies on January 8, 23,500 FIRs had been filed under various laws from January 9 to 30. Around 17,000 cases were filed under the Excise Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act; around 4,600 under the Indian Penal Code and Arms Act; over 260 for violation of COVID-19 norms and 650 FIRs in connection with model code of conduct (MCC) violations, a source said.

App case accused Bishnoi sent to judicial custody

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Niraj Bishnoi, alleged founder and prime accused in the Bulli Bai App case, was sent to judicial custody on Monday by a Mumbai court.

The app was curated to 'auction' Muslim women after doctoring their photographs. A probe showed that over a hundred women's names and photographs were fed into the app's code. Mr. Bishnoi, 21, an engineering student, was arrested by the Delhi Police on January 20 from Assam and brought to Mumbai.

All the accused arrested by the Mumbai Cyber Crime cell – Bishnoi, Vishal Jha, 21 from Bengaluru; Shweta Singh, 19, and Mayank Rawat, 21, from Uttarakhand; Aumkareshwar Thakur and Niraj Singh, 28, from Odisha – are in judicial custody.

Mr. Bishnoi is reported to have been hacking Indian and Pakistani websites since the age of 15. All the accused have admitted that the Bulli Bai App was created by Twitter accounts @giyu84, @giyu44, @giyu94 and they used the GitHub platform to set it up. The police informed the court that the accused had multiple accounts on Twitter, Gmail and Instagram. Investigation by the Mumbai police revealed that Mr. Jha, Mr. Rawat and Shweta Singh used Twitter handles like Khalsa Supremaci, Jatinder Singh Bhullar, Harpal and Sage with the intention of breaching peace and creating animosity among religious groups.

Fortified rice supply in govt. schools raised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre has distributed 3.38 lakh metric tonnes of fortified rice till December 2021 through anganwadis and mid-day meal schemes at government schools, according to the Economic Survey released on Monday.

In 2019, the government approved a Centrally sponsored pilot scheme for fortification of rice for a period of three years beginning 2019-2020.

The scheme is being implemented in 15 districts across as many States.

Last year, during his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that by 2024 rice made available under every government programme will be fortified to fight malnutrition.

Some public health experts have however raised concerns over fortification of rice as an effective tool to fight malnutrition and have said diversification of diet is more important.

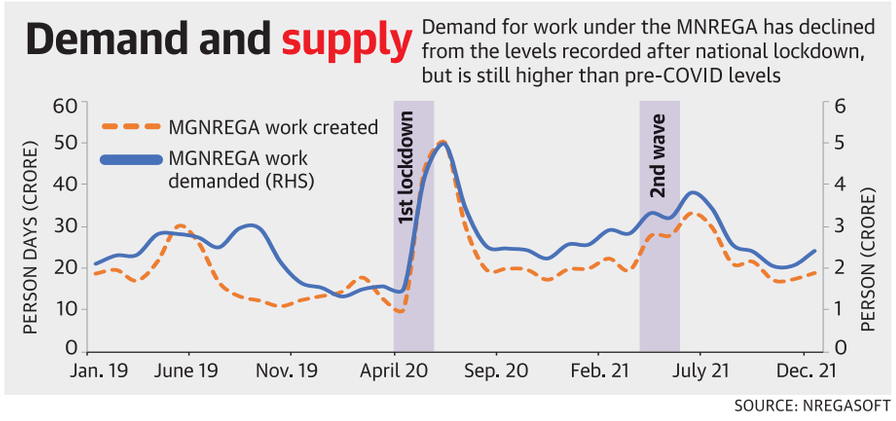
'Demand for MGNREGA work softens'

Govt. says drop observed after peak during first wave but figures still higher than pre-pandemic levels

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

Demand for work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme has dropped from the peak of the first lockdown, but is still higher than pre-COVID levels, the Department of Economic Affairs said in its annual Economic Survey, noting that this is "an indicator of rural labour markets".

However, it cautioned against drawing conclusions about the movement of migrant labour on the basis of MGNREGA employment, noting that the highest demand for work under the scheme was seen in States which are usually the destination of migrant workers, rather than source States.



SOURCE: NREGASOFT

More funds sought

Advocates for rural workers argued that the drop in demand is also due to funding constraints, and urged a significant increase in allocations for the scheme in Tuesday's Union budget.

According to the Survey's analysis, though demand for work stabilised after the second COVID wave, aggregate MGNREGA employment is still higher than pre-pandemic levels of 2019, after accounting for the seasonality of demand.

"The supply side effect of MGNREGA funding skews the picture of demand," said Nikhil Dey, founder of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, a union for unorganised rural workers across the country. "There is no doubt that demand went up during the lockdown and when money was available through the increased allocation," he said, noting that the Centre had infused ₹40,000 crore worth of additional funding early in the first lockdown, meaning scheme administrators had sufficient money to cope with the hike in demand.

'Artificial suppression'

In 2021-22, on the other hand, additional funding was not available until late in the year when many States had already run out of money, forcing an artificial suppression in demand on the ground. "For the upcoming 2022-23 financial year, activists have asked for a budget allocation of ₹2.6 lakh crore, which would cover the guaranteed 100 days of work for all active job card holders. But anything less than ₹1.4 lakh crore, which is the amount spent in 2020-21 plus inflation, will be a clear suppression of demand by the government," said Mr. Dey.

The Survey also mapped the State-wise demand trends. "Intuitively, one may expect that higher MGNREGS demand may be directly related to the movement of migrant labour i.e. source States would be more impacted. Nevertheless, State-level analysis shows that for many migrant source States like West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, the MGNREGS employment in most months of 2021 has been lower than the corresponding levels in 2020," it said.

According to the Survey, demand has been higher for migrant recipient States like Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Dey noted that Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan have a record of administrative sensitivity and efficiency with regard to MGNREGA implementation even pre-COVID.

"These States also see high levels of short-term migration within their own borders," added Rajendran Narayan, an assistant professor at Azim Premji University who is part of a research group on MGNREGA.

'Creating jobs via infra investments'

Sanyal seeks to allay concerns

YUTHIKA BHARGAVA
NEW DELHI

Principal Economic Adviser Sanjeev Sanyal on Monday sought to allay concerns over rising unemployment and asserted that the economy was creating a significant amount of new jobs. The government, he added, was also creating jobs through capital expenditure on infrastructure and providing job support via the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

"There are areas where the public sector is generating jobs, it may not be government jobs but when you are talking about capital expenditure on infrastructure, that is also a job created by government spending, the contractors' workers may not be government employees, so there is that kind of job being created, and then you know support jobs like the MGNREGA are also forms of government jobs," Mr. Sanyal said in reply to a query on lack of job creation in the public sector. He added that for a 'regular government job' there had always been a lot of demand in India. "This is not a new phenomenon ... such incidents have happened in the past as well, well before COVID-type situation."

The comments come amid ongoing controversy over recruitment in the Railways in which more than one crore applications were received for about 30,000 jobs. "There has been an attraction in India for regular government jobs and we have always heard, even in my childhood, that so many lakh people apply for so few numbers of jobs, so this is not a new phenomenon at all," he said.

The international situation is in an environment where there are all kinds of pressures, particularly from oil prices
SANJEEV SANYAL
Principal Economic Adviser

On inflation, Mr. Sanyal asserted that despite a spike worldwide, inflation in India was still within the tolerance threshold.

"The international situation is clearly in an environment where there are all kinds of pressures, particularly from oil prices... supply side shocks, chip shortages, cargo tariffs, etc. So these do have an impact. We are part of the world and imported inflation is an issue and we do need to take that into account," he said.

Mr. Sanyal, however, added that the rest of the world was also in some ways responding to it. "It's not like they are not doing it as well ... A lot of effort is being put worldwide in trying to ease up all these supply side problems ... don't think of these things in linear fashion. Yes, there is a problem with imported inflation, but don't begin to sort of extrapolate this into the future."

Container shortage inflates shipping bills

Sea freight rates surged more than fourfold

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The shortage of shipping containers is likely to be a "persistent problem" and has led to India spending $14.8 billion on importing transportation services, which was 65% more than the previous year, according to the Economic Survey.

COVID-related restrictions led to a slump in container manufacturing.

The department noted that the COVID-19 pandemic-related curbs led to a smaller flow of containers in active shipping which, along with a slump in manufacturing of containers, distorted their demand and supply. This had led to very high shipping rates. During April-September 2021, India spent $14.8 billion on transportation services imports, which was 64.9% higher than last fiscal.

The lack of containers led to a rise in sea freight rates in the range of 300% to 350%, the Department of Economic Affairs said, citing a report of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Combined with factors such as a fall in the production of new containers since 2019, and a rise in the disposal of containers in the same period, it had led to the overall growth in container numbers sliding from 11% in 2019, to 5% in 2021.

Several measures were adopted to overcome the challenges, which included releasing of abandoned or seized containers and increasing duty-free stay of containers, the DEA added.

On the draw

Centre skips mention of rising food subsidy cost

Surveys of last three years had flagged the issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Economic Surveys of the last three years have included a recurring recommendation to address the "burgeoning" food subsidy bill by revising the rates of subsidised grain as well as the number of people covered by the food safety net. This recommendation is conspicuously missing in this year's report, despite an increase in the subsidy bill.

In 2019, the Survey included a detailed discussion of the rising economic cost of implementing the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, noting that the subsidised rates of ₹2 per kg for wheat and ₹3 per kg for rice at which grains are provided to 81 crore beneficiaries has remained constant even while the cost of procurement and distribution has been on the rise. "For sustainability of food security operations, the issue of burgeoning food subsidy bill needs to be addressed," it said.

In 2020, the government went a step further, suggesting a revision in the scope of NFSA coverage as well. "The rates fixed under the NFSA initially for a period of three years have not been revised since 2013, resulting in burgeoning food subsidy. The rates under NFSA and the coverage need to be revisited," it said in the Survey.

In this year's Survey, however, the section on food subsidy was curtailed, with a basic observation on the rising economic cost of wheat from ₹1,908.32 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹2,993.80 per quintal in 2021-22, with a similar rise in rice cost from ₹2,615.51 per quintal to ₹4,293.79 over the same period.

"However, as a pro-poor measure, the CIPs for NFSA beneficiaries have not been revised since the commencement of the NFSA. Measures are being taken to improve the efficiency of food management to reduce the gap between economic cost and CIP," the government said in the survey.

Second wave did not deter job formalisation

EPFO data showed new subscribers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Data from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) suggested that not only had formalisation of jobs continued through the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the adverse impact on formalisation was also lower than in the first wave, the Department of Economic Affairs said in the Economic Survey 2021-2022 tabled in Parliament on Monday.

Urban employment

The department said the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data up to March 2021 showed that urban employment that was affected by the pandemic had "recovered almost to the pre-pandemic levels".

The EPFO data suggested "significant acceleration in formalisation of the job market, driven by both new formal jobs and formalisation of existing jobs, during 2021, with 13.95 lakh net addition to EPF subscribers in November 2021".

The net addition to EPFO subscriptions declined in April-May 2020, but bounced back by September 2020, reaching 12.2 lakh. In November 2020, there was a decline again, as well as during the second wave in April-June 2021, it said

"In November 2021, net addition in subscription peaked with 13.9 lakh new subscribers, the highest in any given month since 2017. The latest payroll data of EPFO shows that the net addition in EPF subscribers reached 13.95 lakh during the month of November 2021," the department said.

Govt. admits to lack of data to study COVID impact on learning

ASER's 2021 report on basic education cited in detail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Economic Survey has acknowledged a gaping lacuna in government data regarding the impact of the pandemic on education, especially on 25 crore schoolchildren who have not entered a classroom in almost two years.

"It is difficult to gauge the real time impact of repeated lockdowns on education sector because the latest available comprehensive official data dates back to 2019-20. This provides the longer time pre-COVID trends but does not tell us how the trend may have been impacted by COVID-19 induced restrictions," said the Department of Economic Affairs in its annual Survey.

Instead, it took the unorthodox step of extensively citing non-governmental survey data such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) conducted by the NGO Pratham to show that enrolment and learning have both suffered during the lockdowns.

Not all students could access online classes when schools closed during lockdown.

ASER's 2021 report showed that the number of children aged 6-14 years who are not enrolled in schools doubled from 2.5% in 2018 to 4.6% in 2021, said the Survey. ASER also found a significant shift from private to government schools, fuelled by the financial distress of parents, free facilities and families migrating back to villages. About 6 in 10 rural children did not receive any learning materials or activities during the pandemic, it said.

"Government data to corroborate these observations is not available," said the Survey, noting the lack of comprehensive official data. "Thus, policy makers have taken into account alternate sources. We are aware that such data has limitation but in the interest of being up to date this data has been included," it said.

Ethanol helps sugar mills clear arrears to farmers

Sale of fuel blend netted ₹35,000 cr.

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA
COIMBATORE

Sugar mills' sale of ethanol to oil marketing companies helped them earn additional revenue and clear cane price arrears to farmers, the Department of Economic Affairs said in the annual Economic Survey placed in the Parliament on Monday.

The department said that in the past four sugar seasons ending 2020-2021, sugar mills/distilleries generated revenue of about ₹35,000 crore from the sale of ethanol to oil marketing firms, which helped in clearing the sugar cane price arrears owed to farmers.

With the aim of managing surplus output of sugar and enhancing liquidity of mills, the Centre had taken various steps including incentivising sugar mills to divert excess sugar cane/sugar to ethanol production and providing financial assistance for transport to mills to facilitate the export of sugar.

About 70 lakh tonnes of sugar was exported in sugar season 2020-2021 in comparison with 59.6 lakh tonnes during the preceding season. Contracts for the export of about 30 lakh tonnes of sugar have already been signed in the current season that ends in September.

India is the largest consumer and the second-largest producer of sugar in the world. Average annual production of sugar cane is about 35.5 crore tonnes which is used to produce about three crore tonnes of sugar. Domestic consumption is estimated to be about 2.6 crore tonnes in 2020-21. Over the years, India has become a surplus producer of the kitchen commodity.

'Vaccination was key to reviving economy'

Was essential to balance lives and livelihoods: DEA

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic posed the challenge of balancing livelihoods while saving lives, the Department of Economic Affairs said in the Economic Survey, tabled in the Parliament on Monday. It highlighted that vaccination played a critical role in minimising the loss of lives, boosted confidence in the economy for resumption of activity and contained the sequential decline in output due to the second wave.

With the global economy continuing to be plagued by uncertainty two years into the pandemic, with resurgent waves of mutant variants, supply-chain disruptions, and a return of inflation in both advanced and emerging economies, the DEA stressed that vaccination had served as more than a health response and was critical in helping reopen the economy, particularly contact-intensive services.

Restoring confidence: The immunisation programme helped address the challenge of saving lives. ▪ VIJAY SONEJI

Therefore, it should be treated for now as a macroeconomic indicator, it said. According to data in the Survey, 99% of the registered healthcare workers and 100% of frontline workers, 87% of the population aged between 18-44, 95% of the population aged between 45-60 and 89% of the population above 60 had been covered under the first dose.

'Social infrastructure'

The DEA observed that a strong and resilient social infrastructure became even more important during the pandemic.

"To save lives and livelihoods amid the COVID-crises, countries have adopted various strategies. India, the country with the second-largest population and a large elderly population, adopted a multi-pronged approach," it said.

Given the nature of the pandemic, the health response, including vaccination strategy, remained critical. India, one of the young nations in the world, also faced the challenge to sustain the learning outcomes in schools, building skills and reskilling the population and ensuring employment and livelihood to one of the largest labour forces in the world.

The government's response through 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' packages and other sector specific initiatives provided the necessary support to mitigate the adverse impact of the pandemic, it asserted.

India ranks third globally in forest area gain: Survey

Forests covered 24% of area in 2020

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

India has increased its forest area in the past decade and ranks third globally in average annual net gain in forest area from 2010-2020, the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) said in the annual Economic Survey. India annually added an average 2,66,000 hectares of forest area over the period.

Forests covered 24% of India's geographical area, accounting for 2% of the world's total forest area in 2020, the department said.

The top 10 countries account for 66% of the world's forest area. Brazil (59%), Peru (57%), Democratic Republic of Congo (56%) and Russia (50%) have half or more of their geographical area under forests.

"Much of India's increase in forest cover from 2011-21 is attributed to enhancement in very dense forest cover, which rose by approximately 20%," the DEA said. "Open forest cover also improved by 7%... Going forward, there is need to further improve forest and tree cover. Social forestry could also play a significant role in this regard," it added.

The latest biennial 'India: State of Forest Report' has elicited criticism from independent experts, who have questioned the methodology used to count forests. Officials in the environment ministry, while asserting that India's definitions of 'forest' and 'tree cover' were consistent with global definitions, acknowledged that most of the increases had occurred outside areas traditionally marked as 'forest' and included plantations and orchards.

U.K. 'partygate' inquiry report slams 'failures of leadership'

PM Johnson says 'sorry', promises administrative changes in Downing Street

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

A long-awaited report into claims of lockdown-breaking parties at British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's offices was published in part on Monday, criticising "failures of leadership" that allowed events to go ahead.

Political and public anger at the revelations put Mr. Johnson's position as leader under threat, but senior civil servant Sue Gray has been forced not to go into detail on all events due to a separate police probe.

After interviewing more than 70 people about 16 events held in 2020 and last year, Ms. Gray said what she could say was "extremely limited" owing to the Metropolitan police's intervention.

But she found that given the demands the government was making of the public to fight the spread of coronavirus, "some of the behaviour surrounding these gatherings is difficult to justify".

Some represented a "serious failure" to observe the high standards expected of those working in government, and "too little thought" was given to how appropriate the events were at the time and how they would be perceived.

"There were failures of leadership and judgment by different parts of No. 10 (Downing Street) and the Cabinet Office at different times," Ms. Gray wrote in her 12-page report. "Some of the events should not have been allowed to take place. Other events should not have been allowed to develop as they did."

On the backfoot: Boris Johnson speaking in Parliament on Monday after the release of Sue Gray's report. • AFP

Drinking culture

Ms. Gray also criticised the drinking culture at the heart of government in the report, which saw her examine emails, text messages, photos and Downing Street's entry and exit logs.

Following the revelations in the report, Mr. Johnson respondend in Parliament saying he was "sorry" for the lockdown-breaching parties but vowed "to get on with the job".

"I get it, and I will fix it," he said, vowing administrative changes to his Downing Street operation.

Taliban killed 100 ex-Afghan govt. officials and others: UN

More than two-thirds are extra-judicial killings, says report

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES

The Taliban and their allies have killed more than 100 security and civilian personnel linked to the former U.S.-backed Afghan government since seizing power in August, according to a new United Nations report.

The report describes severe curtailing of human rights by Afghanistan's new fundamentalist rulers.

Taliban officials on Monday rejected the claims, insisting that the reported deaths were linked to "personal enmity" cases and were under investigation.

"The Islamic Emirate has not killed anyone since the amnesty was announced," the Interior Ministry said on Twitter.

The UN report said that, in addition to the political killings, women's freedoms and the right to protest had also been curbed.

Taliban rejected the report, claiming the deaths were due to 'personal enmity'.

Despite the Taliban's promise of general amnesties, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan "continued to receive credible allegations of killings, enforced disappearances, and other violations", the report said.

The UN said its Afghan mission had received more than 100 reports of killings that it deems credible.

More than two-thirds were "extra-judicial killings committed by the de facto authorities or their affiliates."

Additionally, "human rights defenders and media workers continue to come under attack, intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and killings," it said.

The report also detailed a government clampdown on peaceful protests, as well as a lack of access for women and girls to work and education.

"An entire complex social and economic system is shutting down," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

Israel strikes Hezbollah areas in Syria

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIRUT

Israeli strikes early on Monday hit a military outpost and weapons depot operated by Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement near the Syrian capital Damascus, a war monitor reported on Monday.

"Sites operated by the Lebanese Hezbollah group... in the east Qalamoun region, northeast of Damascus, were hit by Israeli strikes at dawn," the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The war monitor, which relies on sources inside Syria, said that the attack sparked fires "in military outposts and arms depots belonging to Hezbollah".

The Observatory said there were believed to be casualties but it did not offer a toll.

Blinken to hold telephone call with Lavrov on Ukraine crisis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

Russia said on Monday that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov would hold a telephone conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at a time of heightened tensions between their countries over Ukraine.

"Lavrov and Blinken will have a telephone conversation on Tuesday," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters, adding there were no plans for a face-to-face meeting.

The upcoming call is the latest in a flurry of diplomatic meetings between senior diplomats from Moscow, Brussels and Washington over the conflict in Ukraine and disagreements over security concerns in Europe.

Antony Blinken

Fears of an imminent Russian incursion in Ukraine have grown in recent days, despite denials from Moscow and pleas from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to avoid stirring "panic" over the massive Russian military build-up on the border.

UN meeting

The UN Security Council is due to convene later on Monday over the crisis with Washington vowing to hold Russia to account if it attacks Ukraine, including by preparing sanctions in coordination with Western allies.

India calls for 'quiet diplomacy' on Ukraine

It backs 'immediate de-escalation'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

India called for quiet diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of the Russia-Ukraine tensions. Speaking at the UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting on Ukraine, India's Permanent Representative to the UN also called for the immediate de-escalation of the situation while taking into account the security interests of all.

"India's interest is in finding a solution that can provide for immediate de-escalation of tensions taking into account the legitimate security interests of all countries and aimed towards securing long term peace," Mr. Tirumurti said.

India was one of three countries (Kenya and Gabon were the others) that abstained from a procedural vote on whether or not Ukraine would be discussed. China and Russia voted against the move. The U.S., which initiated the meeting, and nine other countries voted to hold the discussion.

Mr. Tirumurti reiterated India's support for a July 2020 ceasefire, the 2014 Minsk Agreement and the Normandy Process. The Normandy Format refers to discussions held between Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France, who have met since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea. The four countries met in Paris on January 26 and are set to meet in Berlin in two weeks.

India also called for quiet diplomacy as both the West, led by the U.S., and Russia have been talking tough publicly. "Quiet and constructive diplomacy is the need of the hour. Any steps that increase tension may best be avoided by all sides in the larger interest of securing international peace and security," Mr. Tirmurti said

More than 20,000 Indian nationals – including students – live in Ukraine. Mr. Tirumurti told the Council their safety was a priority.

Russia, U.S., Ukraine to spar at UN

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council is scheduled to meet on Monday for the first time on Russia's troop build-up and threatening actions against Ukraine at the request of the United States, and all key players are expected to square off in public.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said Russia's actions pose "a clear threat to international peace and security and the UN Charter." Russia's deputy UN Ambassador Dmitry Polyansky responded angrily, tweeting: "I can't recall another occasion when a SC (Security Council) member proposed to discuss its own baseless allegations as a threat to international order from someone else."

Mr. Polyansky's reaction indicated that Russia may start the meeting asking for a procedural vote. To block the meeting, Russia would need support from nine of the 15 members.

Burkina Faso suspended from AU following coup

Junta says constitution restored now

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
OUAGADOUGOU

The African Union on Monday suspended Burkina Faso a week after the volatile country suffered its latest coup, as envoys from West Africa and the UN headed for talks with the new junta.

The AU's 15-member Peace and Security Council said on Twitter it had voted "to suspend the participation of #BurkinaFaso in all AU activities until the effective restoration of constitutional order in the country".

An ECOWAS mission headed by Ghanaian Foreign Minister Shirley Ayorkor Botchway was expected in Ouagadougou, where it would be joined by the UN's special representative for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

"The joint delegation will have meetings with the military leaders and various Burkinabe actors," UNOWAS said in a statement.

ECOWAS leaders will hold a summit in Accra on Thursday to assess the two missions to see whether they should impose sanctions.

An ECOWAS official meeting with the new junta leader of Burkina Faso on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the military junta said on Monday it had restored the constitution a week after taking power and appointed the coup's leader as head of state for a transitional period. The statement did not give a timeline for the transition period.

It identified coup leader Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba as president of the MPSR.

Amid Israeli President's visit, UAE intercepts Yemen rebel missile

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DUBAI

The United Arab Emirates shot down a ballistic missile fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels during a visit by Israel's President on Monday, the latest attack to rattle the Middle East financial hub.

Nobody was hurt in the early-hours attack, the third in consecutive weeks on the wealthy Gulf nation that is part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Iran-backed insurgents. "Air defence forces... intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched by the Houthi terrorist group at the UAE," the Ministry said.

The Ministry said it responded by destroying the missile launch site in Yemen's northern Al-Jawf region.

The latest rebel missile was fired as Isaac Herzog makes the first visit to the UAE by an Israeli president, after the countries established diplomatic ties under the 2020 Abraham Accords. Mr. Herzog will "continue his visit as planned", his office said, as the United States condemned the Houthi attack.

"While Israel's president is visiting the UAE to build bridges, the Houthis continue to launch attacks that threaten civilians," U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price tweeted.

2 jailed in HK for 'seditious publication'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HONG KONG

Hong Kong's courts jailed two persons for publishing seditious content on Monday, the first time the colonial-era law has been used to secure a conviction for printed content since the city's 1997 handover to China.

Sedition is a throwback to Hong Kong's British colonial past but has been dusted off as authorities carry out a widespread crackdown on dissent.

Multiple people – including journalists, union members and a prominent radio DJ – have been detained under the law and are facing upcoming trials.

Kim Chiang Chung-sang, 41, a former property manager, was given eight months in jail for putting up posters outside a kindergarten and the city's High Court.

The posters criticised the judiciary for convicting a man last year at the first trial under a national security law.

In a separate case that also concluded on Monday, the District Court jailed former clerk Chloe Tso Suet-sum, 45, for over a year for asking a 17-year-old to design and print protests leaflets.

Office of The Additional Chief Engineer,
PHED, Region-Kota
E-Notice Inviting Bid No. 87/2021-22

Bids for works under JJM are invited from interested bidders upto 01-02-2022, 18.00 Hours. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the http://www.eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in and departmental website details mentioned below:-

NIT No.	Name of work	Estimated Cost	Date & time for on-line Downloading/ Submission of Bid
87/21-22	Work for Retrofitting of Gulendi Water Supply Project to provide FHTC including 10 years O & M under JJM Distt. Jhalawar UBN No. PHE21222WOB11622	Rs. 3019.89 Lakh	12.01.2022 at 10.00 Hrs. to 01.02.2022 up to 18.00 Hrs.

(Mahesh Jangid)
Additional Chief Engineer
PHED, Region, Kota
DIPR/C/984/21

BHARAT DYNAMICS LIMITED
(A Government of India Enterprise)
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
GACHIBOWLI, HYDERABAD-500 032.

Ref : BDL/CC/OT/GT/005/2021-22 Dt : 01.02.2022

e-PROCUREMENT ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE

Inviting Indigenous Competitive Bidding

Sl.No.	Tender ID	Description	Estimate in ₹
1	64110	Extension of Officer's Hostel and Facelift of Township Entrance Gate at BDL, Bhanur	440.58 Lakhs

Please visit website https://bdltenders.abcprocure.com for further details. Bids should be submitted online only. **"Corrigendum if any shall be issued through our e-portal only and not in Newspapers"**
Addl. General Manager (Corp. Comml.)

TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD
Nanthancode, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 003
Phone: 0471-2314288. E-Mail: dcotdb@gmail.com
Website: www.travancoredevaswomboard.org

TRAVANCORE DEVASWOM BOARD INVITES RE E-TENDERS FOR THE SUPPLY OF:

Jaggery Powder, Easy Open Lids in connection with the festival period 1197 ME (2021-2022) of Sree Dharmasastha Temple, Sabarimala.

E-Tender Closing Date : **09-02-2022 - 05.00 PM**
E-Tender Opening Date : **11-02-2022 - 11.00 AM**

Venue : **Devaswom Commissioner Office, Travancore Devaswom Board Compound, Nanthancode, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 003**

Detailed e-tender notifications and special instructions to the bidders are available on **www.travancoredevaswomboard.org**
For the submission of tender visit the website : **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**

ROC NO : 4/21/Sab.
Dated : 31-01-2022
Sd/- **DEVASWOM COMMISSIONER**
(For and behalf of Travancore Devaswom Board)

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF N.C.T. DELHI
OFFICE OF THE DY. SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (PROJECT) W-IX,
ASHOK VIHAR, OVERHEAD TANK: DELHI - 110052
Tel: 011-27303265 Email id: projectwater9@gmail.com
"STOP CORONA: WEAR MASK, FOLLOW PHYSICAL DISTANCING, MAINTAIN HAND HYGIENE"

N.I.T. NO. 07 (2021-22)

SN	Name of Work	Amount Put to Tender (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Tender Fees (Rs.)	Date & Time of Pre-Bid Meeting	Last date/time of submission of e-tender/Tender ID
1.	Providing and laying 2400 mm Diameter Raw Water main from Delhi Sub-Branch near Haiderpur WTP up to Outfall at Wazirabad WTP	Lump sum	1,88,08,000/- (Rs. 20 Lacs Through RTGS and Balance through B.G.)	1500/-	11.02.2022 at 03:00 P.M.	25.02.2022 up to 03:00 P.M. Tender ID 2022_DJB_215545

Note: Any further amendment/corrigendum made in this NIt will be uploaded and can only be seen on website http://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in.
ISSUED BY PRO (WATER) **(Naresh Kumar Dargan)**
Advt. No. J.S.V. 1064(2021-22) **Dy. Superintending Engineer(Project) Water-IX**

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (E&M)I
CHANDRAWAL WATER WORKS NO.1,
CIVIL LINES, DELHI-110054
PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER NO.20 (2021-22)
"STOP CORONAVIRUS -WEAR MASK, MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING, HAND WASH REGULARLY"

S. No	Subject	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Tender Fee (in Rs.)	Date & ID of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date of submission of tender
1	Design, Build, Operate & Maintain 9 MGD Pressure Sand Filters(PSF) at Chandrawal WW No.1 including all civil and electrical works for period of 5 years (Re-Invited)	Item Rate	17,60,000/-	1500/-	29.01.2022 2022_DJB_215589_1	21.02.2022 at 3.00 P.M

The tender is available at the E-Portal website : **https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in**
ISSUED BY P.R.O.(WATER) **(S.P.Gautam)**
Advt. No. J.S.V. 1063(2021-22) **EE (E&M) I**

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
 # 49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road
Bengaluru – 560 001. website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-39/14353/2021-22 **Date:29.01.2022**

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK e – Procurement Portal Only)

Tender under two cover system are invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Class-I Contractors (Electrical) registered in KCEI who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following works of **(1)** Providing LED Street Light Arrangements to Narendra Mummigatti Housing Area, Dharwad District. **(2)** Providing Basic Electrical Infrastructure Facilities to Narendra Mummigatti Housing Area, Dharwad District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **03.03.2022 upto 04:00 pm.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in 02.02.2022 onwards**.

Sd/-
DIPR/DDU/R.O:3140/2021-22 **Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru**

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.
Wear Mask | 6 Feet Follow Physical Distancing | Maintain Hand Hygiene

LOOK OUT NOTICE

Sajnai Toppo, 40 yrs, S/O Josef Toppo, Chatakpur Village, Mahuadar, Latehar Dist.Jharkhand found missing from Enkakkad .A case has been registered at Wadakkancherry Police Station in Crime. 1229/2021 U/S 57 KP ACT 10.10.2021 at 04.00 Hrs he went from his rented home at Enkakad and has not returned home till yet. This case is investigating by Inspector of Police, Wadakkancherry Police Station, Thrissur City, If any information is obtained, please contact to the following phone numbers.

Contact Numbers
1. ACP Kunnamkulam - Office : 0488 5212100, Mob : 9497990086
2. ISHO Wadakkancherry - Office: 0488 4236223, Mob: 9497987137
Sd/- Asst. Police Commissioner
(151/F2/2022/I&PRD)

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
(A STATE GOVERNMENT UNDERTAKING)
HEAD OFFICE: Sri Sai Towers, Door No.10-152/1, 4th & 5th Floor, Ashok Nagar, Beside Siris Company, Bandar Road, Kanuru, Vijayawada - 520007.

NATIONAL SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Tender No:PDS 1/35/Sugar Tender/Jan-Mar,2022 **Date:31-01-2022**
EMPANELMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF SUPPLIERS FOR SUPPLY OF SUGAR TO ALL THE MLS POINTS IN ANDHRA PRADESH STATE THROUGH AP E-PROCUREMENT.

Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd invites National Short Tenders for empanelment and appointment of suppliers for supply of **23001.909 MTs of ISS Grade S-30/S-31 cane sugar in 1/2 Kg packet** form with secondary packing in **50 Kg new polypropylene (PP) bags under PDS** for the months **January,2022 to March,2022** to all the MLS Points of (13) districts in Andhra Pradesh State.
All the interested Sugar Manufacturers/Traders in All Over India may visit **www.apscscl.in & www.apeprocurement.gov.in** to view and download tender documents free of cost.
Interested tenderers to submit bids should be registered in website **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** and should also obtain Digital Signature Certificates from any Certifying Authority in India. The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature Certificates are mentioned in the website **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** or contact the helpdesk of procurement portal Phone: **08645-246370/71/72/73/74.**
Last date for registration and completion of formalities for the e-auction shall be up to **07.02.2022 at 5 P.M** and the tentative date of online e-reverse auction through ap e-procurement platform would be **10.02.2022 at 11 A.M** onwards. Sd/- VC & Managing Director

Government of Karnataka
KARNATAKA SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION BOARD
6th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru-560 003
Ph: 080-23349434 Fax: 23347670
No: B1/I.L.D.T/21/2020-21/Call-2 Date:29.01.2022

SHORT-TERM e-TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Director, Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board, hereby invites tenders from eligible bidders for the **"SUPPLY OF LAPTOP COMPUTERS TO TOPPERS OF JUNE/JULY-2021 S.S.L.C. EXAM AND TOPPERS (SC & ST) OF MAY/JUNE-2021 2ND PUC EXAM"** through e-procurement portal only. Tender document may be downloaded from **www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in** or **www.sslc.karnataka.gov.in** Tender commences on **31.01.2022,** Pre-bid meeting on **04.02.2022 at 11.30 A.M.** and the last date for submission **10.02.2022 at 11.30 A.M.** Approximate value of tender **Rs. 750.15 Lakhs,** Further details can be obtained during office hours.
Sd/- Director (Exams).

MARKET WATCH

	31-1-2022	% CHANGE
Sensex	58,014	1.42
US Dollar	74.65	0.56
Gold	47,507	-0.57
Brent oil	91.12	-0.05

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	716.30	6.15
Asian Paints	3152.25	41.40
Axis Bank	773.05	8.35
Bajaj Auto	3564.65	67.45
Bajaj Finserv	15689.55	490.80
Bajaj Finance	7000.25	133.00
Bharti Airtel	729.30	13.50
BPCL	397.05	14.55
Britannia Ind	3535.30	25.65
Cipla	945.00	12.75
Coal India	159.80	-1.85
Divis Lab	4036.10	95.40
Dr Reddys Lab	4302.80	84.20
Eicher Motors	2645.50	34.55
Grasim Ind	1727.50	30.50
HCL Tech	1099.40	18.95
HDFC	2521.00	4.50
HDFC Bank	1485.70	22.45
HDFC Life	622.45	2.00
Hero MotoCorp	2724.30	52.15
Hindalco	489.05	-1.30
Hind Unilever	2273.75	-9.80
ICICI Bank	788.80	7.65
IndusInd Bank	872.10	-31.45
Infosys	1736.20	50.00
Indian OilCorp	125.20	1.10
ITC	220.20	2.60
JSW Steel	628.95	0.90
Kotak Bank	1857.25	-41.05
L&T	1909.20	11.65
M&M	885.80	16.15
Maruti Suzuki	8597.30	46.35
Nestle India Ltd.	18521.55	137.15
NTPC	142.05	1.90
ONGC	172.60	3.80
PowerGrid Corp	215.40	5.20
Reliance Ind	2386.60	50.75
SBI Life	1233.25	27.70
State Bank	538.30	14.85
Shree Cement	24267.10	142.40
Sun Pharma	834.50	7.15
Tata Consumer Products Ltd.	727.30	9.40
Tata Motors	517.75	20.45
Tata Steel	1085.55	0.90
TCS	3736.25	46.20
Tech Mahindra	1479.00	68.35
Titan	2360.30	44.70
UltraTech Cement	7216.40	106.55
UPL	776.50	-13.75
Wipro	572.60	20.45

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 31

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	74.41	74.73
Euro	83.14	83.50
British Pound	100.04	100.47
Japanese Yen (100)	64.42	64.70
Chinese Yuan	11.70	11.75
Swiss Franc	79.79	80.14
Singapore Dollar	54.93	55.18
Canadian Dollar	58.39	58.67
Malaysian Ringitt	17.77	17.87
Australian Dollar	52.46	52.73

Source:Indian Bank

January sees second-highest GST collection at ₹1.38 lakh cr.

GST compensation released to States will help speed up expenditure: ICRA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India clocked its second-highest gross Goods and Service Tax collections in January at ₹1,38,394 crore, 15% higher than a year earlier and 25% more than the GST revenues in the pre-COVID month of January 2020.

The numbers are likely to be revised upwards as they only factored in returns filed till 3 pm on Monday. The highest monthly GST collection since the introduction of the tax in July 2017, was ₹1,39,708 crore recorded in April last year.

"Revenues from import of goods were 26% higher and the revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 12% higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. This was the fourth month that GST revenues have crossed ₹1.3 lakh crore; the Ministry said it expected 'the positive trend' to continue in the coming months as well. Apart from settling ₹29,726 crore to Central GST and ₹24,180 crore to States' GST kitty from the Integrated GST (IGST) collections, the Centre also settled ₹35,000 crore of IGST on an ad-hoc basis in the ratio of 50:50 between the Centre and States and Union Territories in January.

Newer peaks: This is the 4th month GST has crossed ₹1.3 lakh cr., the highest being April 2021's ₹1,39,708 cr. ▪ M.A. SRIRAM

GST compensation amounting to ₹18,000 crore was also released to the States in the month.

"The ad-hoc release of IGST... and the release of GST compensation to States should boost their cash flows, helping them to speed up expenditure in this quarter," ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar told *The Hindu*, noting that the healthy revenues were in line with the increase in e-way bills generated in December vis-a-vis November.

Neelachal Ispat sale to Tata arm gets govt. nod

Loss-making firm valued at ₹12,100 cr.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The government has approved the sale of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd. (NINL) to Tata Steel Long Products Ltd. at an enterprise value of ₹12,100 crore, the Finance Ministry said on Monday.

The Government of India has no equity in NINL, a loss-making joint venture of four central public sector firms – MMTC, NMDC, BHEL, MECON –and two Odisha PSUs. NINL has an integrated steel plant with a capacity of 1.1 million tonnes (MT) at Kalinganagar, Odisha, which has been shut since March 30, 2020.

The firm had accumulated debt and liabilities exceeding ₹6,600 crore as on March 31, 2021.

Tata Steel said in a statement the acquisition provided 'a significant opportunity to not only restart the one-million-tonne-per-annum (MTPA) steel plant expeditiously' but also begin work immediately to build a 4.5 MTPA long products complex in the next few years, and further expand it to 10 MTPA by about 2030.

The acquisition by its long products subsidiary, the firm added, was being financed via internal accruals and bridge loans that are expected to be paid down over the next few quarters.

The transaction is expected to close in the next two months. JSW Steel and a consortium of Jindal Steel and Power and Nalwa Steel and Power had also competed in the bidding process.

GDP slide in FY21 was lower than estimated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The contraction in India's economy during the pandemic-hit year FY21, was less than estimated earlier, as per revised data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday. Real GDP declined 6.6% in FY21, compared with a 7.3% contraction estimated previously, while the Gross Value Added (GVA) dropped 4.8% as opposed to a 6.2% fall indicated earlier.

The NSO, however, also revised downwards real GDP growth for FY20 to 3.7% from 4% estimated earlier. Thus, a part of the revisions in FY21 data were triggered by the base effect, while the NSO attributed the revisions to the use of more detailed industry information.

Core sectors grow 3.8%, analysts see mixed signs

'Rise in industrial output may be weak'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Output from India's eight core sectors grew 3.8% in December 2021, accelerating marginally from the 3.4% increase recorded in November, but still far from the healthy 8.4% year-on-year rise in October. Though output dipped year-on-year in just two sectors, crude oil (-1.8%) and steel (-1%), economists said signals from the data were mixed.

Cement output recovered from a 3.6% contraction in November to grow almost 13%. Natural gas rose 19.5%.

"Many high-frequency indicators from December have trailed the growth recorded in October so we expect industrial output to report a feeble rise of less than 2%, lower than core sectors' growth for the fourth consecutive month," said ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar.

Care Ratings also expects core sector growth to remain muted going forward. "The rapid surge in COVID-19 cases... and imposition of fresh curbs could further weigh on core sector growth over the coming months," it said in a note.

Railways to see 'very high' capex over 10 years: Survey

By 2030, capacity should be ahead of demand, it says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In the next 10 years, the railway sector will see a 'very high level' of capital expenditure (capex) to cater to the passenger demand, while the modal share of railways in freight will rise to 40-45% from the present level of 26-27%, the Department of Economic Affairs said in the annual Economic Survey.

"The next 10 years will see a very high level of capex in the railway sector as capacity growth has to be accelerated such that by 2030 it is ahead of demand," the Survey said.

Noting that up to 2014, the capex on railway was barely ₹45,980 crore per annum, the government said: "The capex outlay for 2021-22 is ₹2,15,000 crore."

It added that as more projects are taken on hand and several sources of capital funding are developed, the capex will increase further in the coming years and the railway system will actually emerge as 'an engine of national growth'.

The Survey added that despite facing the unprecedented COVID-related challenges, Indian railways had carried 1.23 billion tonnes of freight and 1.25 billion passengers during FY21.

"Despite COVID-19 pandemic revenue-earning freight loading (excluding loading by Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd. was 1,230.9 million tonnes in 2020-21 as compared to 1,208.4 million tonnes during 2019-20. Passengers originating were 1,250 million in 2020-21 as compared to 8,086 million in 2019-20," the Survey pointed out.

'Adopt UNCITRAL for cross-border insolvency'

Framework is widely accepted: Survey

LALATENDU MISHRA
MUMBAI

The Economic Survey 2021-22 has called for a standardised framework for cross-border insolvency as the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) at present does not have an instrument to restructure firms involving cross-border jurisdictions.

The proposal to frame a robust cross-border insolvency framework has already been highlighted in the report of the Insolvency Law Committee, which had recommended the adoption of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), with certain modifications to make it suitable to the Indian context. "UNCITRAL

on Cross-Border Insolvency, 1997 has emerged as the most widely accepted legal framework to deal with cross-border insolvency issues," the Survey said.

It has been adopted by 49 countries so far, such as Singapore, the U.K., the U.S., South Africa and Korea.

This law works on four main principles: access, recognition, cooperation and coordination.

IN BRIEF

Centre extends LIC chairman's tenure

NEW DELHI

The government has extended the tenure of M.R. Kumar, the chairman of IPO-bound Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), by one year with a view to facilitating smooth listing of the insurer, sources said. He will continue as chairman till March 2023, they said. Besides, the tenure of one of the MDs, Raj Kumar, was also extended by one year. PTI

'India has 83 unicorns with $278-bn valuation'

BENGALURU

India had 83 'unicorns' with a total valuation of $277.77 billion, as on January 14, 2022, according to the Economic Survey 2021-22 released by the Ministry of Finance on Monday. It noted that ₹89,066 crore had been raised via 75 initial public offerings between April and November last year, much higher than in any year over the last decade.

'Udyam helps MSMEs in ease of doing business '

CHENNAI

The registration process via the Udyam portal, unveiled in July 2020 to nurture Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has boosted their ease of doing business, while also lowering transaction costs, the Economic Survey noted. As of January 17, the portal has seen registrations from 63 lakh micro enterprises, 3 lakh small units, and 34,355 medium-sized entities.

Vedanta, Union Bank tie up for ₹8,000-cr. facility

NEW DELHI

Vedanta on Monday said it has tied up a facility of ₹8,000 crore with Union Bank of India to take over a majority of the syndicated facility after multiple discussions with potential lenders. "After multiple discussions with potential lenders, we tied up a facility of ₹8,000 crore (replacement facility) with Union Bank to take over majority of the syndicated facility," Vedanta said. PTI

Sun Pharma Q3 net rises 11% to ₹2,058 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. reported consolidated net profit rose 11% to ₹2,058.8 crore for the third quarter ended December.

Consolidated sales from operations rose 11% from last year to ₹9,814.2 crore.

The board declared an interim dividend of ₹7 per share for FY22 against ₹5.50 per share for the previous year. "We achieved a sustained momentum and good growth across businesses. Despite rising costs, we have achieved higher profitability," said MD Dilip Shanghvi.

"We remain steadfast in our focus on topline growth, operational efficiencies and business continuity while simultaneously continuing to expand our global specialty presence," he added.

FDI in pharma jumped 53% in April-Sept. period

FY21 witnessed a 200% spurt: Survey

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the pharma sector in the first half (April-September) of this fiscal increased 53% to ₹4,413 crore from the year earlier.

The inflows continued to be buoyant, the Department of Economic Affairs said in the annual Economic Survey (2021-22) citing how FDI in pharmaceutical sector had witnessed a sudden spurt in 2020-21, showing a 200% increase over the previous fiscal. "The extraordinary growth of foreign investments in pharma sector is mainly on account of investments to meet COVID-19 related demands for therapeutics and vaccines," the department said.

In the section on pharmaceuticals, the government said the country was the largest supplier of generic medicines with a 20% share in the global supply. Price competitiveness and good quality were two factors behind Indian medicines producers becoming dominant players in the global market.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry ranks third in the world in pharmaceutical production by volume.

During 2020-21, pharma exports totalled $24.4 billion, while pharma import stood at $7 billion, thereby generating a $17.5 billion trade surplus.

KVB Q3 net jumps fivefold to ₹185 crore

N. ANAND
CHENNAI

Private sector lender Karur Vysya Bank's standalone net profit for the Q3 ended December saw a more than fivefold increase to ₹185 crore from ₹35 crore on improved offtake by retail and business clientele.

Net interest margin rose to 3.68% from 3.29%, while net interest income improved by 18% to ₹687 crore. Non-interest income (excluding treasury profit) improved to ₹209 crore from ₹197 crore, the bank said in a statement.

Gross NPAs declined to 6.97% from 7.37%, while net NPAs remained at 2.55%. Provision coverage ratio improved to 78.81% from 77.35%. Total business grew 7.4% to ₹1.23 lakh crore, while CASA deposits grew by 12.2% ₹24,128 crore.

Chip crunch drags Tata Motors to ₹1,451 cr. loss

JLR retail sales declines 37.6%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Homegrown auto major Tata Motors on Monday reported a consolidated net loss of ₹1,451.05 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2021, dragged down by the impact of semiconductor shortage on its British arm Jaguar Land Rover (JLR).

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹2,941.48 crore in the same period last fiscal.

Consolidated revenue from operations stood at ₹72,229.29 crore in the third quarter as against ₹75,653.79 crore in the year-earlier quarter, it added.

JLR posted a pre-tax loss of £9 million in the quarter, while revenue was down 21.1% at £4.7 billion, Tata Motors said in a statement.

JLR sales remain constrained by semiconductor shortages with retail sales of 80,126 vehicles, down 37.6% as compared with the third quarter of FY21, it added.

"Whilst semiconductor supplies have continued to constrain sales this quarter, we continue to see a very strong demand for our products, underlining the desirability of our vehicles," JLR's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Thierry Bolloré said.

'Non-food credit grew 9.3% in Dec.'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Banks' non-food credit growth accelerated to 9.3% in December from 6.6% in the same period of the last year, according to the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Credit to agriculture and allied activities continued to perform well, registering a robust growth of 14.5% in December 2021 as compared with 7.7% in December 2020, according to the RBI's Sectoral Deployment of Bank Credit data for December 2021 released on Monday.

Growth in loans to industry improved noticeably to 7.6%in December 2021 from 0.4%. Size-wise, credit to medium industries registered high double-digit growth of 86.5% in December 2021 compared with 17.1% last year.

Ethanol blending of 8.1% achieved, target was 10%

Output grew 74.5% from previous year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The ethanol supply in the country to enable blending with petrol is likely to reach 302 crore litres, according to the Economic Survey 2021-2022.

The Centre has set a target of 20% ethanol blending with petrol to be achieved by 2025 to reduce the country's crude oil import bill, give a boost to the agriculture sector and reduce environmental pollution.

Ethanol supply under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme is expected to exceed 302 crore litres by the end of Ethanol Supply Year (ESY) 2020-2021 (December 1, 2020 -November 30, 2021) to achieve approximately 8.1% blending, the Survey noted. This is an increase of 74.5% compared with the previous year.

The ethanol blending target for ESY 2021-22 is 10%.

The government last year notified mass emission standards for E12 (12% ethanol blended with petrol) and E15 (15% ethanol blended with petrol) to enable the automobile industry to manufacture E12- and E15-compliant motor vehicles.

Bharti Airtel to buy 25% stake in Lavelle

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Monday said it will acquire 25% equity stake in Bengaluru based technology start-up Lavelle Networks, which specialises in Software-Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) solutions.

In a filing, the company said that the acquisition of the stake had been done at a mutually agreed pre-money enterprise valuation. "The said valuation is not disclosed herein due to reasons of confidentiality," Bharti said. "As part of its NaaS portfolio, Airtel will offer software defined connectivity solutions from Lavelle Networks and co-create a host of innovations as part of its NaaS platform," the firm added.

'Centre has adopted MSP, but States must facilitate crop shift'

No mention of farm-law repeal, MSP panel in Economic Survey

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
NEW DELHI

There is an urgent need for crop diversification in view of the severe water stress in areas where paddy, wheat and sugarcane are grown as well as to increase oil seed production and reduce dependency on imports of cooking oil, the Department of Economic Affairs said in the annual Economic Survey released on Monday.

While the Centre had adopted minimum support prices (MSP) for farm produce as a key tool to encourage crop diversification, the onus was on States to take coordinated action to facilitate a shift towards crops with higher value and lower water consumption, the department said.

However, there was no mention of the MSP committee which the Prime Minister had promised to set up in November to draft a policy on all these issues.

The survey also completely ignored what was arguably the biggest development in agricultural policy over the last year – the repeal of three agrarian reform laws in the wake of widespread, year-long protests by farmers.

The survey urged for an increase in funding for agricultural research rather than farm subsidies, noting that "every rupee spent on agricultural research and development yields better returns compared to returns on money spent on subsidies or other expenditures on inputs."

The government noted that agriculture continued to be a major driver of the economy in the pandemic era, with the sector's growth rate rising from 3.6% in 2020-21 to 3.9% in 2021-2022.

ISMA sets sugar output at 314.5 lakh tonnes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

India's sugar production estimate has been revised upward by 3% to 314.5 lakh tonnes for the 2021-22 marketing year ending September, as against the earlier forecast of 305 lakh tonnes, according to industry body ISMA.

Sugar output stood at 311.8 lakh tonnes in the 2020-21 season. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

"This is after considering an estimated diversion of sugar equivalent of 34 lakh tonnes for production of ethanol by means of diversion of sugarcane juice /syrup or B-heavy molasses," the Indian Sugar Mills Association said in a statement on Monday.

Ranji set to begin on February 16

No Plate side will figure in knockout stages; teams to serve three days' quarantine

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

The Ranji Trophy is set to return in a curtailed form on February 16 with 38 participating teams divided into nine groups. Each team will be assured of a minimum of three games, as opposed to eight during the tournament's last edition in 2019-20.

The Hindu understands that the decision was taken during the BCCI hierarchy's meeting in Ahmedabad on Monday.

No Plate team will feature in the knockout stage for the first time since the tournament's expansion from 28 to 37 (later 38) teams in 2018-19.

The top 32 teams will be divided into eight groups of four teams each while the Plate group will be a six-team affair.

The holder: Saurashtra's Pujara and Unadkat with the Ranji Trophy after its maiden triumph in 2020. ▪FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Nine venues that are set to host a group each are Chennai, Ahmedabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Rajkot, Cuttack, Guwahati, Kolkata, and Hyderabad.

As a result, the three preliminary rounds will be scheduled from February 16 to 19, February 23 to 26 and March 2 to 5.

The teams will have to serve three days' quarantine and will get two days' official training window before the tournament opener.

Tamil Nadu – clubbed with Jharkhand, Delhi and Chhattisgarh – will play its group games at Ahmedabad. Chennai will host another group consisting of Karnataka, Railways, Jammu and Kashmir and Pondicherry.

The format is drastically different from the one originally announced by the BCCI. In the earlier format, scheduled to begin on January 13 before it was postponed due to a COVID-19 surge, each team was assured five league games.

Indians arrive for ODIs

WI IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD

Members of the Indian cricket team arrived here for the three-match ODI series against the West Indies beginning on Feb. 6.

All players entered the bio-bubble between Sunday and Monday.

"They will undergo a three-day quarantine," a BCCI official said.

Due to the COVID-19 threat, the BCCI reduced the venues of three ODIs and as many T20Is to two.

75% attendance for T20s

The three T20Is, from Feb. 16, will be played in Kolkata where the West Bengal government has allowed 75% spectator attendance.

Fresh from its home T20I series win against England, the West Indies squad will land here later in the week.

Fresh start: Coach Dravid and captain Rohit will be keen to turnaround the team's ODI fortunes. ▪FILE PHOTO

Afghanistan chases history against England

On a high: Afghanistan has punched above its weight so far.

U-19 WORLD CUP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Its late arrival in the Caribbean had forced the ICC to rework the fixtures of its group matches but Afghanistan, with its magnificent run to the semifinals of the U-19 World Cup, ensured the tweaking by the apex body was worth it, even if it meant rescheduling as many as four matches.

Having punched above its weight, it now faces England in the Super League semifinals.

Afghanistan will create history if it is able to beat fancied England.

A Grand Slam that will be remembered for long

Barty and Nadal gave the tournament a happy ending after Djokovic controversy

AUS OPEN

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

An Australian Open like no other began in controversy with the deportation of Novak Djokovic but culminated in one of the greatest comebacks in tennis history by Rafael Nadal on Sunday.

Throw in Ashleigh Barty becoming the first home winner for 44 years, and local heroes Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis winning the men's doubles, this was a Grand Slam that will live long in the memory for myriad reasons.

Early chaos

After the chaos that preceded the tournament, Tennis Australia couldn't have dreamt of a happier ending – and it was one they desperately needed, after a competition riddled with unforced errors on the organisers' parts. It began with the spectacle of the nine-time Australian Open champion Djokovic being detained in a notorious immigration hotel, suffering multiple court cases and eventual deportation – shocking no matter which side you sit in the COVID-19 vaccination debate.

Nadal. ▪GETTY IMAGES

Barty. ▪GETTY IMAGES

Tennis Australia also had to justify a largely voluntary testing protocol that came in for criticism from some players, notably World No.3 Alexander Zverev.

It will no doubt bask in the glory of their two historic champions, Nadal and Barty.

Tournament director Craig Tiley was beaming through his mask during the presentation ceremonies.

But as a central figure in the pre-tournament chaos he, or his successor, must make sure the extraordinary scenes in the run-up to the tournament are never repeated.

Pro-Nadal

In the final, booing and screaming between serves to try to put off Daniil Medvedev made Rod Laver Arena seem more like Madrid during a Davis Cup tie – a feverishly pro-Nadal cauldron.

But in the end, the abiding memory will be of Nadal's monumental achievement in winning that unprecedented 21st Grand Slam after an astonishing final lasting 5hr 24min.

Eleven unbeaten matches later he has two more tournament wins and has moved ahead of Djokovic and Roger Federer as the all-time men's Grand Slam leader.

Gritty Yuki passes the Kovalik test

Prajnesh falls in the first round: Halys stuns Berankis

TATA OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE

India's Yuki Bhambri registered a sensational come-from-behind win over Jozef Kovalik of Slovakia in the singles opening round of the Tata Open Maharashtra tennis tournament here on Monday. The 29-year-old Indian secured a 6-7(10), 6-2, 7-5 win in his opener.

The revival

After losing a hard-fought first set, Yuki took a 2-0 lead in the second. He didn't let the momentum shift, taking the set 6-2.

In the decider, the Indian converted a break point to make it 3-3. Though the 29-year-old Slovakian tried his best to make a comeback, Yuki held his nerve and broke at 6-5 to seal the issue.

Prajnesh Gunneswaran, however, lost to the fifth-seeded Daniel Altmaier 6-7 (5), 2-6. After putting up a fight in the opening set, when he stretched the German to a tie-breaker, the Indian fell apart in the second.

Fighting back: After losing the opening set, Yuki staged a remarkable rally. ▪SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Earlier, France's Quentin Halys packed off World No. 82 Ricardas Berankis of Lithuania with a stunning 6-1, 6-2 win.

In another match, Moldovan Radu Albot overcame a tough challenge from Italy's Federico Gaio in the second set before registering a 6-2, 7-6(3) victory.

The results (first round, Indians unless mentioned):

Yuki Bhambri bt Jozef Kovalik (Svk) 6-7(10), 6-2, 7-5; Daniel Altmaier (Ger) bt Prajnesh Gunneswaran 7-6(5), 6-2; Quentin Halys (Fra) bt Ricardas Berankis (Ltu) 6-1, 6-2; Radu Albot (MDA) bt Federico Gaio (Ita) 6-2, 7-6(3).

Ajay, Pardeep star as Giants beat Steelers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BENGALURU

Raiders Ajay Kumar and Pardeep Kumar helped Gujarat Giants beat Haryana Steelers 32-26 in the ProKabaddi League here on Monday.

Giants dominated right from the first whistle, giving Steelers' defence no chance to stamp its authority.

Ajay Kumar scored a Super 10 (11 points) while Pardeep Kumar got 10 points, including one for a tackle, as Giants halted its losing streak against the in-form Steelers.

Manika moves into top-50

Manika. ▪FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Manika Batra jumped six places to enter the top-50 of the women's singles world rankings for the first time. Manika has reached a career-high 50th in the list.

In men's singles, G Sathiyan has moved up to 33rd while Sharath Kamal two spots to 34th. Manika and Sathiyan climbed to 11th in mixed doubles while Manika and Archana Kamath rose four places to sixth in women's doubles.

Debutant India drubs China

Sushila Chanu chips in with two goals in 7-1 romp

PRO LEAGUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUSCAT

Sushila Chanu scored a brace as the Indian women's hockey team made a grand debut in the FIH Pro League, hammering China 7-1 in the first game of the two-leg tie, here on Monday.

Chanu (47th and 52nd minutes) converted two penalty strokes while Navneet Kaur (5), Neha (12), Vandana Katariya (40), Sharmila Devi (48) and Gurjit Kaur (50) netted one each.

China's lone goal came off a field effort by Xue Deng in the 43rd minute.

Running riot: The Indians scored at will against the hapless Chinese. ▪TWITTER@THEHOCKEYINDIA

The victory helped the Indian women move to the third spot in the points table with three points (goal difference of plus six).

India will play China again on Tuesday at the same venue.

The result: India 7 (Sushila 47 & 52, Navneet 5, Neha 12, Vandana 40, Sharmila 48, Gurjit 50) bt China 1 (Deng 43).

Hyderabad cruises past NorthEast United FC

The 5-0 win helps the side consolidate its position at the top of the table

ISL 2021-22

SPORTS BUREAU

Hyderabad FC breezed to a 5-0 victory against NorthEast United FC in the Indian Super League at the Nehru Stadium in Fatorda on Monday.

The win boosted the team's tally to 26 points from 14 games and extended its lead at the top to four points above the second-placed Jamshedpur FC (22 from 12).

Bartholomew Ogbeche's brace helped him become the highest goal-scorer in ISL history with 49.

Ogbeche gave HFC the lead as early as the third minute after a well-worked corner routine. Joel Chianese played a short pass to Akash Mishra, who returned the ball to Chianese.

A good ball inside the box by Chianese reached Joao Victor whose header hit the post. The rebound fell to Ogbeche who made no mistake.

HFC widened the margin in the 47th minute as Chianese turned provider again. His pin-point cross off a corner saw Mishra at the right spot and head home.

Double delight: Ogbeche, celebrating Mishra's strike, became the league's top goal-scorer with a brace against NEUFC.

Ogbeche netted a second in the 60th minute off another set-piece. Chianese's free kick was floated back to him on the right flank. The Australian swung the ball into the box where Ogbeche was at hand to slam home.

Nikhil Poojary and Edu Garcia scored in the 84th and 88th minutes to complete a memorable night for HFC and a miserable one for NEUFC.

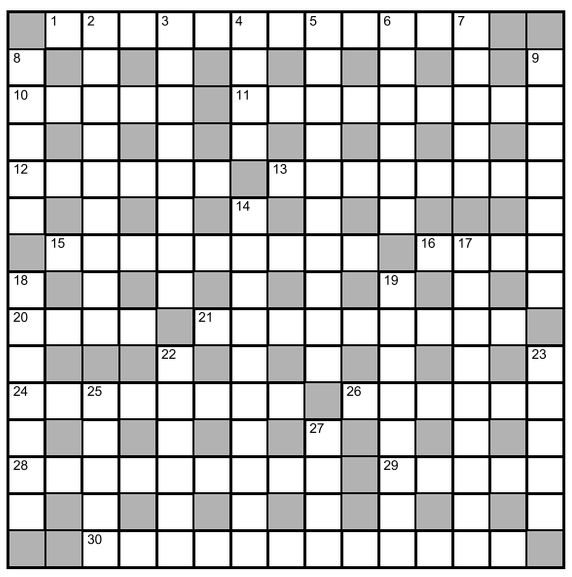
The result: Hyderabad FC 5 (Ogbeche 3 & 60, Mishra 47, Nikhil 84, Garcia 88) bt NorthEast United FC 0.

TH CROSSWORD + 13468

(set by Spinner)

Display keystrokes of genius. Type your answers in our online grids. @ https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn

SCAN TO PLAY



ACROSS

1 Lincoln's resistance well reasoned, out of the ordinary! (12)
10 Husband's worry endlessly lingers (5)
11 Spinner's left a note, regularly of value! (9)
12 Profile of swashbuckling leader – "Home and away, pull off wins!" (6)
13 Inept error not cool, edited for correspondent (8)
15 One who might cure reactions to all pesky triggers except rum and gin, basically! (9)
16 Oddly refused vaccine before introduction of entry condition (4)
20 Delta/omicron, in conclusion, repress vaccine shot! (4)
21 Reminders on viruses mutating! (9)
24 Stylish traits put in place by India's top captain (8)
26 Something that shocks the target, involving marketing, essentially? (6)
28 American seen outside city while being inside city leads to inquisitiveness (9)
29 Spins in two directions after grass is trimmed (5)
30 Pulling up from dip towards lower level (8-4)

DOWN

2 Parts of ship's black crests peeling off at the top (9)
3 Returned to support revolutionary with love (8)
4 A team with nations, ultimately? (4)
5 Setter's following – one million! The papers: "Magnificent!" (10)
6 Contract currently includes annually revised rates, for starters (6)
7 Rookie gets direction that's of minimum significance (5)
8 Quarantining finally, carrier cut off all contact! (5)
9 Son tries hiding primarily overcooked lies (7)
14 Perhaps, 'I' in Egoism invites new scandals (10)
17 Sommelier's friend's company initially recruits team having thousands (9)
18 Move on from a skip decked with topmost victories (7)
19 Positive batting complimented, with captain at the middle (8)
22 In the end, water gets into a boot on the beach (6)
23 Dissolve coaches' entourage at last after years (5)
25 Wearied at heart, captain led extraordinary ride (5)
27 Hue and cry about doctor quitting (4)

SUDOKU

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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13467

	W		A		I		C		T		N	
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	H	O	T	P	O	T	A	T	O		S	L	E	W
			S		P		R		R		T		D

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Steer clear of delusion

Sastras teach that by practising good deeds it is possible to lessen the sinful effects of bad karma. Sin accrues easily in our lives, knowingly and unknowingly, even as dust accumulates despite constant cleaning. It does not require any conscious effort for dust to settle down on cleaned surfaces. So practice of punya karma is advised as a step in cleaning or ridding us of the sinful effects of our bad karma, pointed out Sri Kesava Dikshitar in a discourse.

In the Gita, it is clearly shown that all beings are subject to the subtle impressions or vasanas of previous experiences in past lives. These become manifest as distinctive likes and dislikes in their successive births. People tend to think that whatever causes the experience of joy is good and is to be desired and that whatever causes sorrow is bad and has to be avoided. For instance, the vasana for tasting a particular dish or drink drives one to satisfy this desire and this becomes a habit which is difficult to break. The vasana is strong in the mind of the person. If properly analysed, there is no joy or merit in that dish, or for that matter any object in the world however attractive it may appear to us. But owing to the vasanas that are strong and can easily sway the mind, people are instigated to go after these worldly attractions. This leaning to the objects of the world is present right from birth and is the cause of delusion.

Accumulation of punya karma through several births can help to weaken the strong feelings of like and dislike and thus free them from this fundamental delusion. One has to be wary of both likes and dislikes that prevent one from gaining true wisdom. With the withdrawal of sin, the delusion caused by the pairs of opposites goes away, says Krishna in the Gita.

TV PICKS

Tata Open Maharashtra: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1 p.m. onwards
Under-19 World Cup: SS Select 2 (SD & HD), 6.30 p.m.
ISL: Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.
Pro Kabaddi: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m. onwards

IN BRIEF

Booker excels as Suns win 10th straight game

PHOENIX

Devin Booker had a 28-point effort as host Phoenix Suns came from behind to beat San Antonio Spurs 115-110 to win its 10th straight game in the NBA on Sunday.

The results: Atlanta 129 bt LA Lakers 121; LA Clippers 115 bt Charlotte 90; Chicago 130 bt Portland 116; Detroit 115 bt Cleveland 105; Denver 136 bt Milwaukee 100; Orlando 110 bt Dallas 108; Minnesota 126 bt Utah 106; Phoenix 115 bt San Antonio 110. REUTERS

Jyothi Surekha triumphs

HYDERABAD

V. Jyothi Surekha won the Lancaster Archery Classic in women's pro (compound) category at Lancaster (Pennsylvania, USA). The 25-year-old World No. 4 from Vijayawada defeated Paige Pearce of USA 131-129 in the final.

Ranjeet wins title

NEW DELHI

Former National champion V.M. Ranjeet beat Lakshit Sood 6-0, 6-3 in the final of the ₹100,000 AITA men's tennis tournament organised by the Pradhan Tennis Academy in Gurugram.

Holder's four in four seals it for WI

Hosts win the T20I series against England 3-2

ENG IN WI

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BRIDGETOWN

Jason Holder took four wickets in successive balls during a dramatic last over as the West Indies beat England by 17 runs in the fifth and deciding Twenty20 International at the Kensington Oval on Sunday for a 3-2 series win.

Akeal Hosein had already slowed England's progress with a format-best four for 30. England, however, was still in the game, needing 20 runs to reach a target of 180 when all-rounder Holder began to bowl the final over of the match at his Barbados home ground.

Despite starting the over with a no-ball, the towering paceman removed Chris Jordan and Sam Billings with his second and third legitimate deliveries with catches at deep midwicket by substitute fielder Hayden Walsh Jr.

Holder then had Adil Rashid taken at deep square-leg before ending the match when he bowled Saqib Mahmood, with both batsmen out for golden ducks.

The scores: West Indies 179/4 in 20 overs (Kieron Pollard 41 n.o., Rovman Powell 35 n.o.; Adil Rashid 2/17, Liam Livingstone 2/17) bt England 162 in 19.5 overs (James Vince 55, Sam Billings 41, Jason Holder 5/27, Akeal Hosein 4/30).

West Indies won the match by 17 runs and series 3-2.

Leading the charge: Holder, centre, and teammates celebrate clinching the series. ▪ AFP

DELHI ROUND-UP

Janak Puri Academy in final

Man-of-the-match Kirat Singh top-scored with 55 as Janak Puri CA beat VSCA by six wickets to enter the final of the 2nd Ratan Lal Saini Under-16 tournament.

The scores: VSA 138 in 35 overs (Harshit Sharma 33, Nikhil 2/18, Yash Tyagi 2/29) lost to JPCA 139/4 in 24 overs (Kirat Singh 55, Kapil Dev 35 n.o., Ayush 2/26).

Close win for Green Fields

Pragyan top-scored with 69 and Sagar Gill picked up three wickets as Green Fields Academy edged past Dinesh Raj Academy in the 1st Pushpa u-17 tournament.

The scores: GFA 224/6 in 40 overs (Pragyan 69, Abhishek 47, Dev Dubey 39) bt DRA 222/6 in 40 overs (Tanmay Singh 64, Aman Dedha 50, Sagar Gill 3/26.

Skillz youth tournament

The fifth edition of the Skillz Youth under-19 cricket tournament will be held from February 10 in Noida with eight teams in the fray. The tournament will be played in league format with each team playing three 40-over-a-side matches each. Contact Harsh Gautam (9810404475).

All-round show by Vaibhav

Vaibhav Sood's all-round performance and three wickets by Rishabh Charak helped M-10 Cricket Academy beat Ravinder Phagna Cricket Academy by four wickets in a league match at the Kragbuzz Under-19 tournament.

The scores:
RPCA 194 in 35.2 overs (Karan Dedha 73, Rishabh Charak 3/26, Vaibhav Sood 2/29) lost to M-10 Academy 195/6 in 37.4 overs (Dhruv Raj Singh 40, Vaibhav Sood 33, Sarthak 2/37).

Senegal in semifinals

REUTERS
YAOUNDE

Senegal saw off the threat of giant-killer Equatorial Guinea and won 3-1 in their Africa Cup of Nations quarterfinals on Sunday to advance to the final four of the tournament.

Earlier on Sunday, Mohamed Salah scored an equaliser and created the winner for Mahmoud Trezeguet as Egypt came from behind to beat Morocco 2-1 after extra time.

The results: Quarterfinals: Egypt 2 (Salah 53, Trezeguet 100) bt Morocco 1 (Boufal 7-pen); Senegal 3 (Diedhiou 28, Kouyate 68, Sarr 79) bt Equatorial Guinea 1 (Buyla 57).

Canada stuns USA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
HAMILTON

Canada took a giant step towards its first World Cup qualification in 36 years on Sunday after scoring an upset 2-0 victory over the United States in CONCACAF qualifiers.

A Cyle Larin goal after just seven minutes and an injury time effort from Sam Adekugbe secured all three points for the Canadians.

The unbeaten Canadians now have 22 points from four games with four fixtures remaining.

The results: Canada 2 (Larin 7, Adekugbe 90+5) bt USA 0; Panama 3 (Brown 43-og, Davis 51, Ariano Navarro 69) bt Jamaica 2 (Antonio 5, Gray 87); Mexico 0 drew with Costa Rica 0; Honduras 0 lost to El Salvador 2 (Bonilla 35, Ceren 90+2).

Sasikumar aiming for consistency

'My game is much better than ever before'

TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

Running into the top seed and bowing out in the first qualifying round of the ATP Tour event in Pune was a chastening experience, but the 25-year-old Sasikumar Mukund is confident that he can make his game count this season.

With two Challengers scheduled in Bengaluru over the next fortnight after the Tata Open Maharashtra, Sasikumar, who was ranked a career-best 229 in October 2019, felt he would get consistent results to "get a taste of the Grand Slam qualifying events".

"My game is much better than ever before. In 2019, I played 30 Challenger main draws. If I play that now, I would be close to the top-100. I am much fitter, wiser and smarter. Of course, I am much older, and that adds to it," he said.

Having played the final of the Challenger in Italy recently after having progressed from the qualifying event, Sasikumar felt that years of hard work, and the sincere efforts of his coach Martin Spottl, will pay off in the form of more consistent results.

"In Italy, I played some good tennis, even though I was sick. I was on antibiotics but luck was on my side. I was very happy with the quality of my game. Although I tested negative for COVID-19, I had throat pain and fever. I was very happy that I stayed mentally strong to make the final."

Training in Vienna and playing around the world, with the coach travelling with him for most of the events last year, Sasikumar felt he was getting a better grip on the competitive circuit.

He did miss the Davis Cup against Finland, but clarified that it was owing to visa issues and that he would miss the Challenger events.

"I didn't have a visa for Europe. I communicated this very clearly. I didn't want to forego a five-year European visa for a temporary arrangement as I was not going to play the tie. Ramkumar and Prajnesh were healthy. Saketh was also available. I am always willing to play for the country. But I also have to think about the coach who has committed his time, forgetting his family," he reasoned.

Progress: Sasikumar feels he is getting a better grip on the competitive circuit. ▪ FILE PHOTO

Confident

He was equally confident that he would not be selected for the tie against Denmark in March.

"Ramkumar has been playing great. Yuki is back to playing singles. Prajnesh is also there. They are higher ranked players on paper. So, I don't expect to be selected," said Mukund.

Proud and grateful with the family support, especially from his sister, Sasikumar acknowledged the financial support from Virat Kohli Foundation.

"I am still exploring my potential. Italy was completely unexpected. Tennis-wise, I want to get better and be more consistent and reliable on court as possible."

Sreejesh gets international award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Veteran hockey goalkeeper P.R. Sreejeesh on Monday won the World Games Athlete of the Year for his 2021 performances, becoming only the second Indian to receive the accolade.

In 2020, Indian women's hockey captain Rani Rampal became the first Indian to win the honour for her performances in 2019.

Sreejsh beat competition from sport climber Alberto Gines Lopez of Spain and Italy's wushu player Michele Giordano for the award.

"I'm very honoured to win this award. First of all, a big thank you to FIH for nominating me for this award, and secondly thanks to all the Indian hockey lovers around the world, who voted for me," Sreejesh said in a statement.

Sreejesh received 1,27,647 votes, while Lopez and Giordane accumulated 67,428 and 52,046 votes respectively.

THE HINDU GROUP

This Wednesday, budget will be our *only business.*

On *2nd February,* The Hindu BusinessLine brings you exhaustive coverage of the Union Budget. The entire edition will explore the budget part by part, complete with comments and articles from industry leaders and leading economists. Grab your copy from the nearest stands or give a missed call on **74066 15444.**

BusinessLine

THE HINDU

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022

Text & Context

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NEWS IN NUMBERS

Asset sale

12,100 In ₹ crore, the amount at which the Government approved the sale of loss-making Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) to Tata Steel Long Products Ltd. NINL has an integrated steel plant with a capacity of 1.1 million tonnes (MT), at Kalinganagar, Odisha. NINL which has been closed since March 2020, has huge debt and liabilities exceeding ₹6,600 crore as on March 2021, including huge overdues to promoters (₹4,116 crore), banks, other creditors and employees. PTI

Infra push

13,327 In kms, is the National Highways or roads constructed in 2020-21, compared to 10,237 kms in 2019-20, according to the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament. About 3,824 kms of road network was constructed in 2021-22 (till September). The significant upturn in road construction in 2020-21 was due to the increase in public expenditure by 29.5% as compared to the previous year; a reflection of the impetus given to the critical sector. PTI

Steel output

25 The % at which India's crude steel production increased year-on-year to 66.91 million tonne during the April-October period of 2021-22, according to the Economic Survey. During the period, the country's output of finished steel registered growth of 28.9% y-o-y while the consumption of the same grew 25%. The steel industry has grown even as global steel production slowed down, the Survey said. The global steel production in November 2021 was at a 9.9% decrease compared to November 2020. PTI

Social spending

71.61 In ₹ lakh crore, the amount to which the combined expenditure of the Centre and the State governments on the social services sector increased during the financial year 2021-22. The expenditure is 9.8% higher than the ₹65.24 lakh crore in the financial year 2020-21. The budget estimate (BE) on social services in 2021-22 by the general Government was at ₹71.61 lakh crore, of which ₹6.97 lakh crore was on education, ₹4.72 lakh crore on health and ₹7.37 lakh crore on other segments. PTI

Taking it deep

3 The number of times Rafael Nadal has won a Grand Slam final in five sets. Nadal has featured in a total of six Grand Slam final matches which have lasted five sets. Apart from his 2022 Australian Open win against Daniil Medvedev on Sunday, he had defeated Roger Federer in the 2009 Australian Open final and beat Medvedev in the 2019 U.S. Open. He had also lost thrice; 2007 Wimbledon against Federer, 2012 Australian Open against Djokovic and 2017 Australian Open against Federer. With 21 wins, Nadal has the most major wins for any men's player in the singles game.

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

EXPLAINER

The limits of the legislature's power to suspend a member

Can a lawmaker be suspended beyond one session? Is a one-year ban from the House legal?

THE GIST

- Last week, the Supreme Court declared as grossly illegal and irrational the suspension of 12 BJP legislators for one year by the Maharashtra Assembly for disorderly conduct.
- The State counsel argued that under Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Assembly Rules, the Speaker could direct a Member to withdraw from the Assembly for disorderly conduct for the day, or the remainder of the Session. However, there is no such limitation when the whole House decides to impose suspension. They also stated that once the power to punish a member for disorderly conduct is recognised, there can be no judicial review of the manner in which it is exercised.
- The Bench noted that Rule 53 showed a 'graded approach' to the issue of disorderly behaviour, an initial suspension for a day, and then for the remainder of the session, but nothing beyond it. Once the length of the suspension goes beyond the session, it ceases to be a disciplinary measure and undertakes the character of punitive action. A lengthy suspension, apart from the deprivation of representation for the constituents, may also be detrimental to democracy.

K. VENKATARAMANAN

The story so far: Last week, the Supreme Court declared as grossly illegal and irrational the suspension of 12 BJP legislators for one year by the Maharashtra Assembly for disorderly conduct. Brushing aside objections that the judiciary should not examine the validity of the proceedings of the House, a three-judge Bench, comprising Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice C.T. Ravikumar, ruled that the suspension beyond the term of the particular session in which it was imposed was a nullity in the eyes of the law.

What happened on July 5, 2021?

There was a ruckus in the Assembly when the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government introduced a resolution seeking empirical data on OBCs from the Union government. The House was adjourned briefly for a few times before the resolution was passed, as BJP members rushed to the well of the House and were accused of damaging the presiding officer's microphone and grabbing the mace. Later, Bhaskar Jadhav, a Shiv Sena MLA who was in the Chair during the incidents, said that when he was in the Deputy Speaker's chamber, some members rushed inside and abused him. A resolution moved by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister was subsequently adopted by the House suspending 12 MLAs –Dr. Sanjay Kute, Ashish Shelar, Abhimanyu Pawar, Girish Mahajan, Atul Bhatkhalkar, Harish Pimple, Jaykumar Rawal, Yogesh Sagar, Narayan Kuche, Bunty Bhangdiya, Parag Alavani and Ram Satpute. They were barred from entering the legislative premises for 12 months. The members challenged their suspension in the Supreme Court.

How did the State government defend the action?

Counsel for the State government argued that there is no limitation on the power of the legislature to punish for breach of privilege or disorderly conduct in the course of its proceedings. Once the power to punish a member for disorderly conduct is recognised, there can be no judicial review of the manner in which it is exercised. Under Rule 53 of the Maharashtra Assembly Rules, the Speaker could direct a Member to withdraw from the Assembly for disorderly conduct for the day, or the remainder of the Session. However, there is no such limitation when the whole House decides to impose suspension.

In this context, counsel contended that when the power to expel a member is available, the power to suspend, being a lesser punishment, is also available to the House at all times.

The Bench had raised a question as to how any suspension can go beyond 60 days, in the light of Article 190(4) of the Constitution, which says the House could declare a seat vacant if a member is absent for 60 days. The State government contended that in such a case, it is the House that declares the seat vacant, and it is not an automatic consequence of a member's absence for 60 days on which the House met.

The Bench had raised a question as to how any suspension can go beyond 60 days, in the light of Article 190(4) of the Constitution, which says the House could declare a seat vacant if a member is absent for 60 days.

The Government also pointed out that in Raja Ram Pal (2007), the Supreme Court had upheld the expulsion of 12 MP's in the cash-for-questions scandal. When expulsion, the greater punishment was allowed, suspension, being a lesser penalty, cannot be questioned.

What are the reasons given by the court for its ruling?

The Bench noted that Rule 53 showed a 'graded approach' to the issue of disorderly behaviour, an initial suspension for a day, and then for the remainder of the session, but nothing beyond it. It was a power to be exercised only for the protection of the proceedings.

However, in the present case, there was no separate provision for the House to impose a lengthy suspension. If at all it was exercising inherent powers to regulate its proceedings, it ought to have adopted a 'graded approach' and limited its suspension to the immediate objective of ensuring order. Once the length of the suspension went beyond the session, it ceased to be a disciplinary measure, but partook the character of a punitive action. Citing Privy Council cases and Indian precedents, the Bench said anything that went beyond the session was irrational and grossly illegal.

The Bench also cited provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, that say any vacancy in the House has to be filled up through a by-election within six months of its occurrence.

It ruled that a one-year suspension meant that the constituency concerned would go without represention in the Assembly for a whole year.

Further, suspension seemed to have worse consequences than outright expulsion from the legislature, as a by-election will be held within six months; whereas, a one-year suspension does not entail mandatory filling up of the vacancy.

What general principles arise from the case?

The court has reiterated the principle that even though the judicature will not interfere in the functioning of the legislature, a coordinate body, it is not deprived of the power of judicial review if there is a violation of the Constitution.

Even though there were no prescribed limits to the privileges of the House, there is no doubt that these are subject to the provisions of the Constitution.

A lengthy suspension, apart from the deprivation of representation for the constituents, may also be detrimental to democracy, as it could be used to manipulate numbers in the legislature, and deny the opposition the opportunity to participate effectively in debates.

EXPLAINER

Tipping right: On the U.S. Supreme Court balance

Who is going to be the next nominee on the SCOTUS bench? How did the Court come to have a 6-3 balance?

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

The story so far: U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) Justice Stephen Breyer (83) has announced that he will be retiring at the end of the current term of the court, which will be around the end of June or early July 2022. His departure from the highest court in the land during the tenure of President Joe Biden, a Democrat, means that the 6-3 balance of the SCOTUS in favour of conservatives will remain undisturbed given the near certainty that Mr. Biden will successfully nominate another liberal judge to the court. In line with campaign promises, the Biden White House has already signalled its intention to nominate an African American woman justice for the post.

What is Justice Breyer's legacy on the SCOTUS?

Justice Breyer was nominated to the Court in 1994 by erstwhile Democratic President Bill Clinton. With a reputation as a pragmatic centrist who eschewed grand jurisprudential ideology in favour of practical compromise that benefitted the common man and woman, he left an indelible legacy for major pronouncements by the SCOTUS on abortion rights, the environment, health-care coverage, and probes into the constitutionality of the death penalty. However, even though the SCOTUS leaned increasingly conservative over his tenure, Justice Breyer always looked for compromise and impacted judicial rulings on issues such as affirmative action in university admissions, same-sex marriage and the First Amendment protecting freedom of speech. He was sometimes overshadowed by the towering reputation of his colleague, the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, but as one of the few remaining liberal voices on the SCOTUS, his work will continue to have a lasting impact on a wide range of social causes for decades to come.

The U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, DC. • GETTY IMAGES

Who will Justice Breyer's successor be?

After Justice Breyer's retirement announcement, Mr. Biden said that the person he intended to nominate to succeed him would not only be "of extraordinary qualifications, character and integrity," but "... that person will be the first Black woman ever nominated to the United States Supreme Court. It is long overdue." Indeed, no African American woman has ever served on the SCOTUS before, and such a nomination would come at an important moment of national reckoning over gender inequality and race.

Leading the list of potential nominees is Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson (51) who has already successfully gone through a Senate confirmation process when Mr. Biden promoted her from the Federal District Court in the District of Columbia to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. Also under consideration by the White House is South Carolina U.S. District Judge J. Michelle Childs, who was in the process of being nominated to the Court of Appeals. A third serious contender is Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of California Leondra Kruger. Given that Democrats enjoy only a slim majority in the Senate, where the nominee will have to be confirmed, after extensive background checks and legal history research Mr. Biden is likely to pick a candidate who could easily summon 50 support votes in the Lower House of Congress.

Why does the SCOTUS have a conservative majority?

The SCOTUS has tipped dramatically to the right since Justice Anthony Kennedy chose to retire under Donald Trump in 2018. Former Democratic President Barack Obama nominated the remaining two liberal Justices on the court, Sonya Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. However, Republicans led by Senator Mitch McConnell foiled Mr. Obama's attempt to replace the space left by the death of conservative Justice Antonin Scalia with his nominee, Merrick Garland. Instead Mr. Biden's immediate predecessor, Donald Trump, succeeded in nominating Judge Neil Gorsuch to the seat. Mr. Trump then got two other conservative judges into the SCOTUS, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Barrett, respectively upon the retirement of conservative Justice Anthony Kennedy and the death of the liberal Justice Ginsberg. Thus, luck and timing –including in terms of which party controlled the White House and Senate during various nominations –have played a role in tipping the SCOTUS firmly towards conservatives over the years.

What impact will this balance have on social and political issues?

The simple answer is: enormous. Whether in terms of re-litigating and potentially reversing the seminal decision under *Roe v. Wade* granting abortion rights, or game-changing rulings on voting rights, gun control and capital punishment, the conservative supermajority of the SCOTUS is already rewriting the social contract of America as its citizens know it. Major policies with immediate impact that could be decided in the coming year or so include the Biden administration's vaccine mandates to combat the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fate of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, which gives young immigrants a reprieve from deportation, regulations governing gerrymandering, or the partisan redistricting efforts to influence electoral outcomes, and the use of racial affirmative action policies by major U.S. universities.

THE GIST

- U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer has announced that he will be retiring at the end of the current term of the court. He was nominated in 1994 by erstwhile President Bill Clinton.
- Mr. Biden said that the person he intended to nominate would have extraordinary qualifications and would also be the first African American woman nominee.
- The 6-3 balance of the SCOTUS in favour of the conservatives was a product of luck and timing as the former President Mr. Trump managed to get two conservative judges on the bench, upon the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy and the death of the liberal Justice Ginsberg.

Unified identity: Naresh Singh Tikait (3rd from the right), one of the leaders of protesting farmers from western U.P in New Delhi on 8th January 2021. ▪ BUSINESSLINE

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Amid fault lines, a revival of the farmers' identity

Signs of a polarised western U.P. and its agrarian communities unifying are visible in the ongoing farmers' movement

SATENDRA KUMAR

THE GIST

■ The Jats have dominated landownership in large parts of western U.P. Muslims form a section of the Jats, and both groups have co-existed in the villages. The Green Revolution boosted the Jats and as landowners they have been patrons (*jajmans*) of the artisan-services and labour castes who are largely Pasmanda Muslims. However, when the Green Revolution had advanced, farmers' income stagnated and villagers were found more at urban sites than in the fields. This led to the rise of the rural middle class which includes the Muslim artisan-service castes. Independence from *jajmani* relations changed their mutually dependent economic interests into competing ones.

■ Distress in agriculture has led Jats to look for new avenues of employment and political alliances. In a globalising economy, these shifts have brought the younger generation in proximity with the large urban Hindu middle class with the BJP tapping into the political and economic aspirations of the youth. Similarly, more Muslim men and women were participating in the Tablighi Jamaat, a religious movement. There was a growing intensification of a pan- and fundamentalist-religiosity among Muslims and Hindus in the region.

■ Thus, the political aspirations of the rising new middle class among the Jats had fragmented and weakened the *kisan* identity and polity in the region. However, the Yogi Adityanath government's stringent anti-cattle slaughter measures as well as the Centre's three reform farm laws have not only created fear among the farmers but have also disenchanted them causing a re-surgence of the *kisan* identity.

The Bharatiya Janata Party in western U.P. has started feeling the impact of the farmers' agitation as their campaigning efforts are blocked by villagers who are not allowing them entry into their respective villages. In this article dated February 13, 2021, Satendra Kumar outlines how a fractured kisan identity had re-emerged in the wake of the farmers protests from last year.

This year in Uttar Pradesh, thousands of farmers gathered on January 29, at the government inter-college ground, Muzaffarnagar, following a call by the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) president, Naresh Tikait, for a 'mahapanchayat' to express solidarity with the protest at the Ghazipur border led by his brother, Rakesh Tikait. Among the key speakers was Ghulam Mohammad Jaula, the most influential Muslim leader of the BKU, and considered to be a close friend of the late Mahendra Singh Tikait.

The presence of Mr. Jaula and Muslim farmers at the meet has been read as a sign of a re-emerging Jat-Muslim alliance under the *kisan* identity after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots affected the social fabric in rural western U.P. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its regional leadership were behind a local caste dispute growing into a communal issue that polarised villages along religious lines. At the time, it seemed that Jat farmers had suddenly claimed the Hindutva identity.

But that did not happen overnight. The farmers' polity has had deep roots while farmers' mobilisations have a long history in the western U.P. region. The ongoing agrarian change and crisis generated by neoliberal economic policies have shifted the agrarian economy to non-farm occupations. These new developments caused fissures in the farmer's polity in the northwestern region, giving the BJP a political advantage. Recent events indicate a revival of the farmers' identity as a community.

A transformation

The Jats have dominated landownership in large parts of western U.P. since at least the mid-19th century. Muslims form a section of the Jats, and both groups have co-existed in the villages.

Between the mid-1960s to late 1980s, the Green Revolution boosted the Jats. As landowners, they have been patrons (*jajmans*) of the artisan-services and labour castes who are largely Pasmanda Muslims. The artisan-service castes are either landless or small-marginal landowners. The BKU has provided an inclusive platform to various rural groups including labourers, marginal and middle farmers across religions. In the 1980s, the BKU led by Mahendra Singh Tikait, along with Muslim farmers and landless labourers, organised protest movements for cheap electricity and higher crop prices.

However, in the early 1990s, when the Green Revolution had advanced, farmers' income stagnated and land holdings became smaller through subdivisions. Neoliberal economic policies, a decline of state subsidies to agriculture, the rising cost of farming inputs, growing stagnation in farm production, and ecological precarity, all led to non-farm economic activities, and a further weakening of Jat farmers and the BKU's politics. Increasingly, villagers are found more at urban sites than in the fields. Face-to-face interactions among different communities and individuals, once common, are now a rarity. Farmers who would depend on the artisan-service castes for everyday services (repairing agricultural implements, hair dressing and washing clothes) now look to new technologies or nearby towns for these services. The breakdown of the *jajmani* system has resulted in a cash flow. The young generation across caste groups has come under the spell of the consumer culture. Villagers who live on non-farm incomes and remittances now self-identify as middle class. Family, kinship and an obligation-based rural economy have been transformed into an individual-centric economy based on skills and cash transactions. Intra-caste, family and kin inequalities are on the rise. The formation of rural middle class is under way which includes the Muslim artisan-service castes. Independence from *jajmani* relations combined with universal suffrage has not only created political competition between the Jats and their clients but also changed their mutually dependent economic interests into competing ones.

In the resultant shift in attitudes among the younger generation toward the dominant caste patrons, the young generation of artisan-service castes are now asserting their rights. Such assertion by the marginalised groups often leads to skirmishes and conflicts. But the disintegration of vertical relations and everyday face-to-face interactions between different caste-communities and individuals (who work in urban areas), and the growing disconnect from the village and its social norms have all weakened the capacity of rural society to absorb and resolve everyday conflicts.

More importantly, these changes have also reduced the ability of the Jats and other dominant castes to use their power and resolve conflicts in their favour.

Shifting identities, BJP's rise

Distress in agriculture has led Jats to look for new avenues of employment as well as new political alliances. In a globalising economy, these shifts have brought the younger generation in proximity with the large urban Hindu middle class, influencing their tastes, language, rituals, symbols, politics and ethos. Changes in aspirations and identities forged by the new mediatised culture and mobilities have created an altered socio-cultural landscape. Communication and entertainment technologies have aided new social and economic connections, providing spaces for different socio-political formations. Economic and spatial mobilities have fragmented the Jat community.

By giving representation and political offices, the BJP has tapped into the political and economic aspirations of youth. An increasing number have shifted away from their Arya Samaj roots and joined different religious and spiritual sects that are urban based and have spread to rural western U.P. With agricultural and village festivals on the decline, Hindu rituals and festivals, and religious meetings and functions organised by member-groups of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh are the new centre of focus. The BJP has appropriated their symbols of pride by organising celebrations such as on the birth centenary or 'sacrifice day' of Jat freedom fighters. Certain TV channels (Astha) have become quite popular too. Increased interactions with the wider world have had an influence on the sense of caste and religion.

Similarly, religious channels such as QTV and Peace TV are quite popular among the Muslims in this region and who are also influenced by ideas shared by young Muslims who work in West Asia about being Muslims there. In the last three decades, backward Muslims have begun to exhibit (pan-Islamic) religious symbols in public places. There are now more men and women participating in the Tablighi Jamaat, a religious movement. The ideas, norms and practices of the Tablighi Jamaat have changed the public presence of the Muslim identity. There is a growing intensification of a pan- and fundamentalist-religiosity among Muslims and Hindus in the region.

Crises and a re-assemblage

The political aspirations of the rising new middle class among the Jats had fragmented and weakened the *kisan* identity and polity in the region. In the general elections (2014 and 2019), and the U.P. Assembly elections (2017), the Rashtriya Lok Dal lost badly and a new political leadership emerged among the Jats. This new leadership of the BJP represented the aspirations of youth who perceived Muslims as a threat. However, continued agrarian distress, rising electricity charges, diesel and fertilizer costs, and unpaid dues of sugarcane by mills have severely affected Hindu and Muslim Jat farmers.

The Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government's stringent anti-cattle slaughter measures have devastated already broken farmers as stray cattle ruin crops. The COVID-19 pandemic has also hit the rural economy. Jat farmers have had a hard time getting agricultural labour and help since a large number of Muslim artisan and service castes displaced by the 2013 riot have left the villages. These everyday hardships have changed their perceptions about each other. The realisation for cooperation is what compelled leaders such as Mr. Jaula, Vipin Baliyan, and Puran Singh to organise joint Hindu-Muslim *kisan* panchayats in 2017 and 2018. Rakesh Tikait, under the banner of the BKU, organised a massive rally just before the 2019 election and led a march to Delhi. Both Hindu and Muslim farmers were participants.

In addition, the Centre's three reform farm laws have not only created fear among the farmers of losing land but have also disenchanted them as far as the BJP is concerned. Finally, the events of the night of January 27, 2021 have hurt the dignity of Hindu and Muslim Jat farmers, and accelerated the process towards a new farmers' alliance. The ongoing farmers' movement has shown the potential to heal old wounds and unite the polarised western U.P. society. A new dawn beckons amidst the many insurmountable fault lines.

Satendra Kumar teaches at the G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The views are personal

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

"Good morning, sir.

"Good morning. Bright and early!"

"Early Sir. I managed to find some time in the morning. I want to learn a lot. Yesterday someone asked me a simple question. I just blinked."

"What do you mean by 'blink'?"

"I mean, Sir, that I am unable to give the right answer. I am ignorant."

"Don't worry. We are all ignorant. Your area of ignorance is different from mine. But the word 'blink' is not used in English in the sense you have used it. When a person opens and shuts his eyes quickly, he is said to blink. It is no use blinking the fact that we are poor. In this sense, it means you refuse to consider or ignore the fact. Here it is used in a figurative sense."

"What is the difference between 'among' and 'between', Sir?"

"You use 'among' when more than two things or persons are involved.

He divided his property among his three children.

You must discuss the matter among yourselves.

'Between' is used when two persons or things are involved.

What is the distance between Madras and Calcutta?

You can choose between coffee and tea.

This is strictly between you and me.

However, it is incorrect to say that between cannot be used when more than two things or persons are involved. If there are a number of objects and they are being considered in pairs, you can use 'between'. When you talk about treaties and agreements, it is 'between' rather than 'among' that is used. Examples:

The treaty between four nations was signed.

An agreement was reached between the three companies yesterday.

When there is a triangular piece of land, you say it is between three points and not among three points. The Oxford English Dictionary says that 'between' is still the only word available to express the relation of a thing to many surrounding things severally and individually; 'among' expresses a relation to them collectively and vaguely."

"Sir. is it correct to say fill in the application form?"

"Yes, you can 'fill in' or 'fill out' or 'fill up' an application form. They mean the same thing and all are correct."

"Sir, in a recent editorial in *The Hindu*, I found the sentence "They could bankrupt Iraq". Is the sentence correct?"

"The sentence is quite correct. You are perhaps worried about the use -of 'bankrupt' as a verb. In modern English it is used as a verb. 'Bank' is an Old High German word meaning 'bench'. Bankers of the past stood behind a bench and transacted business. There were no counters, vaults, safe or unsafe! When a banker failed, his bench was broken by the people. The word 'bankrupt' is of Latin origin. 'Bank' means 'bench' and 'ruptus' means 'broken'. Bankrupts 'suffered' a broken bench and a broken heart. Well, in modern times in banks it is only the customers who sit on benches; the officials use steel chairs!"

"The story of the word is so interesting. Thank you, Sir. Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

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THE DAILY QUIZ

On this date in 1964, The Beatles had their first #1 single in the USA and Beatlemania was up and running. Test yourselves on songs that reached the peak positions in both the U.K. and the U.S.

1 According to Beatle scholars, which were the first songs to be No. 1 in the U.K. and the U.S.?

2 Though the band's second single is considered to be its real first #1, it was not officially acknowledged because it was only No. 2 on the Record Retailer chart, which subsequently evolved into the U.K. Singles Chart. Name this song that featured in an album of the same name.

3 Which is the band's only number one not to have Ringo Starr drumming away but playing the tambourine? And who played the drums?

4 Which 1965 song did John Lennon claim on more than one occasion as the first heavy metal song ever made?

5 Which much covered number had the working title 'Scrambled Eggs' and is said to have been composed by McCartney at the home of his then-girlfriend Jane Asher?

6 The first release by the quartet on its Apple label evolved from a song McCartney wrote to comfort Lennon's young son Julian following John leaving Cynthia for Yoko. Name this ballad.

7 Which song, released a month after their break-up, was the group's 20th and last No. 1 in the United States?

8 Simple one to end with. Which November 2000 album features virtually every No. 1 single the band achieved in the U.K. or USA from 1962 to 1970?

◄ This statue is named after the protagonist in an all-time favourite where none of the Fab Four played any instruments but contributed harmony vocals. Name the protagonist. ▪ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Please send in your answers to the **dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in**

Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Gandhi's return from South Africa to India on 9 January 1915. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, 2. Champaran in Bihar, 3. Madurai, Tamil Nadu, 4. 79, 5. Herbert Reiner Jr, 6. Charlie Chaplin

Early Birds: Brig. HS Ratnaparkhi| Praveer Mehta| Jahanavi Saini| Abhay Anand| Lucky Maurya

Compiled by: V.V. Ramanan

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