





## SHORT TAKES

## Bird flu confirmed in dead owl in Delhi zoo

**New Delhi:** A dead owl in the Delhi zoo has been found to have been infected with bird flu, officials said on Saturday.

"The zoo witnessed the death of a brown fish owl in its captivity. Its cloacal, tracheal and ocular swabs were sent to the animal husbandry unit of the Delhi government for serological examination," zoo Director Ramesh Pandey said. The samples were found positive for H5N8 avian influenza virus under real time RT-PCR test done by ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Disease (NIHSAD), Bhopal, on Friday, he said. As per protocols and guidelines issued by the Centre and the Delhi government, sanitisation and surveillance drills have been intensified in the zoo and all possible preventive measures are being taken, Pandey said. "Birds in captivity have been isolated and are under consistent monitoring and care for their behaviour and health. Spray of lime, virkon-S and sodium hypochlorite and foot bath of potassium permanganate are being done on regular intervals every day," he said. Chicken feed to raptors and entry of vehicles inside the zoo have already been stopped. Movement of staff is also being restricted and regulated in view of the bird flu outbreak. — *PTI*

## Farmers' union in SC seeks new panel

Continued from Page 1  
on the committee is in the teeth of the two principles of natural justice — "Nemo iudex in causa sua" meaning that no one should be made a judge in his own cause, and "Audi alteram partem" — the rule of fair hearing.

"It is important to mention here with great regret that the principle of natural justice is going to be violated by making these persons as members of the committee... How they will hear all farmers on equal parameters when they have already supported these laws," the petition said.

The top court by its January 12 order had suspended the implementation of three farm laws and had set-up a committee of four experts on agriculture to hear all including those opposed to or supporting the farm laws, government and other stakeholders and submit its report with recommendations to the court.

The four-member committee set-up by the top court included Bhopinder Singh Mann, Dr Parmod Kumar Joshi; agricultural economist and director for South Asia of International Food Policy Research Institute; Ashok Gulati, agricultural economist and former chairman of the commission for agricultural costs and prices; and Anil Ghanwat, president, Shetkari Sanghatana.

On Delhi Police seeking injunction against the farmers' proposed tractor rally, the reply says that the New Delhi district area where Republic Day parade takes place is already under prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC that bars the gathering of more than five people.

## India begins world's biggest fight against coronavirus

Continued from Page 1  
has never been attempted in history and this shows India's capability," PM said.

Life had come to a standstill about 10 months ago for the entire country, and indeed the world, since the first case of the novel coronavirus was detected in India last year and the vaccines are seen as the only way to reclaim human life and halt the menacing progress of the virus.

Union home minister Amit Shah said the vaccine drive represents the determination of a self-reliant India and is an important milestone in the fight against the pandemic.

Expressing gratitude to frontline Corona warriors, PM said they are getting priority as those "who need the vaccine the most will get it first." The Prime Minister recalled with sensitivity and empathy, the initial feeling of helpless confusion among the people of the country when people could not attend to their near ones who got infected.

"This disease rendered the infected isolated and alone, when sick children were separated from their mothers and old parents were forced to battle the disease all alone in hospitals. Even the departed relatives who lost the fight could not be given proper send off.

Vaccines are sanjivini in our fight against the pandemic, says Union health minister Harsh Vardhan  
Sanitation worker first to get Covid vaccine in Delhi

**New Delhi, Jan. 16:** Manish Kumar, a sanitation worker, became the first person in the national capital to be administered a Covid-19 vaccine during the launch of the nationwide vaccination programme at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in the presence of Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday.

As people around applauded, AIIMS director Randeep Guleria also received a shot of the vaccine followed by NITI Aayog member V.K. Paul.

Mr Kumar, who works at the AIIMS along with his mother Laxmi Rani, said he was not at all nervous and was "proud of getting the vaccine."

Mr Harsh Vardhan said the two vaccines — the indigenous Covaxin from Bharat Biotech and Covishield from the Oxford/AstraZeneca stable — are like sanjivini (life infusing) in the fight against the pandemic.

"These vaccines are our sanjivini in our fight against the pandemic. We have won the battle against polio and now we have reached the decisive phase of winning the war against Covid. I want to congratulate all frontline workers on this day," he told reporters shortly after the vaccine shots were administered.

Meanwhile, a security guard was the first to get the Covaxin shot at RML Hospital and another security guard was also the first to get the jab at Safdarjung Hospital.

Several doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers also got the shots in these hospitals.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the world's largest vaccination drive against the pandemic.

Noting that it is a historic day, Mr Harsh Vardhan

A SECURITY guard was the first to get the Covaxin shot at RML Hospital and another security guard was also the first to get the jab at Safdarjung Hospital. Several doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers also got the shots in these hospitals.

"We have been blessed by the Prime Minister all through our fight against coronavirus. It's the largest coronavirus vaccination programme in world."

"We have been able to put up a valiant fight against the disease during the last one year. Adopting a pre-emptive and proactive strategy has resulted in a very good performance by India. We have probably the lowest fatality rate in the world," Mr Harsh Vardhan said.

Asserting the safety of both the coronavirus vaccines, Covishield and Covaxin, Mr Harsh Vardhan said: "The experts gave their approval after seeing the results. There is no difference between both the vaccines. Both are equally safe and effective."

He said, "At a time when rumours are being spread, I hope the media will spread the correct information and this move will help in the fight against the disease," the health minister said.

Mr Harsh Vardhan also said that the phase-3 trials of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin are ongoing. "It has been subjected to ample and adequate scrutiny," he said.

"There is no need for any fear. We have to be absolutely fearless and sure of the safety of this vaccine. We also have to be patient. Everyone has to wait for his/her turn," the



A medic administers Covishield vaccine to a frontline worker in New Delhi on Saturday. (Right) Health workers stand in a queue to get vaccinated at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital. — *G.N. JHA, PTI*

health minister said.

According to the government, the shots will be offered first to an estimated one crore healthcare workers and around two crore frontline workers, and then to persons above 50 years of age followed by persons younger than 50 years of age with associated comorbidities.

The cost of vaccination of healthcare and frontline workers will be borne by the Central government.

Thanking all, including doctors, nurses, healthcare staff, security personnel, and journalists who have been at the frontline in the fight against the pandemic, Mr Harsh Vardhan said they ensured that India reaches the stage where vaccines are delivered to the people.

On concerns over the efficacy of the vaccine, he said there is no evidence to suggest it is unsafe and these are false rumours and narratives.

Mr Harsh Vardhan also visited Sir Ganga Ram Hospital to inspect the Covishield vaccination programme at the facility after AIIMS.

— *PTI*

## Kejri: Don't believe in rumours, experts say Covid vaccines safe

**New Delhi, Jan. 16:** Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday urged people not to believe in rumours and listen to experts who say Covid-19 vaccines are safe, as the world's largest immunisation programme against the disease began in the country.

Kejriwal inspected the Covid-19 vaccination campaign at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital here, interacted with some health workers who received the shot and lauded their contribution in fighting the pandemic.

The vaccination drive has started at 81 centres in Delhi. Atmaja Priyadarshini Nayak, nursing officer at the LNJP Hospital, was administered the vaccine shot in the presence of the chief minister.

"I have interacted with those vaccinated. No one has any problem. All are happy that they will get rid of coronavirus," the



Arvind Kejriwal said. He said: "I want to say to all not to pay attention to rumours and misinformation. The experts say vaccines are safe and there is no need to worry."

But there is a need to use face masks and maintain social distancing even after receiving the vaccine shots, Kejriwal stressed.

The Delhi government has made all the preparations and around 8,100 people will be vaccinated on Saturday at 81 sites across Delhi, he said, adding the exercise was running smoothly at LNJP and those vaccinated were very happy.

The chief minister said there was no need to launch a separate app to register people for vaccination as the Centre has devised the same system for the entire country.

— *PTI*

## Health workers treated with chocolates, cakes and juices

**New Delhi, Jan. 16:** Healthcare workers at a hospital here who received the jab on the first day of India's massive vaccination drive against Covid-19 were treated with chocolates, cakes and juices after the shots, bringing smiles on the faces of many after initial apprehension. Some of them recalled the difficult months spent during the coronavirus pandemic.

At the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), those vaccinated were surprised with these gift hampers. Dr Ajeet Jain, nodal officer of Covid-19 and cardio surgeon at the hospital, said: "The gift hampers were not pre-planned. It just happened and we are happy that they brought smiles on the faces of volunteers. We will think about whether to continue or not."

Each day 100 people at this centre will be admin-

istered the vaccine. Dr Vikas Dogra, head of the pulmonology department, was the first health worker who received the vaccination on Saturday at the hospital. "I am happy that I was the first person who got the vaccine at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital. I didn't feel any difficulty during and after the vaccination," he said.

Till 2 pm, 37 health workers received the vaccine shot at the RGSSH. Nursing staff Shaheen Riyazuddin, who tested Covid-19 positive twice in April 2020, said: "The doctor told me that it happened due to my weak immune system. Our seniors briefed us about the vaccination and said there was no need to worry. I was informed yesterday that I will get the vaccine on Saturday. I was slightly nervous while going inside the centre, but after the jab, everything is fine," she said. — *PTI*

## 'China providing winter clothing to Pak Army' Pak trying to push militants from across border: Reports

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

Intelligence agencies have cautioned security forces that Pakistan was trying to push militants from across the border even during the winter season.

According to intelligence reports, China was providing winter clothing and other heavy duty equipment to the Pak Army which in turn was giving the same to militant groups to facilitate their infiltration into India even during winter.

According to the intelligence report, "It was extremely surprising that militants were trying hard for infiltration during the winter season also. This is unusual

since during the winter season due to the heavy snow it becomes very difficult to move through mountain passes. But it seems this time the militants are well equipped in terms of high altitude clothing, good quality equipment like glasses, and other snow gadgets which is suspected to have been provided by the Chinese Army to Pak security agencies."

In view of the sustained operations launched by the Indian Army in the Kashmir Valley, militants are facing an acute shortage of both men and material. With more than 250 militants killed last year, terror outfits are in desperate need for further reinforcements.

Further, due to harsh winter and heavy snow, it

becomes extremely difficult for security agencies to conduct patrolling in high altitude regions along the Indo-Pak border due to which more militants close to the border areas are trying to infiltrate into India.

"It is clear that China is now assisting and supporting both Pak Army and ISI by providing them resources in terms of arms, ammunition, and equipment which in turn are being supplied to the militants. But we are extremely cautious in the border areas and even our security personnel are well equipped to ensure that no one takes advantage of the harsh weather to infiltrate across the border," a senior security official added.

## At RML, doctors want Covishield, not Covaxin

Continued from Page 1  
that 60 per cent of children the world over receive life-saving vaccines which are made in India and pass through stringent Indian scientific tests.

"We have come to know that the Covid vaccination drive is being conducted by the hospital today. Covaxin manufactured by Bharat Biotech is being preferred over Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute in our hospital. We would like to bring to your notice that the residents are a bit apprehensive about the lack of complete trial in case of Covaxin and might not participate in huge numbers, thus, defeating the purpose of vaccination. We request you to vaccinate us with Covishield, which has completed all stages of the trial before its roll out," the residents doctors' association of RML said in a letter to the medical superintendent of the hospital, Dr A.K. Singh Rana, who himself took the Covaxin shot on Saturday. At the RML hospital, a security guard was the first one to receive the shot.

Senior Congress leader

Manish Tewari too raised questions over the emergency use approval granted to Covaxin, alleging it was done without due process. "As vaccine roll-out begins, it is all a bit puzzling. India has no policy framework for authorising emergency use. Yet, two vaccines have been approved for restricted use in emergency situation," Mr Tewari tweeted. "Covaxin is another story — Approvals sans Due Process," he added.

Covaxin was also used in AIIMS, Delhi, where its director Dr Randeep Guleria and NitiAayog member (health) Dr V.K. Paul took the shots.

"I believe that this is a great vaccine. I have taken Covaxin. Embrace the vaccine," Dr Paul said.

Meanwhile, Telangana health minister Eatata Rajender, who had announced to take the shot of first day itself to dispel apprehensions and instill confidence among people, on Saturday stepped back citing PM's suggestion to public representatives not to jump the queue and let health workers and frontline workers to take the jab first.

## Bengal paves way for rooftop solar energy with Net metering

**Kolkata, Jan. 16:** To make solar energy viable for households in Bengal, WBERC has relaxed rooftop solar regulations by allowing Net metering starting from capacity of 1 KW against 5 KW capacity criteria required earlier and that too for restricted categories of consumers.

Earlier no individual or housing complexes except co-operatives, were permitted the benefit of net metering a key driver for rooftop solar adoption. Without Net metering rooftop solar projects are not very economically feasible, an official said.

According to earlier regulations, only institutions, commercial, industrial and cooperative housings were allowed net metering benefit but that was from 5 KW onwards. The West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (WBERC) in its recent amendments to the Cogeneration and Electricity Generation from Renewable Sources Regulations 2013 had allowed Net metering from 1 KW but had restricted it

to 5 KW, a top official told PTI.

The new amendment mandates "gross metering" facilities for solar system installation capacities above 5 KW. The commercial benefit for a consumer is far less in case of gross-metering compared to net-metering thus making adoption less commercially attractive. A simple implication is, now a small installation up to 5 KW gets a boost but it deprives larger installations between 5 KW and 10 KW.

"We have allowed net-metering of solar power installation from 1 KW to 5 KW. Now there is no restriction and anyone can install rooftop solar. Earlier regulations did not allow Net metering for common households," a WBERC official said. However, a consumer cannot install solar panels more than its own load. That means if a household has an existing electricity load of 2 KW then his installation cannot be higher than 2 KW even if he has space and interest, the official explained.

## BJP names Shahnawaz as MLC candidate from Bihar

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

The BJP on Saturday named its national spokesperson and former Union minister Syed Shahnawaz Hussain as its MLC candidate from Bihar. The party also named six more candidates for the legislative council polls in Uttar Pradesh.

The announcement marks Mr Hussain's return to the electoral politics but at the state level, for the first time since 2014 when he lost the Lok Sabha election from Bhagalpur. He was not fielded by the party in the 2019 polls. In the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, he held the civil aviation portfolio among other charges.

Other names for UP legislative council polls include Kunwar Manvendra Singh, Govind Narayan Shukla, Salil Bishnoi, Ashwini Tyagi, Dharmveer Prajapati and Surendra Chaudhary.

## Arrested TV rating agency ex-CEO admitted to ICU in Mumbai

**Mumbai, Jan. 16:** Partho Dasgupta, the former CEO of TV ratings agency BARC, who was arrested in the television rating points (TRP) rigging case, has been admitted to the ICU of a hospital here after his sugar level shot up, officials said on Saturday.

His daughter took to Twitter to allege that he was tortured in prison and appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others to "save his life."

Dasgupta, a diabetic, was rushed to the state-run J.J. Hospital here from the Talaja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai around midnight after his blood sugar level shot up, a prison official said. He was admitted to the ICU and was on oxygen support, the official said.

Dasgupta, the former CEO of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), was arrested in the alleged TRP rigging scam by the crime branch of the Mumbai police on December 24 last year.

A Mumbai court had, earlier this month, rejected his bail plea stating that he appeared to have played a vital role in the scam to rig TRP as per the police's case.

The Mumbai police had earlier told the court that Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami had allegedly bribed Dasgupta with "lakhs of rupees" to ramp up the news channel's viewership numbers fraudulently.

On Saturday, Pratyusha, Dasgupta's daughter, tweeted a message titled "a helpless daughter's anguished appeal" tagging PM Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah, the PMO, as well as Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Her mother received a call at around 3.00 am on Saturday informing that her father had been brought to the hospital in an unconscious state at around 1.00 pm on Friday, she said. — *PTI*



## SHORT TAKES

## Will get vaccinated in next phase: Capt.

**Mohali:** Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh said he would get himself vaccinated for Covid-19 vaccine in the next phase as he rolled out the inoculation drive here. Four healthcare workers, including three doctors, were administered the first dose of Covishield vaccine in the presence of the chief minister at civil hospital here. The chief minister said it was his desire to get vaccinated first but in accordance with the directives of the Government of India only healthcare workers could be covered in the first phase. "I would definitely get myself vaccinated in the next phase," he said. Mr Singh said the vaccine would be administered to the health workers first, followed by the Army and police personnel, in line with the guidelines of the Government of India. — PTI

## Drive suspended till Monday in Maha

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra public health minister Rajesh Tope on Saturday evening announced suspension of the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the state till Monday owing to "problems in the Co-Win app". The app has been created by the Centre for managing registration for the inoculation. Nationwide inoculation drive for coronavirus began on Saturday morning. "Not just in Maharashtra, everywhere in the country this app created problems in the execution of vaccination drive. We have decided to suspend the vaccination for the next two days," Tope told PTI. "On January 8, when dry run was conducted, and again today I specifically pointed out problems with the Co-Win app and Union Minister Harsh Vardhan said he will look into it," the minister said. — PTI

## When will poor get free shot: Akhilesh

**Lucknow:** As the coronavirus vaccine was launched on Saturday, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav sought to know from the government how the drive will be conducted and when the poor will get the shot free of cost. The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said he has faith in doctors of the country but not the government. He also suggested that the BJP people should first line up in queues and get themselves vaccinated as the party conducts all programmes in a grand manner. "After one year, when the SP will come to power, we will ensure free vaccine for all," he said while asking from the government when the poor will get free vaccines. — PTI

## 5-year-old raped in UP village, critical

**Banda, UP:** The condition of a 5-year-old girl, who was allegedly raped in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Banda district, deteriorated after which she was rushed to a hospital in Kanpur for better treatment, police said on Saturday. Chief medical officer Uday Bhan Singh said the girl was sent to Kanpur for better treatment and undergoing plastic surgery as she was profusely bleeding. The incident took place on Friday night in the village under Girwa police station area, they said. A 23-year-old man has been arrested in this connection, circle officer (CO) Nareni Siyaram said. The youth had lured the minor to a secluded spot by offering her Rs 10 and he allegedly raped the girl there, the CO said. When the girl's family went to the house of the accused to complain about the incident, he and his family members threatened to kill them, police said. — PTI

## PM rolls out ₹1K-cr fund for startups

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced the launch of ₹1,000-crore "Startup India Seed Fund" to support startups and help budding entrepreneurs pursue innovative ideas. Addressing the 'Prarambh: Startup India International Summit', Mr Modi exuded confidence that the growth of startups will help in generating jobs and improving lives of people in the region. He said India has taken several steps to ensure that the startups do not face shortage of capital. — PTI

## First beneficiaries of vaccination express pride

## Urge people not to fall for rumours on vaccines, term them baseless

**New Delhi, Jan. 16:** "I feel proud and humbled to be a part of this historic moment," said Bijli Tomy, a nurse who got the first vaccine shot at Delhi government-run LNJP hospital as a countrywide Covid-19 immunisation drive began on Saturday. A similar sentiment prevailed on the first day of the exercise among the healthcare workers in Delhi who received the shots at 81 sites chosen for the drive. Vikas Dogra, the head of pulmonology department at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, who also received the vaccine shot, urged people not to believe in rumours. "I didn't feel anything after vaccination. Those

who are spreading rumour that the vaccine is not safe, I want to say that they are not experts. It is a baseless thing and I want to tell people that they should not believe in rumours," he told PTI. Another first beneficiary Sandeep Nayar, who is the head of respiratory medicine department at BLK Super Speciality Hospital here expressed a similar sentiment. "There is no local or systematic reaction. I will advise everyone to get the shots when their turn comes. Don't fall for rumours. The vaccines are safe," he said. The Covid-19 vaccination drive is underway in the national capital, with healthcare workers, who were at the forefront of



A medical staff poses with a rose outside LNJP Hospital in New Delhi on Saturday. — ASIAN AGE

the fight against the pandemic, getting the first shots, as they were welcomed amid claps and cheers. "I felt absolutely no-

department, told PTI.

The vaccination exercise is being conducted at 81 sites across all 11 districts.

Six central government hospitals — AIIMS, Safdarjung, RML Hospital, Kalawati Saran Children Hospital and two ESI hospitals — are also part of the drive.

Besides LNJP Hospital, Delhi-government run GTB Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, DDU Hospital, BSA Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, ILBS Hospital are among the vaccination sites.

Private facilities Max Hospital, Fortis Hospital, Apollo Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital are also part of the inoculation drive. — PTI

## Surgeon hails nation's efforts against virus

**Kochi, Jan. 16:** Receiving the first shot of Covid-19 vaccine in this southern port city, cardiothoracic surgeon Dr Jose Chacko Periyappuram hailed the country's efforts to wipe out the novel coronavirus and said he felt comfortable after the vaccination.

Dr Periyappuram, who performed the first successful heart transplant in Kerala, urged people to not fall prey to the false propaganda unleashed on the social media against the global effort to end the pandemic. "Some people have some misconceptions about the vaccination. They are seen carried away by false propaganda unleashed through the social media," he said.

"My message to them is that don't fall prey to such wrong



A medic prepares the dose of Covid-19 vaccine at Ernakulam government general hospital in Kochi. — PTI

information," he told reporters after completing a 30-minute observation following vaccination at the General Hospital, Ernakulam.

He said the injection is totally harmless and there are hardly any possibilities of side-effects. "This vaccination will definitely help boost our immunity. This message should be conveyed to society," he said.

Sharing his experience after receiving the first shot, Dr Periyappuram said he did not even feel pain as a well-trained nursing staff did the job efficiently. — PTI

## Vaccine is completely safe, says Guj doc who got first jab

**Ahmedabad, Jan. 16:** The coronavirus vaccine is completely safe and inoculation is the only way to overcome the pandemic, said Dr Naveen Thacker, a paediatrician who became the first recipient of vaccine jab in Gujarat on Saturday.

For Jalpa Gandhi, a nurse at the Ahmedabad civil hospital who has been attending to coronavirus patients from day one, getting the shot meant relief from gnawing anxiety that she may catch the virus while at work.

Dr Thacker, a member of the state government's task forces on coronavirus and mass COVID-19 vaccination, and Gandhi were administered Covishield vaccine at the civil hospital here. So were many other doctors and nurses.

"As you can see, I have not felt any adverse effect even an hour



Health minister Harsh Vardhan displays a Covishield vaccine vial at AIIMS in New Delhi. — PTI

after getting inoculated. I am blessed to be the first recipient...The vaccine is totally safe, effective, and we can defeat coronavirus only when all of us get vaccinated," Dr Thacker said.

"This is the beginning of a final war," he said, adding that misleading rumours have always dogged vaccines when they appeared two centuries ago, but one should not fall prey to them. — PTI

## Minister targets Centre on quota, CM says avoid politics MVA allies not on same page on drive

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, JAN. 16

Differences within the MVA government in Maharashtra came to fore over the Covid vaccination drive in the state. While state health minister Rajesh Tope said the Centre has provided inadequate supply of vaccines to Maharashtra, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray said there should not be any politics over the vaccine.

Mr Thackeray kick-started the Covid vaccination drive at the BKC centre on Saturday. While speaking on the occasion, he allayed the talks of Maharashtra receiving step-motherly treatment from the



Dr Vijay Yewale, a pediatrician, shows a victory sign along with medics after receiving the dose of Covid-19 vaccine at NMMC Hospital in Navi Mumbai. — PTI

Centre in the supply of Covid vaccine.

"The quota of Covid vaccine has been fixed by the Central health department, so it is not right to doubt their

intention. Just as all people in Maharashtra are equal to me as a chief minister, it should be the same for the Prime Minister," he quipped. Mr Thackeray

expressed confidence that the supply of vaccines will increase after the rise in its production. The vaccines of couple of other companies are in the final stage. Once they are approved, the supply will increase, he added.

However, Mr Tope reiterated that Maharashtra has received less number of vaccines from the Centre. He said, "Maharashtra needs nearly 17.5 lakh doses of vaccines including the buffer stock. Of them, we have received only 9.72 lakh doses. It means the Centre has supplies only 55 per cent of stock."

On the first day of the vaccination drive, 28,500 people were inoculated in Maharashtra.

## PM leading from front in Covid-19 battle: BJP

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, JAN. 16

Calling the launch of vaccination drive as a "historic moment for the country," the BJP said the drive shows the immense potential of the country's scientists and the power of its leadership.

The Prime Minister kicked off the drive while reassuring the country that emergency use authorisation was given to two made in India vaccines only after scientists were convinced of their safety and effectiveness, and urged people to beware of propaganda and rumours.

BJP president J.P. Nadda said the PM is leading the country from the front in the battle against the Covid-19 by ensuring health services to all when they need it the most.

"We salute our doctors, nurses, healthcare workers for making great efforts at this time. They are the real heroes of the largest vaccine drive. Vaccine will save us from the Covid virus but we should support it by use of masks, frequent handwashing and maintaining physical distance," he said.

Union home minister Amit Shah said the vaccination drive shows the immense potential of India's scientists and the power of its leadership and hailed the corona warriors.

## C'garh, MP sanitation staff get jab; docs dance in Gwalior

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
BHOPAL, JAN. 16

Hari Deb, a security guard of J.P. Hospital in Bhopal on Saturday got the first shot of anti-Covid-19 vaccine in Madhya Pradesh, kick starting the vaccination drive in the state.

Forty-two-year-old Deb was administered the vaccine in the J.P. Hospital Centre here immediately after Prime Minister Narendra Modi ended his vaccine address.

Mr Deb was presented a bouquet by senior officials of the state health department on the occa-

sion. "I feel good. I feel elated that I have been chosen to get the first shot in the state", Mr Deb told reporters.

A doctor in the J.P. Hospital, Anupa Shukla, was the second person to get the shot. "I am happy that I got the opportunity to get the shot on the first day of the first phase of vaccination. A vaccine develops immunity in the body. There is no need to be scared of getting vaccinated," she said.

In government-run Hamidia hospital, sanitation worker Sanjay Yadav was administered the first vaccine. Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was present on

the occasion. In Gwalior, sanitation worker Raghuvir became the first person to get vaccinated.

Later, dean of the hospital S.N. Ayengar and principal of the JAH medical college R.S. Dhakad took the shots.

Doctors in the hospital danced to the tune of Bollywood music after getting vaccinated.

Local sanitation staff Kailash Sisodia, Raju Valmiki, Asha Pawar, Baisakhu Pahngar and Upendra Kaushik became the first recipients of vaccines in Ujjain, Sagar, Indore, Jabalpur and Rewa Centres respectively.

## Kolkata nurse faints after taking shot

**Kolkata, Jan. 16:** A 35-year-old nurse was admitted to the critical care unit (CCU) of a hospital in Kolkata after she lost consciousness within minutes of taking the Covid-19 vaccine on Saturday, officials said.

She is one of the 15,707 beneficiaries who were vaccinated across West Bengal during the day. Thirteen other "adverse event following immunisation (AEFI)" cases were also reported from various parts of the state but those were not serious, they said.

AEFI is any untoward medical occurrence following immunisation and might not have a relation with the vaccination process, officials said.

Within minutes of taking the vaccine at Dr B.C. Roy Hospital, the nurse started trembling, complained of uneasiness and fainted in the observation room.

She was rushed to nearby Nil Ratan Sircar Medical College and Hospital and admitted to the CCU. "That's probably an allergic reaction.

As of now, there is nothing to worry about her as this type of allergic reaction is common in many vaccinations," a senior health department official, who is also a doctor, told PTI.

"We have learnt that she has a history of being allergic to drugs. She is also a chronic asthma patient. In that way, this is normal though quite rare. We are checking whether this is related to the vaccination or not. Even if it is because of the inoculation then also there is

nothing to worry about," he said.

Several medical tests are being conducted on the nurse.

"Her blood pressure and oxygen saturation levels are normal. However, she is kept on oxygen support as she is an asthma patient. Specialised doctors are attending to her," he said.

The health department is consulting vaccine expert Dr Shantanu Tripathy who was earlier associated with the School of Tropical Medicine. — PTI

## I am feeling lucky: Man after getting first Covid jab in Goa

**Panaji, Jan. 16:** Ranganath Bhojje, a 43-year-old multi-tasking (MTS) worker at the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) who became the first person in Goa to get the Covid-19 vaccine on Saturday, said he was happy to get the jab and was hoping for the best.

Bhojje has been working at the special facility created to treat Covid-19 patients here as an MTS staff.

After he walked out of the observation room at the GMCH, Bhojje was greeted with flowers by Union information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar and chief minister Pramod Sawant. "I am

happy to become the first person in Goa to get this vaccine. I was never reluctant when I was selected for vaccination but I am rather feeling lucky. I am hoping for the best," Bhojje said.

When asked about his experience, Bhojje said he didn't face any inconvenience or any medical issue after vaccination. "I was asked to sit for half an hour after taking the vaccine," he said.

Vaccination drive was conducted at seven places in Goa including at two private hospitals.

Goa immunisation officer Dr Rajendra Borkar appealed to people to guard against rumours. — PTI

**POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH, CHANDIGARH**  
**CORRIGENDUM**  
Ref: Open E-Tender Notice No. PI (EP)20-21-07.  
Following change is made:-  
1. The tender item is at Sr. No.11 (Fully Automated Individual (ID) NAT Testing System-01 Nos. along with rates of reagents for 75000 tests per year with expected 10% escalation each year and Rates will be frozen for next 10 years.) the bid submission dates and bid opening dates have been amended from to Bid Submission date 25.01.2021 and Bid Opening date 27.01.2021.  
Ref: Open E-Tender Notice No. PI (EP)20-21-08.  
Following change is made:-  
2. The tender item is at Sr. No.10 (Pediatric ICU Beds) due on 22.01.2021 has been withdrawn due to technical reasons.  
The following additional terms and conditions have been added to the Notice Inviting Tender:-  
i. Bidders are not required to submit EMD/Bid Security till 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2021. In place of EMD/Bid Security only "Bid Security Declaration" is required to be deposited by bidder as per Rule 170 (iii) of GFR 2017, accepting that if they withdraw or modify their bids during the period of validity and if they failed to sign the contract or to submit performance security before expiry of the bid validity, they will be suspended for a period of 2 years to submit bids.  
ii. The successful bidder is required to deposit performance security at the rate of 3% of the value of contract till 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2021.  
All other details will remain the same. PROFESSOR-IN-CHARGE (EP).

120/2021

Please join us on

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**

Your Convenience - Our Concern

Visit us at : [www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in)

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Security Helpline No. 182

Integrated Helpline No. 139

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of passengers that Railways have decided to run the Train No. 04727/04728 between Sri Ganga Nagar-Delhi-Sri Ganga Nagar instead of Sri Ganga Nagar-Tilak Bridge-Sri Ganga Nagar with revised timings as per following details:-

Revised Timings of 04727/04728 Sri Ganga Nagar Jn.-Delhi Jn.-Sri Ganga Nagar Jn. Special Express (Daily)

Train No. 04727	ARR.	DEP.	↓	STATIONS	↑	Train No. 04728	ARR.	DEP.
----	20:30			SRI GANGA NAGAR JN.		05:50	----	
20:50	20:51			FATEH SINGHWALA		----	----	
20:58	21:00			SADULSHAHR		04:49	04:51	
21:10	21:11			BUDHSINGHWALA		----	----	
21:17	21:18			BUGLANWALI		----	----	
21:29	21:30			HIRNAWALI		----	----	
21:37	21:38			JORKIAN		----	----	
21:55	22:20			HANUMAN GARH JN.		03:55	04:20	
22:28	22:30			HANUMANGARH TOWN		03:20	03:22	
22:51	22:53			TIBI		03:00	03:02	
23:11	23:13			ELLENABAD		02:39	02:41	
23:42	23:44			NOHAR		02:07	02:09	
00:08	00:10			GOGAMERI		01:40	01:42	
00:22	00:24			TAHSIL BHADRA		01:26	01:28	
01:20	01:45			SADULPUR JN.		00:15	00:40	
01:57	01:58			HARPALU		23:46	23:47	
02:14	02:15			RAMPURA BERI		23:29	23:31	
03:12	03:17			LOHARU JN.		23:10	23:15	
03:31	03:32			SATNALI		22:21	22:23	
03:37	03:38			NANWAN		22:15	22:16	
03:45	03:46			NANGAL DEGROTA		22:08	22:09	
04:01	04:03			MAHENDER GARH		21:53	21:55	
04:11	04:12			BOJAWAS		21:46	21:47	
04:17	04:18			GURHA KEMLA		21:40	21:41	
04:22	04:24			KANINA KHAS		21:34	21:35	
04:33	04:35			DAHINA ZAINABAD		21:21	21:23	
05:35	06:12			REWARI JN.		20:45	21:00	
06:20	06:21			KUMBHAWAS MUNDHALIA D		20:18	20:19	
06:26	06:27			KHALIL PUR		20:11	20:12	
06:34	06:35			INCHHAPURI		20:03	20:04	
06:41	06:42			PATAUDI ROAD		19:56	19:57	
06:48	06:49			JATAULA JAURI SAMPKA		19:49	19:50	
06:54	06:55			TAJ NAGAR		19:44	19:45	
06:59	07:00			PATLI		19:38	19:39	
07:08	07:09			GARHI HARSARU JN.		19:29	19:30	
07:15	07:16			BASAI DHANKOT		19:23	19:24	
07:21	07:22			GURGAON		19:16	19:17	
07:29	07:30			BIJWASAN		19:07	19:08	
07:35	07:36			SHAHABAD MD PUR		19:01	19:02	
07:40	07:41			PALAM		18:55	18:56	
07:49	07:50			DELHI CANTT		18:48	18:49	
08:03	08:04			PATEL NAGAR		18:35	18:36	
08:08	08:09			DAYA BASTI		18:28	18:29	
08:13	08:14			VIVEKANAND PURI HALT		18:23	18:24	
08:18	08:19			DELHI KISHAN GANJ		18:17	18:18	
08:45	----			DELHI JN.		----	18:00	

DAYS OF RUN: 04727 Ex Shri Ganganagar Jn. Daily from 18.01.2021 to till further advice and 04728 Ex Delhi Jn. Daily from 19.01.2021 to till further advice.

ACCOMMODATION: AC 3 Tier, Sleeper & Second Seating (Reserved).

Note :- The above Special Train will run with full reserved Accommodation.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., must be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

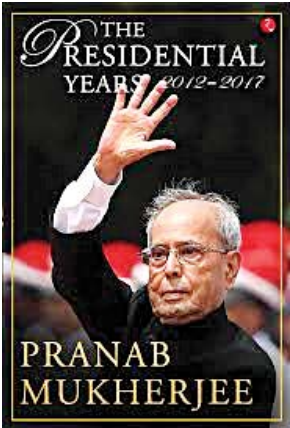
For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table of stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.



INDIAN TOP 10  
BESTSELLERS

## NON-FICTION

- 1 **THE PRESIDENTIAL YEARS 2012-2017**  
Pranab Mukherjee, Rupa, ₹695
- 2 **A PROMISED LAND**  
Barack Obama, Penguin Viking, ₹1,999
- 3 **VAJPAYEE: THE YEARS THAT CHANGED INDIA**  
Shakti Sinha, Penguin Vintage, ₹599
- 4 **THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**  
Shashi Tharoor, HarperCollins, ₹599
- 5 **JUGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**  
Vinay Sitapati, Penguin Viking, ₹799
- 6 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**  
Aanchal Malhotra, HarperCollins, ₹599
- 7 **OUR HINDU RASHTRA**  
Aakar Patel, Westland, ₹799
- 8 **INDIAN ECONOMY'S GREATEST CRISIS**  
Arun Kumar, Penguin Portfolio, ₹499
- 9 **JINNAH: HIS SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ROLE IN HISTORY**  
Ishtiaq Ahmed, Penguin, ₹999
- 10 **A POEM A DAY!**  
Gulzar (Translator) HarperCollins, ₹3,999



## FICTION

- 1 **SHUGGIE BAIN**  
Douglas Stuart Picador, ₹499
- 2 **THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**  
Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, Faber & Faber, ₹499
- 3 **HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT**  
Jeffrey Archer, Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- 4 **A TIME FOR MERCY**  
John Grisham, Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699
- 5 **HAMNET**  
Maggie O' Farrell, Tinder Press, ₹699
- 6 **DAYLIGHT**  
David Baldacci, Pan Macmillan, ₹650
- 7 **THE ARCHER**  
Paulo Coelho, Penguin Viking, ₹250
- 8 **WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**  
Shauna Singh Baldwin, Tara- India Research Press, ₹599
- 9 **VANISHING HALF**  
Brit Bennett, Dialogue Books, ₹799
- 10 **FUNNY HA HA**  
Paul Merton (Editor), Head of Zeus, ₹1,299



Bahrsions, New Delhi

# A captain's frank perspective on a devious and unjust war



Anil Bhat

review

When Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee made his bold and friendly gesture of travelling by bus to Lahore and signing a declaration on February 21, 1999, the Pakistan army's Operation Koh-e-Paima (Call of the Mountains) or Op. KP, was well under way. It would be another three months before the Indian Army's Op. Vijay would be launched to counter it. Whether then Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had been kept in the dark about Gen. Pervez Musharraf's ambitious plan or not is a matter of conjecture, elaborated upon in the book.

A diary of the Pak army's Lt Mohammad Maazullah Khan Sumbal, posted to 8 Northern Light Infantry (NLI), was recovered by the Indian Army from Point 4812 in the Batalik sector during Operation Vijay, copies of which were released to the media by Army Headquarters. The second entry of January 2, 1999, reads, "Reached Skardu at 1000 hrs and reported to the unit (8 NLI)." Quite obviously, preparation and mobilisation for Op. KP must have begun in 1998, at least, and when Musharraf was heading Mil Ops (DGMO).

Attempts to project the intruding NLI troops as terrorists failed after a few days of Indian Army reacting to massive intrusions in area Kargil, which was six to eight months after Op. KP began. The intrusion was of the level and extent that could not have been achieved by terrorists.

*A Ridge Too Far* is a catchy but apt title reminiscent of *A Bridge Too Far* authored by Cornelius Ryan and made into a movie — based on the events of World

War II's failed Operation Market Garden. Captain Amarinder Singh deserves praise to manage his time as senior political leader — presently chief minister, Punjab — to put together the complex story of the limited Kargil war in 1999, with great dedication and rigorous research, presenting a tome packed with details, analysis, comments and visuals, not only of all the battles, but also very informative on the historic background.

The book is divided into four parts. Part I is an overview of the situation that gave rise to the war, covering the history of conflict between India and Pakistan. Part II describes the harsh terrain that exists on both sides of the LoC — the theatre of the war — in adapting to which the Indian soldier displayed exceptional valour and discipline, and great qualities of leadership. Part III details the build-up by the Indian Army before conducting offensive operations, and the actual conduct of battle from Corps to Brigade. And Part IV gives a stirring account of the heroic battles fought by ten infantry battalions.

An alumnus of Doon School, National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, and the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun, Amarinder Singh was commissioned in June 1963 into 2nd Battalion, The Sikh Regiment. His course-mates recall him as a fine person, good cadet, gentlemanly and with no airs about being the scion of an erstwhile powerful kingdom. During the 1965 Indo-Pak war he was the ADC to Lt Gen. Harbaksh Singh, Vrc, GOC-in-C, Western Command, then a vast theatre, which included all of the current Northern Command, i.e. all of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, which was raised in June 1972. Thereby, early in his service he had a wide overview of the undivided theatre of Western Command.

Meticulously researched and skilfully narrated, this book also seeks to record for posterity the thoroughly professional

response and gallant performance of all those who fought the war for India or were concerned with its direction, from the Chief of Army Staff to the youngest soldier. Important aspects of war/conflict, like historical background, topography/terrain conditions, enemy and own forces, intelligence, personalities and other related matters have been brilliantly described and analysed. And the volume of inputs on some of these aspects like many locations and events related to them is mind-boggling.

Also what emerges from the book is the tremendous odds that advancing/attacking battalions had to face because of the very exacting terrain and the very heavy fire they had to face from an enemy who benefited greatly most of all, by getting a few months to effectively dig in and protect itself. The descriptions of various actions/battles amply brings out the extremely difficult aspects of steep mountainous terrain occupied by a well dug-in enemy and how costly these factors turned out to be for the Indian Army's attacking battalions in terms of casualties in the initial phases at least — and all because of reacting too late, owing to lack of vital and

timely intelligence. Advancing 1,000 metres uphill took days and cost lives in many cases. While eventually Indian Army was victorious everywhere — from Batalik to Chorbatla, and Valdoor to Shangrut — and Pakistanis were surrounded from all sides, in the 77-day Operation Vijay, 527 were killed (26 officers, 21 junior commissioned officers and 452 other ranks) and 1,363 were wounded.

Pakistan army, known for trying to avoid committing its own troops whenever possible and "outsourcing", used about 13 battalions of NLI, largely comprising non-Sunnis, literally as cannon fodder. Unlike the rest of the Pakistan army, which is dominated by major ethnic groups like the Punjabis and Pashtoons, the NLI troops were drawn from eight major ethnic groups — Baltis, Shins, Yashkuns, Mughals, Kashmiris, Pathans, Ladakhis and Turks. The community composition of NLI is 49 per cent Shias, 23 per cent Ismailis, 10 per cent Noor Bakhshis and only 18 per cent Sunnis. About 55 per cent hailed from Gilgit while 35 per cent hailed from Baltistan. Preparations for capturing Kargil were firmed up when Pervez Musharraf was heading the Pakistani army's directorate of military operations. NLI troops were made to dress in shalwar kameez, so that they could be projected as terrorists. So much so that Pak army, initially refused to acknowledge or accept the bodies of the first few NLI casualties. There were also reports of NLI's rations not getting replenished. This became obvious when sugar crystals were seen stuck to the lips of some fatal casualties. Bodies of many NLI casualties were transported in the dark and their graves and graveyards, too, were not given any pride of place. The NLI was not even treated as part of the regular Pakistan army till sometime after the Kargil war.

Pakistan army's losses were hard to pinpoint. While Pakistan confirmed that 453 soldiers were killed, the American

estimate was of about 700 fatalities. According to former PM Mr Sharif, there were over 4,000 fatalities. Indian estimates were of 1,042 Pakistani soldiers killed. Gen. Musharraf, in his book, *In the Line of Fire*, differs from everyone in stating that 357 troops were killed and 665 wounded. While then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's figure may be exaggerated and his ultraconservative, the Indian estimate may not be far from the truth. In a number of cases, Indian Army units returned the bodies of enemy troops killed, saw bunkers being destroyed and were able to hear the Pak army's radio transmissions.

Prime Minister Vajpayee's considered decision for the Indian Air Force not to cross the LoC proved to be very disadvantageous for IAF but paid India diplomatic dividends. G8 nations supported India and condemned the Pakistani violation of the LoC at the Cologne summit, as did the European Union. Even China, Pakistan's long-time "ally", insisted on a pull-out of forces to pre-conflict positions along the line and settling of border issues peacefully. The Asean Regional Forum, too, supported India's stand on the inviolability of the LoC.

India released taped phone conversations between the Pakistan army chief and a senior Pakistani general where the latter is recorded saying: "the scruff of the militants' necks is in our hands". Defeat at Kargil drove Pakistan's infamous Inter Services Intelligence to deviously plan and implement the 26/11 terrorist attacks on Mumbai.

While many of the Kargil Review Committee Report's recommendations remain unimplemented, one very welcome change, albeit 15 years later onwards, is the political will to sanction special offensives which struck fear in the hearts of the Pak army and its terrorists.

**Anil Bhat**, a retired Army officer, is a defence and security analyst based in New Delhi

## What happens to women in a matriarchy and other secrets



Nayantara Roy

review

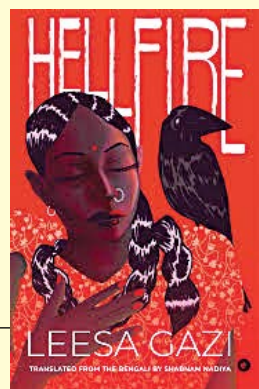
Leesa Gazi knows how to spin a yarn. In her debut novel, translated so effectively from Bangla by Shabnam Nadiya, Ms Gazi has us riveted to a poignantly powerful tale of the bizarrely controlled life that the main protagonist "Lovely" and her sister "Beauty" have led, while recounting the events of a singularly important day in Lovely's life. She does this at the pace of a suspense-filled thriller while incorporating moments of poetic description and drawing vivid pictures of humdrum everyday life in a middleclass household in Dhaka.

While this is her first novel, Ms Gazi is a scriptwriter, actor and filmmaker. Among the work she has done is her contribution to the award winning documentary film on the lives of rape survivors in the aftermath of the Bangladesh Liberation War, *Rising Silence*.

Perhaps her work in the visual arts contributed to Ms Gazi's ability to draw such clear pictures for her readers while telling the story of two sisters and their mother who, trapped by blind adherence to the perceived demands of convention, creates an unreal dystopia for her daughters to navigate with only her by their side. In this story, of a sort of life imprisonment imposed on the daughters by the mother, Ms Gazi's comfort with the visual and her ability to recount this in words is brought out in all the minutiae of detail that she deftly puts together to help her readers into this surreal, yet at times strikingly ordinary, world. For instance, when Lovely entered Ramna Park she, "... leaned back her head and lifted her face to the sky. A leaf dropped onto her face like a falling star on a dark night. She unzipped her bag with care and placed the leaf inside. Who knew what kind of tree it belonged to. She didn't know anything about plants or trees. It would be good if she knew what tree this came from."

The author adroitly moves the reader back and forth between Lovely's surreal perception of the world on the day being described to the more prosaic voice of the background narrative, in a seamless manner. That this is brought about so effectively in the translation is also a tribute to the excellent and sensitive translation by Shabnam Nadiya. Mouthwatering descriptions of food have become a requisite for such novels but Gazi adds a twist to her descriptions. Among the various allegorical characterisations, food is also used to gently underline the lack of rights in the lives of the girls with the sameness of the *hilsa pulao* for special occasions, almost bringing forth a disgust of this traditionally gourmet dish, while the humble peanuts bought in a park carry the delicious flavour of liberation. As the novel moves towards unearthing secrets and the "man inside" Lovely's head exhorts her to break out, Gazi keeps up the tempo of anxiety for the reader with descriptions such as, "And here was this crow, cawing endlessly. In the afternoon as undisturbed as a still lake, the crow's hoarse call seemed to emerge from another world, existing only to send her a warning." As the day darkens, so does the "man" in Lovely's head become more cautious, exchanging places with the exterior Lovely, drawing us towards a startling and tragic denouement. This disturbing thriller with its cautionary tale against authoritarian behaviour and uncritical obedience to convention, shows us how excessive control contains the seeds of its own collapse by not allowing people to grow in a natural manner. And all of this is done by tautly and elegantly juxtaposing the mundane and the poetic, the surreal and the real.

**Nayantara Roy** is a lawyer practising in Delhi



HELLFIRE

By **LEESA GAZI**  
Translated by  
**SHABNAM NADIYA**  
Westland Eka  
₹399

## A middle-aged writer navigates an alt-right world



Rupa Gulab

review

If you remember *The Matrix*, the title of Kunzru's book may give you a hint of its plot. If you don't, here's the Cambridge dictionary definition of "red pill": "Beliefs, choices, or information that allow you to see the world as it really is, even though you would feel

safer or happier if you did not. This refers to a scene in the film *The Matrix* where a character is offered a choice between a red pill, which reveals the true world, and a blue pill, which keeps it hidden."

*Red Pill* opens with anxiety. It is early 2016, one of the strong contenders in the US presidential race is the darling of the alt right, the media frequently flash-cuts pictures of children displaced by war, and other disturbing things are at play, too.

The narrator (a British Indian writer living in New York) wonders "If the

world changed, would I be able to protect my family? Could I scale the fence with my little girl on my shoulders? Would I be able to keep hold of my wife's hand as the rubber boat overturned?"

We meet him as he's about to leave for a three-month writers' retreat in Berlin. He has been awarded a fellowship at the Deuter Centre—something he's not looking forward to, but he knows he has to leave home for a bit to sort himself out.

His angst amplifies in Berlin. A sinister note is struck when he discovers that one of buildings close



RED PILL

By **HARI KUNZRU**  
Scribner  
₹425

to the Deuter Centre was the venue of the 1942 Wannsee Conference, where the final solution to the Jewish Question was planned.

He's on edge at the Deuter Centre, too. He finds the entire system at odds with freedom, and refuses to work on his project in the communal workplace (which provokes the displeasure of the authorities), and avoids his colleagues as far as possible. If he's not locked up in his room reading dark German poets or watching *Blue Lives* (an unusually violent and disturbing US police

serial), he's out on long walks, brooding.

We see his paranoia growing and a breakdown is imminent. A meeting with Anton, the creator of *Blue Lives*, finally pushes him over the edge.

*Red Pill* is a novel for our times—it captures the anxiety of ordinary citizens over growing racism and nationalism, the surveillance state, the dissemination of fake news on the internet, and all the horrors that we see around us with clear-headed honesty.

However, there are far too many literary allusions to make the going smooth.

When you're trying to grapple with abstruse theories propounded by eighteenth century poets and aristocrats, you do tend to lose the plot. It's jerky and disjointed too. An entire section on the modus operandi of the Stasi in former GDR was unnecessary perhaps—great on its own, but it didn't meld into the book. Even so, *Red Pill* is a must read if you want to understand the uncomfortable world we live in.

**Rupa Gulab** is an author and columnist. *Hot Chocolate Is Thicker than Blood* is her latest title.



## THE ASIAN AGE

17 JANUARY 2021



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

## How life got in the way of my one true calling

An autorickshaw driver in Jaipur a couple of years ago asked me, “Hope you don’t mind my asking but are you a writer?” A shop salesperson looked at my execrable handwriting and commented, “You must either be a writer or a doctor”.

So, clearly, something gives me away. The problem is that I’m not THAT sort of a writer. Not the sort that everyone around me wants me to be. I’m not the sort of writer who spent the Pandemic lockdown carefully crafting my creative skills and honing my “talent” so I could write that exemplar novel, that series of high philosophy essays to understand humanity, that definitive book on the state of the nation.

Maybe I do want to be that writer. As an adolescent, like most others, I wrote those poems. Emotions crystallized in show-off nonsense from studying literature. The ones you really should find and burn before you burn so no unsuspecting young relative clearing your remains gets traumatised. I do confess then that I did have those dreams (have? had?), that so many have of being a “writer”. Of giving voice to that mandatory (what do you mean you don’t have one) book inside me. But is that really me, babe?

Okay I lie and exaggerate. I do have one book to my name. A definitive experience of researching and exploring India’s contemporary history, a labour of love for this country of ours and our journey as a nation. But that was in 1997. It was a co-authored and co-edited experience with Ayaz Memon, plus some 50 illustrious contributors. And today, it is out of print.

Also, at the turn of this century, I did sit down to write that novel. I made a space that was my own, surrounded by other people’s books. I rejigged my computer to give it more juice, I bought lots of A4 paper. Whatever the equivalent of lots of sharpened pencils in this digital age. Or as digital as it was then.

And I wrote, some 80,000 words. I greatly enjoyed myself. I laughed uproariously at my own jokes in case no one else would. I made up some characters and I based others on real-life people with I hoped enough tweaks just to make them unrecognisable. In some cases, I was quite happy to be vindictive assuming people I had forgotten to stay in touch with had also forgotten me. I did not follow all those publisher’s rules about flow charts and Autocad drawings to make an architectural model for my novel with as much work in the fake structure as in the real thing just to satisfy some management-brained “editor”. Did Jane Austen do that? Pah! Who on earth was anyone to tell me what to do?

Aah, arrogance. Because by then my characters got lives of their own and became uncooperative, as a well-known writer had warned me would happen. They just hared off in their own directions, far away from even my deliberately free-flowing structure. I contemplated murder of a few as my only option. I asked for advice from writer friends and writer critics and got plenty, both good and bad. The whole thing was on the verge when it was no longer fun...

And just then, life dropped a massive distraction into my life. Boy did I jump to it!

I still have the files, Manuscript 1, 2, 3 et cetera. I last looked through them 10 years ago. They seemed increasingly childish every time I took a re-look. Frankly, homicide of all the characters seemed like the only option. To spare myself the guilt, I did nothing. Which maybe is the same thing.

So that’s my career as a “writer”. I mean I am a writer. But not that kind of a writer. My admiration and respect for real writers has grown manifold. For their dedication and doggedness. For talent and their deep reserves. I salute them, the writers and their books, those I have read for ages, those I still do. Isn’t the human imagination fascinating? I read some. I review some. I collect some.

And then I stick to my type of writing. Short commentaries where 1,000 words seem like an imposition and 500 are about perfect. That’s me. The hack writer.

I take solace in this T.S. Eliot story. “Don’t you think most critics are failed writers?” asked a fan-friend. Yes, said Eliot: “And so are most writers”.

*The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.*

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com, Else, send to Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110002.

Subhani



## Why Akali Dal’s voice is missing in farmers’ stir



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

It was on the day the farm bills were passed in the Lok Sabha that the Akali Dal’s Harsimrat Kaur Bada

Union minister for food processing, announced her resignation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Cabinet in September 2020. She said her party was opposed to the bills, and that the government went ahead without heeding the protest of her party. But the Akali Dal then, and in the past three months since, did not state the specific reasons for their opposition to the farm legislation. The resignation of Ms Bada seemed to be an expression of despair rather than defiance. After leaving the government and the ruling National Democratic Alliance, neither the BJP nor the Akalis have attacked each other.

The BJP had attacked the Congress, and the Congress government of Amarinder Singh in Punjab, for opposing the farm laws as an act of hypocrisy. Home minister Amit Shah initially blamed the “Khalistanis” for fomenting the agitation, but later both Mr Shah and his party have refrained from targeting “Khalistanis” fearing the trouble it may unleash.

But television news channels supporting the Narendra Modi government have tried to build a counter-narrative that the Congress was using the “Khalistanis” to subvert the farmers’ agitation as it once did in the late 1970s and early 1980s to outflank the Akalis in Punjab’s politics. It is a line of argument that the Modi government and the BJP would still be wary of using because of the uncertain fallout and the stance of the Sikh diaspora’s political lead-

ership in places like Britain and Canada.

The information and broadcasting ministry had recently issued a 188-page booklet, enumerating the many things that Prime Minister Modi and his government have done for the Sikhs, indicating as it were that the government sees the ongoing agitation as that of Punjabi Sikhs and not as that of farmers per se. But it appears the Sikh outreach through the booklet did not evoke any positive response.

The Akalis, who have been the major political voice of the Sikhs, have not been in the forefront of the agitation now that they walked out of the government and the NDA on the very same issue. It is not clear what the equation is between the Akalis and the leaders of the farmers’ unions.

The farmers’ spokespersons told a Hindi television news channel that the farmers were not opposed to Mr Modi nor to the BJP, and that as a matter of fact they (farmers) had voted for the BJP. So, it has been made clear that if the Centre repeals the laws, the farmers will remain with the government.

It is this stand of the farmers that might be

**That even ostensibly farmers’ parties like the RLD and Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, and INLD and the Jannayak Janta Party in Haryana, can’t take the farmers for granted is evident in their unflattering electoral performance in the past few years**

**The Akalis, who have been the major political voice of the Sikhs, have not been in the forefront of the agitation now that they walked out of the government and the NDA. It is not clear what the equation is between the Akalis and the leaders of the farmers’ unions.**

holding the Akalis back from entering the fray and declaring their opposition to the Modi government. They may still be looking to return to the NDA and to the government once the standoff between it and the farmers ends.

It is of course standard practice that political parties do not usually spearhead the agitation of a section of society though they would support it from the outside.

The farmers too need to keep political parties out to keep the legitimacy of their cause and avoid being accused of being pawns in the hands of the Opposition political parties.

It is indeed the case that both Akalis and the Congress in Punjab would like to support the farmers’ agitation and expect in return the vote of the farmers at election time.

If the impasse is over, and the Modi government manages to reach an agreement with the farmers, the Akalis might stand to gain. If, however, the impasse continues, there is the possibility that the Akalis might want to join hands with the Congress, as the Shiv Sena and the Congress did in Maharashtra, to oppose the BJP. At the moment, despite the silence and invisibility of the Akalis, there might be an active back channel between the Akalis and the BJP.

There is also the danger, as far as the Akalis are concerned, that if the BJP makes a peace deal

with the Punjab Sikh farmers, Mr Modi and Mr Shah, who are forever on the lookout to expand the BJP’s footprint, may absorb the Sikh constituency and the Akalis may be left high and dry. This was this strategy that backfired for the BJP in Maharashtra when it tried to undermine the Shiv Sena.

It looks like the farmers are confident that they can argue their own case, fight their own cause, and don’t need to depend on political parties. It is the parties who need to woo the farmers. That even ostensibly farmers’ parties like the Rashtriya Lok Dal and Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, and Indian National Lok Dal and the Jannayak Janta Party in Haryana, can’t take the farmers for granted is evident in their unflattering electoral performance in the past few years. It is then reasonable to infer that the BJP would want to carve out its own farmers’ constituency.

Akali Dal leaders have held on to their belief that they represent the Punjabi constituency, taking advantage of the Sikh identity of Punjab’s farmers. The Sikh element in Punjab’s politics simply cannot be wished away. The BJP, on its part, will have a problem in balancing its Hindutva politics with that of the Sikh minorityism of the Akalis.

The farmers themselves have kept the protest as a farmers’ issue, pure and simple. They kept the ideologies of all stripes at bay. They are pressing on the simple issue of seeking repeal of the three farm laws. Economic experts explain the protest as anti-rational. The farmers, however, believe that their demand is rational too. The Akalis’ obligation at this point is to argue the case of the farmers so that the entire country knows that the farmers are not being obtuse and obdurate.

*The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst*

LETTERS  
ANIMAL ALTRUISM

A video of a leopard in the Tirthan Valley of Himachal Pradesh has triggered reactions from viewers ranging from awe to concern. The big cat was seen approaching a group of cars on the roadside. While some occupants scrambled for cover, one man stood still and let the animal balance itself against him playfully. This has raised speculation whether or not it is a pet. In India, private possession of endangered cats is prohibited. However, some believe that the animal may have been foraging for food near human settlements unbenowned and decided that being friendly made it stand a better chance for procuring the same.

Priyanka Mathur  
Kolkata

## BEWARE OF TURNCOATS

**THOUGH AN** increasing number of Trinamul Congress leaders is opting to shift their loyalties in West Bengal, the BJP should not forget what happened in Maharashtra in the aftermath of Assembly elections in that state. The floor-crossers who had joined the BJP just before the polls in Maharashtra, staged a mass homecoming after the BJP failed not only at getting a majority of its own, but also lost 17 seats when its tally went down from 122 in 2014 to 105 in 2019. Further, if denied party tickets in preference to the turncoats, the rank and file of BJP loyalists can stage a revolt by contesting as Independents across a number of seats in West Bengal; which can eat into a substantial number of committed BJP votes, thereby spoiling the chances of official party nominees in many constituencies.

Arun Malankar  
Mumbai

## POLL GIMMICK

**THIS REFERS TO** the excursion of Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi to a Jallikattu event in Avaniyapuram in Tamil Nadu, which is nothing but another election gimmick. Ironically, the DMK youth wing leader, who never bothered to attend Jallikattu during the past 10 years, too, accompanied him. Hope he, too, doesn’t face the same fate as the Congress leader during the coming Assembly elections which is all poised to be wrapped up by the AIADMK. Even the BJP does not stand a chance in the state.

N. Mahadevan  
Chennai

## ACCOMMODATE MIM

**FIGHTING ELECTIONS** isn’t the privilege of a few political parties; everyone has equal opportunity. Accusing the AIMIM of spoiling the MGB party in Bihar and now planning to put up candidates in West Bengal is unfair; they have every right to do so. Wasn’t it the responsibility of Mahagathbandhan then to offer adequate seats to them and strengthen the alliance before the elections? Shouldn’t a lesson be learnt from the debacle and the situation rectified before the Bengal elections? The so-called national parties have insignificant presence in states. A strategic alliance can stop the fascists from grabbing power, otherwise one will see the fall of one state after the other, just because of poor seat adjustment.

Syed Abdul Monim  
Navi Mumbai

Mohan Guruswamy



## An important lesson from India’s history for PM Modi

**T**he fortunes of India had irrevocably changed on May 29, 1658 when two Indian armies clashed on the dusty fields of Samugarh, near Agra. India’s history changed forever. Aurangzeb’s victory over his brother Dara Shikoh marked the beginning of Islamic bigotry in India that not only alienated the Hindus but also the much more moderate Sufis and Shias as well. Aurangzeb’s narrow Sunni beliefs were to make India the hotbed of Muslim fundamentalists, long before the Wahabis of Saudi Arabia sponsored the fanatics of the Taliban and the Islamic State. It was not only a battle for the Mughal throne, but also a battle for the very soul of India.

Aurangzeb’s victory here and other successful campaigns resulted in the creation of the greatest and biggest imperial India till then. But the seeds of India’s collapse were sowed.

In 1620 India had the world’s greatest national income, over a third of it, and was its greatest military power as well. It was the envy of Europe. The European traders came to seek Indian

goods for their markets. But no sooner was the iron hand of Aurangzeb no more that his imperial India began to disintegrate. The iron hand that ruled by dividing rather than uniting and that sought to impose a hierarchy by theological preferences gave rise to much discordance. But for Aurangzeb, Shivaji Bhonsle might have remained a minor western Indian feudatory? There are important lessons to be learnt from all this for those who rule and seek to rule India.

The weakening central rule and profit seeking peripheral kingdoms allowed European trading posts to be established. Weakening regimes led to the trading posts raising armed guards. Soon the overseas trading companies began warring each other and with so many minor states now free to make their destinies joining hands with one or the other it was the Europeans who got gradually got established. The Anglo-French wars of the Carnatic were fought by Indian armies beefed up by trading company levies. The East India Company of the British ultimately prevailed and the

French, Dutch, Portuguese and Danish got reduced to pockets.

A hundred years later, in 1757, the era of total foreign supremacy over India began when the East India Company’s troops drawn from South India and officered by English company executives defeated the army of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah at Plassey (Palashi) in Bengal, with the now usual mix of superior drilling, resolute leadership and a bit of treachery. At a crucial time, Mir Jafar and his troops crossed over. India lay prostrate before Robert Clive.

Within a decade, on August 12, 1765, Clive obtained a firman from the then Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, granting the dewan of Bengal, Bihar and Odisha to the Company. A Muslim contemporary indignantly exclaims that so great a “transaction was done and finished in less time than would have been taken up in the sale of a jackass”. By this deed the Company became the real sovereign ruler of 30 million people, yielding a revenue of four million sterling. The John Company grew from strength to

strength, and by 1857 the Grand Mughal was reduced to his fort conducting poetry soirées. It was the golden age of Urdu poetry.

The events of 1857 led to the formal establishment of India as a directly ruled colony of the British empire. It was yet another epochal event. India changed, for the better and for the worse. Once again India absorbed from outsiders, as it absorbed from the Dravidians, Aryans, Greeks, Persians, Kushans, Afghans, Uzbeks and all those who came to seek their fortunes here. The British were the only ones who came to take away its vast wealth in a systematic manner. The wealth taken from India to a great extent financed the Industrial Revolution in England.

From then to another epochal year ending with seven took ninety years. In 1947, India became independent. Its GDP is now the world’s third biggest. In a few decades it could conceivably become its biggest. But have we learned any lessons from history?

Given its abject failures on the economic front, the BJP/RSS regime in

New Delhi is now pushing India towards a Hindutva nationhood, by seeking to victimise a minority for the perceived wrongs and slights of the past. An intolerant religion can never be the basis of nationhood and national unity in India. The legacy of Aurangzeb tells us that. Aurangzeb had created the greatest empire that India had seen since Ashoka the Great. But it didn’t take very long for it to dissipate. In the hundred years that followed, a foreign mercantile company gained control over all of India.

The BJP under Narendra Modi might keep gaining electoral dominion over all or most of India. But has he learned any lessons from history? Does he want to become the Hindu Aurangzeb? What is worrisome is that we know well that history is not Narendra Modi’s forte.

*The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.*



## SHORT TAKES

S. AFRICAN TO  
HEAD UN'S  
S. SUDAN MISSION

**United Nations, Jan. 16:** Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed veteran South African diplomat Nicholas Haysom to head the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan. Haysom, who is currently the secretary-general's special adviser for Southern Africa, previously served as head of the UN political mission in Afghanistan and as special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan. In 2018, he was appointed to head the UN mission in Somalia but was expelled by the government on January 1, 2019, after questioning the arrest of a political candidate with an extremist history. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric on Friday announced Haysom's appointment. He said Guterres is grateful to Shearer "for his exemplary leadership of the UN Mission during critical developments for South Sudan."

5 HK ACTIVISTS  
SEEK ASYLUM  
IN THE US

**Hong Kong, Jan. 16:** Five Hong Kong democracy protesters who reportedly fled to Taiwan have arrived in the United States intending to seek asylum, an activist group said on Saturday. Their escape follows the mass arrest of democracy figures in Hong Kong under a new national security law that is part of a mounting crackdown by China on the financial hub.

The Hong Kong Democracy Council, a US-based group, said it had welcomed a group of young activists to America this week and their journey had been "arduous and perilous". "The activists, all under the age of 30, took part in the ongoing pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, faced protest-related arrests and charges, and fled the city by boat last July," Samuel Chu, founder of HKDC, said. "I am relieved and overjoyed to welcome them to the United States and to assist them as they seek asylum," Chu added.

INDIAN GUILTY  
IN ROBOCALL  
SCAM CASE

**Washington, Jan. 16:** An Indian national has pleaded guilty to conspiracy and identity theft in connection with an overseas robocall scam that defrauded thousands in the US, mostly elderly people, of nearly \$8 million, the Department of Justice said.

Shehzadkhan Pathan, 39, operated a call centre in Gujarat's Ahmedabad that placed automated robocalls to victims in the United States, as per court documents. After establishing contact with the victims through these automated calls, Pathan and other "closers" at his call centre would coerce, cajole, and trick victims to send bulk cash through physical shipments and electronic money transfers, federal prosecutors alleged.

Pathan and his conspirators used a variety of schemes to convince victims to send money, including impersonating law enforcement officers from the FBI and DEA and other government agencies, to threaten victims with severe legal and financial consequences.

ATTACK IN  
DR CONGO KILLS  
46 PYGMIES

**Bunia, DR Congo, Jan. 16:** Forty-six Pygmies have been massacred in eastern DR Congo's Ituri province by the notorious Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militia, local sources said on Friday.

"ADF rebels overran the village of Abembi" on Thursday, said Gili Gotabo, a local NGO leader. "Forty-six people died and two were wounded, all of them from the Pygmy community," he said.

The province's interior minister, Adjio Gigi, confirmed the toll and also blamed the ADF, which has been accused of hundreds of killings in the past year.

The attack took place in a local chieftom called Walese Vonkutu, on Ituri's border with North Kivu province, the sources said.

Originating in the 1990s as a Ugandan Muslim rebel group, the ADF is the most notorious of more than 100 militias that plague eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a country the size of western continental Europe.

It has been accused of slaughtering hundreds.

## Snow 'towers' over Eiffel



People walk with umbrellas in Champ de Mars park on January 16, 2021 after a snowfall in Paris, as the Eiffel Tower is seen in the background. 32 departments, including Paris and the entire Ile-de-France, are placed on snow-ice alert by Meteo-France.

— AFP

Biden slams lawmakers  
who did not wear masks

At least four US Congress men test positive for virus since Capitol attack

**Washington, Jan. 16:** President-elect Joe Biden has slammed Republican lawmakers who refused to wear masks while huddling in a secure location during the January 6 riot at the US Capitol despite the threat of Coronavirus, telling them that "it's time to grow up".

At least four members of US Congress —including Democratic leaders Pramila Jayapal, Brad Schneider and Bonnie Watson Coleman — have tested positive for Covid-19 since the Capitol attack by Trump's supporters which left five people dead.

"Quite frankly, it was shocking to see members of the Congress while the Capitol was under siege by a deadly mob of thugs refusing to wear a mask while they were in secure locations," Biden told reporters in Wilmington, Delaware on Friday.

"I'm so proud of my congresswoman, right here in the state of Delaware, Lisa Blunt Rochester, trying to hand out masks while people are lying on the floor huddled up, and her Republican colleagues

Army vet charged for shooting  
PoC girl during Trump meeting

**Iowa City (US), Jan. 15:** A white military veteran shot and wounded a 15-year-old girl when he fired his gun into a car carrying four Person of colour teenagers during a tense confrontation at a Trump rally near the Iowa Capitol last month.

Michael McKinney, 25, is charged with attempted murder in the Dec. 6 shooting in Des Moines. McKinney, who was heavily armed and wearing body armor, told police he fired the shot in self-defense. A resident of tiny St. Charles, Iowa, McKinney has posted on Facebook in support of

the far-right Proud Boys and against Black Lives Matter. In a news release detailing McKinney's arrest, the state police described an afternoon shooting at a parking lot and didn't mention the Trump car rally or the race of those involved.

A city police spokesman said initial reports indicated the shooting was traffic-related. Division of Criminal Investigation spokesman Mitch Mortvedt said the agency released the immediate facts and circumstances as required. But a review by *The Associated Press* shows the shooting was

sparked by a belligerent political clash between a large group of white Trump supporters and four unarmed POC girls all aged 16 and under.

The teen driver's mother said the girls argued with Trump supporters about politics and were subjected to racial slurs. Rallygoers blamed the teens for starting the confrontation, saying they were harassing and threatening the crowd. The girls' car ended up surrounded by Trump supporters who were yelling and honking horns before the driver went in reverse and struck a pickup.

— AP

were refusing to put them on. What the hell is the matter with you? It's time to grow up," he said.

"The result? At least four members of Congress today, including a cancer

survivor, now have Covid-19 who were in those rooms," Biden said. Congresswoman Coleman, who recently tested Covid-19 positive, is a 75-year-old cancer survivor. House

Speaker Nancy Pelosi has imposed fines this week on members who refuse to wear masks on the House floor, with a \$500 penalty for a first offence and \$2,500 for a second offence.

## Pak Cabinet removes Imran's aide as PTV chief

**Islamabad, Jan. 16:** The Pakistan Cabinet has removed Naem Bukhari, a close associate of Prime Minister Imran Khan, as chairman of Pakistan Television (PTV), after the Islamabad High Court barred him from working as the head of the state-run channel, according to media reports on Saturday.

Supreme Court lawyer, politician and former TV host Bukhari was appointed as chief of the state broadcaster in November last year, inviting criticism for getting benefit from his closeness to Prime Minister Khan.

In an embarrassment to Khan, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday restrained Bukhari from working as the PTV chairman while hearing a set of petitions challenging his appointment, citing it a violation of a 2018 Supreme Court order in a similar case.

Justice Minallah had remarked that the Cabinet did not make a clear decision on relaxing the age limit for 65-year-old Bukhari. The Cabinet, through circulation, took a decision in which Bukhari and two other PTV directors were removed from their posts as they were



Naem Bukhari

over 65 years, the Dawn News reported, quoting Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry.

When asked why the decision was taken in

haste and made through circulation instead of convening a formal meeting of the Cabinet, the minister said the government had to take a decision as presently the PTV was without a head and facing a "chaos-like situation", the report said.

The Cabinet also restored Aamer Manzoor as the managing director of PTV, the Geo News reported. Manzoor was removed by the corporation's board of directors on January 1. Barring Bukhari from serving as PTV chairman, the high court had directed the government to move a fresh

summary for his appointment and clarifying special age relaxation for him.

The court adjourned the hearing for two weeks. While passing the order, the IHC recalled a 2018 Supreme Court decision, which set aside the appointment of Atau Haq Qasmi as PTV chairman.

The apex court in Qasmi's appointment case had ordered the federal government to appoint a full-time managing director of PTV after fulfilling all legal, procedural, and codal formalities strictly in accordance with the law.

— PTI

## SECURITY | NIGHTMARE

## Transactional diplomacy alienated friends, foes alike

## Trumpism not a blip in foreign policy

**Washington, Jan. 16:** President-elect Joe Biden's plan to scrap President Donald Trump's vision of "America First" in favour of "diplomacy first" will depend on whether he's able to regain the trust of allies and convince them that Trumpism is just a blip in the annals of US foreign policy.

It could be a hard sell. From Europe to the Middle East and Asia, Trump's brand of transactional diplomacy has alienated

friends and foes alike, leaving Biden with a particularly contentious set of national security issues. Biden, who said last month that "America's back, ready to lead the world, not retreat from it," might strive to be the antithesis of Trump on the world stage and reverse some, if not many, of his predecessor's actions.

But Trump's imprint on America's place in the world — viewed as good or bad — will not be easily erased. US allies aren't blind to the large constituency of American voters who continue to support Trump's nationalist tendencies and his belief that the United States should stay out of world conflicts.

If Biden's goal is to restore America's place in the world, he'll not only need to gain the trust of foreign allies but also convince voters at home that international diplomacy works better than unilateral tough talk. Trump

U.S. NTSB team  
joins jet crash  
investigationBoeing 737-500 was out of  
service for 9 months last yr

**Jakarta, Jan. 16:** A team from the US National Transportation Safety Board has arrived in Indonesia's capital to join the investigation into the crash of a Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500, the head of Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee said on Saturday.

The team also comprises representatives from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, Boeing and General Electric. They joined personnel from Singapore's Transportation Safety Investigation Bureau at the search and rescue command center at Tanjung Priok port in Jakarta to see some of the plane debris.

The plane lost contact with air traffic controllers minutes after taking off from Jakarta during heavy rain on Jan. 9. The jet crashed into the Java Sea, killing all 62 people on board. Divers found parts of the cockpit voice recorder on Friday as more personnel joined the search for wreckage and victims.

Investigators have already downloaded information from the plane's flight data recorder, which was recovered earlier this week. "There are 330 parameters and everything is in good condition. We are learning about it now," said Soerjanto Tjahjono, chairman of the National Transportation Safety Committee. Indonesia's government granted a waiver allowing the NTSB team to enter the country during its Coronavirus-related travel ban in which foreigners are barred from entering.

The 26-year-old Boeing 737-500 was out of service for almost nine months last year because of flight cutbacks caused by the pandemic. The airline and Indonesian officials

DAMAGED  
ROADS, LACK OF  
GEAR HINDER  
QUAKE RESCUE

**Mamuju, Jan. 16:** Damaged roads and bridges, power blackouts and lack of heavy equipment on Saturday hampered Indonesia's rescuers after a 6.2 magnitude earthquake left at least 42 dead and hundreds injured on Sulawesi island.

Operations were focused on about 10 locations in the hardest-hit city of Mamuju, where people are still believed trapped following Friday's night-time quake, said Saidar Rahmanjaya, who heads the local search and rescue agency. Cargo planes carrying food, tents, blankets and other supplies from Jakarta landed late Friday for distribution in temporary shelters.

Still, thousands spent the night in the open fearing aftershocks and a possible tsunami. The National Disaster Mitigation Agency's spokesperson Raditya Jati said 34 people were killed in Mamuju and nearly 200 hospitalized. The nearby district of Majene was also ravaged, leaving at least eight dead and more than 630 injured, he said.

At least 300 houses in Majene were damaged and about 15,000 people moved to shelters. Many survivors said that aid has not reached them yet due to damaged roads and disrupted communications.

— AP

US slaps curbs on  
Iran, China, Cuba

**Washington, Jan. 16:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday imposed sanctions on three of his primary targets — China, Iran and Cuba — in a last-minute push aimed in part at boxing in President-elect Joe Biden.

Five days before he turns in his keys at the State Department, Pompeo vowed to punish China over its clampdown in Hong Kong — a stance backed by Biden — but moved further away from Biden's goal of easing tensions with Iran and Cuba.

Pompeo condemned as "appalling" the massive operation on January 6 in Hong Kong in which China rounded up 55 people including an American lawyer, John Clancey.

"We condemn PRC actions that erode Hong Kong's freedoms and democratic processes and will continue to use all tools at our disposal to hold those responsible to account," Pompeo said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

President Donald Trump's outgoing admin-

istration slapped sanctions on six people over the detentions including Tam Yiu-Chung, Hong Kong's sole delegate to China's top lawmaking body, the National People's Congress Standing Committee.

It earlier took action against Hong Kong's top leader, Chief Executive Carrie Lam, who acknowledged that as a result she was no longer able to use a credit card or hold a bank account.

China last year pushed through a draconian security law in Hong Kong after widespread and sometimes violent protests that sought to preserve freedoms guaranteed to the financial hub before Britain handed back the territory in 1997.

Antony Blinken, who will appear for a Senate confirmation hearing on Tuesday to be Pompeo's successor, has vowed that the next administration "will stand with the people of Hong Kong and against Beijing's crackdown on democracy."

— AFP





## SHORT TAKES

UN'S 1ST STEP  
TO ELECT NEXT  
CHIEF BY JAN. 31

**United Nations, Jan. 16:** The UN General Assembly and Security Council are expected to take the first step toward electing the next head of the global organisation this month. Assembly President Volkan Bozkir said Friday that he and Tunisia's UN Ambassador Tarek Ladeb, the current council president, hope to send a letter before January 31 asking the UN's 193 member nations to submit any candidates to challenge Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The former Portuguese prime minister and UN refugee chief, whose five-year term at the helm of the United Nations ends on December 31, said in letters to Bozkir and Ladeb on Monday that he will seek a second term. The General Assembly elects the secretary-general on the recommendation of the 15-member Security Council where the five permanent members have veto power, so their support is crucial. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson immediately announced his support for Guterres, but there has been no word yet from The United States, Russia, China and France.

PALESTINIAN  
POLLS: FIRST IN  
15 YEARS

**Gaza City, Jan. 16:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree Friday, setting parliamentary and presidential elections for later this year in what would be the first vote of its kind since 2006, when the Islamic militant group Hamas won a landslide victory.

Elections would pose a major risk for Abbas' Fatah party and also for Hamas as both faced protests in recent years over their inability to reconcile with one another, advance Palestinian aspirations for statehood or meet the basic needs of those in the territories they govern.

Fatah and Hamas have been publicly calling for elections for more than a decade but have never been able to mend their rift or agree on a process for holding them, and despite Friday's decree, it remained far from clear whether the voting would actually be held.

Elections would also complicate President-elect Joe Biden's plans to restore aid to the Palestinians and to revive the peace process with Israel. The 2006 election victory by Hamas, which is considered a terrorist group by Israel and Western countries, led to heavy international pressure being placed on the Palestinian Authority.

LASCHET WILL  
LEAD MERKEL'S  
PARTY

**Berlin, Jan. 16:** Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right party on Saturday chose Armin Laschet, the pragmatic governor of Germany's most populous state, as its new leader — sending a signal of continuity months before an election in which voters will decide who becomes the new chancellor.

Laschet defeated Friedrich Merz, a conservative and one-time Merkel rival, at an online convention of the Christian Democratic Union. Laschet won 521 votes to Merz's 466; a third candidate, prominent lawmaker Norbert Roettgen, was eliminated in a first round of voting. Saturday's vote isn't the final word on who will run as the center-right candidate for chancellor in Germany's Sept. 26 election, but Laschet will either run for chancellor or will have a big say in who does. Merkel, who has been chancellor since 2005, announced in late 2018 that she wouldn't seek a fifth term. She also stepped down from the CDU leadership.

The decision ends an 11-month leadership limbo in Germany's strongest party after outgoing leader Annegrt Kramp-Karrenbauer, who had failed to impose her authority on the party, announced her resignation. A vote on her successor was delayed twice because of the Coronavirus pandemic. There had been no clear favorite going into Saturday's convention, but the election of Merz would have marked at least a symbolic break with the Merkel era.

Laschet will have to work to strengthen party unity — something Kramp-Karrenbauer struggled with. Laschet, 59, was elected in 2017 as governor of North Rhine-Westphalia state, a traditionally centre-left stronghold. He governs the region in a coalition with the pro-business Free Democrats.



A demonstrator holds a QAnon flag and a poster reading Freedom during a protest against virus restrictions at the Maria Theresien Platz in Vienna, on Saturday. — AFP

Defamation suit: Nix  
Trump, court told

**New York, Jan. 16:** Justice Department lawyers asked a federal appeals court Friday to replace President Donald Trump with the United States as the defendant in a defamation lawsuit brought by a woman who says he raped her in the 1990s.

The lawyers filed papers in an appeal of a lower-court Manhattan judge's ruling denying the substitution in a lawsuit brought by E. Jean Carroll, a columnist who in a June 2019 book described her encounter with Trump at an upscale Manhattan department store. The book excerpt prompted Trump to deny the allegations and question Carroll's credibility and motivations in a statement from his White House press office, comments in an Oval Office interview and statements to the media as he boarded a helicopter for Camp David, the lawyers said.

Carroll subsequently sued Trump, alleging defamation. They said the statements fell within the scope of his employment as president because Carroll was, in effect, questioning his fitness to hold public office and thus statement had to be made, even if they were later deemed to be defamatory.

If the substitution was allowed, US taxpayers would be responsible for any payout that might result in the litigation.

Carroll's attorney did not immediately comment on the government filing. Carroll has alleged that she and Trump recognized one another when they randomly spotted each other at the luxury store.

— AP

Biden names PIO  
to key WH post

**Washington, Jan. 16:** US President-elect Joe Biden has appointed Indian-American community and economic development expert Sameera Fazili to a key White House position. Fazili has been named as Deputy Director, National Economic Council at the White House, the Biden-Harris Transition announced on Friday.

The National Economic Council coordinates the economic policy making process and provide economic policy advice to the US president. Fazili is currently the Economic Agency lead on the Biden-Harris Transition.

She was earlier posted at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta where she served as the Director of

Engagement for Community and Economic Development. Fazili is the second Kashmiri-origin Indian-American appointed to a key position in the incoming Biden administration. In December, Aisha Shah was named as Partnerships Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy. In the Obama-Biden administration, Fazili served as a senior policy advisor on the White House's National Economic Council and as a senior advisor at the US Treasury Department in both Domestic Finance and International Affairs.

Prior to that, she was a clinical lecturer of law at Yale Law School. Originally from Buffalo, she now lives in Georgia. — PTI

PENCE CONGRATULATES HARRIS,  
OFFERS FULL CO-OPERATION

**Washington, Jan. 16:** Outgoing US Vice President Mike Pence has called his soon-to-be successor Kamala Harris to congratulate her and offer his full co-operation in the transition of power, according to multiple media reports said. However, there has been no communication between outgoing President Donald Trump and president-elect Joe Biden, which is unprecedented in recent memory.

"Vice President Mike Pence telephoned Vice

President-elect Kamala Harris Thursday to congratulate her and offer his belated assistance — filling a leadership role all but abdicated by President Trump, who is planning to fly out of the capital shortly before Joseph R Biden Jr is sworn in next week," *The New York Times* reported. Friday's call was the first time Pence, 61, and Harris, 56, had an one-to-one conversation since their vice presidential debate in October last year. — PTI

After vaccine, 23 die in  
Norway, 10 in Germany

Probe finds fever, nausea, diarrhoea caused fatalities

**London, Jan. 16:** Norway has launched a probe after 23 elderly patients died following their immunization with the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine against Covid-19.

"It may be a coincidence, but we aren't sure," Steinar Madsen, medical director of the Norwegian Medicines Agency (NOMA), told the British Medical Journal (BMJ).

"There is no certain connection between these deaths and the vaccine."

Two Covid-19 vaccines, Comirnaty, from BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna, are being used in Norway. The agency has investigated 13 of the deaths so far and concluded that common adverse reactions of mRNA vaccines, such as fever, nausea, and diarrhoea, may have contributed to fatal outcomes in some of the patients.

"There is a possibility that these common adverse reactions, that are not dangerous in fitter, younger patients and are not unusual with vaccines, may aggravate underlying disease in the elderly," Madsen was quoted as saying.

"We are now asking for doctors to continue with the vaccination, but to carry out extra evaluation of very sick people whose underlying condition might be aggravated by it."

The Paul Ehrlich Institute in Germany is also investigating 10 deaths shortly after Covid-19 vaccination in that country.

In a statement, Pfizer said: "Pfizer and BioNTech are aware of reported deaths following administration of BNT162b2. We are working with NOMA to gather all the relevant information."

"All reported deaths will be thoroughly evaluated by NOMA to determine if these incidents are related to the vaccine. The Norwegian government will also consider adjusting their vaccination instructions to take the patients' health into more

**London, Jan. 16:** All travel corridors in place between the UK and some regions will be temporarily closed from Monday as part of efforts to curb the spread of new Coronavirus variants from countries such as Brazil and South America. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced on Friday evening that passengers coming to the UK from anywhere must now have proof of a mandatory pre-departure Covid-19 test taken at least 72 hours earlier and self-isolate for at least 10 days on arrival.

All passengers will continue to be required to fill in locator forms, with the fines in place for a breach in any of the lockdown conditions starting at 200 pounds. "To protect us against the risk of as yet unidentified new strains, we will also temporarily close all travel corridors from 0400 hrs on Monday. Following conversations with the devolved administrations, we will act together so that this applies across the whole of UK," said Johnson.

"This means that if you come to this country, you must have proof of a negative Covid test that you have taken in the 72 hours before leaving and you must have filled in your Passenger Locator Form,

consideration." More than 20,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered over the past few weeks in Norway and around 400 deaths normally occur among care home residents every week, reports the BMJ.

Chinese publication Global Times first broke the story, saying that health experts in the country have called on Norway

**10** days of self-isolation on arrival

**72** hours earlier: Time when passengers coming to the UK must have taken the Covid test.

**15** of Feb., the date till when the measures will be in place until being reviewed

and your airline will ask for proof of both before you take off. You may also be checked when you land and face substantial fines for refusing to comply," he said. "And, upon arrival, you must then quarantine for 10 days — not leaving your home for any reason at all, or take another test on day 5 and wait for proof of another negative result. And we will be stepping up our enforcement — both at the border and in-country," he added.

The latest measures will be in place for at least a month until being reviewed on February 15. — PTI

and other countries to suspend the use of Pfizer's mRNA-based Covid-19 vaccine, after at least 23 deaths were reported post-vaccination.

"All the deaths have occurred in frail, elderly patients in nursing homes. All are over 80 years old and some of them over 90," Norwegian media NRK reported.

According to the BMJ,

CHINA COVERING  
UP COVID ORIGIN,  
CLAIMS POMPEO

**Washington, Jan. 16:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo alleged Friday there were Covid-like illnesses among staff at a Chinese virology institute in autumn 2019, casting further blame on Beijing as health experts arrived in the country to probe the pandemic's origins.

The top US diplomat in a statement urged the World Health Organisation team that landed Thursday in Wuhan, where Covid-19 was first detected, to "press the government of China" on the "new information." "The United States government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the (Wuhan Institute of Virology) became sick in autumn 2019, before the first identified case of the outbreak, with symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and common seasonal illnesses," Pompeo said.

He said this contradicted reports that none of the staff at the institute had contracted Covid-19 or related viruses.

"Beijing continues today to withhold vital information that scientists need to protect the world from this deadly virus, and the next one," Pompeo said.

Covid-19 was first detected in Wuhan in late 2019 and has since killed more than two million people so far. — AFP

2 insider attackers kill 12  
Afghan militia: Official

**Kabul, Jan. 16:** At least two members of an Afghan militia opened fire on their fellow militiamen in the western Herat province, killing 12, in what

provincial police on Saturday described as an insider attack. Herat police spokesman Abdul Ahad Walizada said the attackers fled with the slain militiamen's weapons and ammunition, adding that Afghan government forces had regained control of the area.

A Taliban spokesman Yousaf Ahmadi in a tweet claimed responsibility for the insider attack, which took place late Friday. Meanwhile, a sticky bomb attached to an armoured police Land Cruiser SUV exploded Saturday in the western part of the capital, Kabul, killing two policemen and wounding another, Kabul police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said. Faramarz did not specify the identities of the casualties.

However, two members of the Afghan police force,

BOMB KILLS TWO  
COPS IN KABUL

**Kabul, Jan. 16:** A roadside bomb targeting a police vehicle in the Afghan capital killed two policemen Saturday, officials said, as violence continues unabated in Afghanistan despite peace talks between the Taliban and government.

The vehicle carrying the policemen was struck by the bomb in the centre of the capital on the road to the prestigious Kabul University, police spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said. Two policemen were killed and one wounded, Faramarz said. — AFP

speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media, said Kabul's deputy police chief Mawlana Bayan was wounded in the attack.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for

the bombing in Kabul. In the southern Helmand province, a suicide car bomber targeted a police compound late Friday, killing one policeman and wounding two others, provincial police spokesman Zaman Hamdard said. The attack took place in Lashkar Gah district on the highway between southern Helmand province and the city of Kandahar. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in Helmand. The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for multiple attacks in the capital in recent months, including on educational institutions that killed 50 people, most of them students.

IS has claimed responsibility for rocket attacks in December targeting the major US base in Afghanistan. There were no casualties. The violence comes as the representatives of the Taliban and the Afghan government earlier this month resumed peace talks in Qatar. — AP

U.S. RETAINS  
Let's ULTRA  
DESIGNATION

**Washington, Jan. 16:** The United States has reviewed and maintained the terrorist designations of

Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ), along with ISIL Sinai Peninsula (ISIL-SP) and several other organisations. Days ahead of the transition of power, the US Department of State said that it has amended the terrorist designations of LJ and ISIL Sinai Peninsula (ISIL-SP) to include additional aliases.

Additionally, the Department of State has reviewed and maintained the Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) designations of LJ, ISIL-SP, LeT, Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al Naqshabandi, Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan (Ansaru), al-Nusra Front, Continuity Irish Republican Army, and the National Liberation Army, a media note said.

"Based upon a review of the Administrative Records ... I conclude that the circumstances that were the bases for the designations of the aforementioned organisations as Foreign Terrorist Organisations have not changed in such a manner as to warrant revocation of the designations and that the national security of the US does not warrant a revocation of the designations," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a federal register notification published on January 14.

These organisations included Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al Naqshabandi, Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, al-Nusra Front, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Continuity Irish Republican Army, and the National Liberation Army. — PTI

## LIVING | OUTSIDE

The UAE, the US and Saudi Arabia host the largest numbers of Indian migrants

## At 18 mn, India has world's largest diaspora

**United Nations, Jan. 16:** The Indian diaspora, one of the most "vibrant and dynamic", is the largest in the world, with 18 million people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020, the UN has said. The United Arab Emirates, the US and Saudi Arabia host the largest numbers of migrants from India, it said.

"India has the largest transnational population in the world. It has the most migrants abroad — 18 million, which is a significant number and another

feature which is very interesting about the Indian migrant population is that they're really distributed all over the globe," Population Affairs Officer in the Population Division at UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Clare Menozzi said.

Menozzi said while some transnational populations are really clustered in one country or region, the Indian diaspora is present in all continents and regions — from the Gulf to Northern America to

Others with a large diaspora included Mexico and Russia (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million).

Other countries hosting large numbers of migrants from India included Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and the UK.

Australia, UK. "It's a very vibrant" and dynamic diaspora in the world, she said. The report, 'International Migration 2020 Highlights', by the Population Division of UN DESA, released on Friday said in 2020, 18 million persons from India were living outside of their country of birth. Other countries with a large diaspora included Mexico and Russia (11 million each), China (10 million) and Syria (8 million). The report said India's large diaspora is distributed across a number of major countries of destination, with the UAE (3.5 million), the US (2.7 million) and Saudi Arabia

(2.5 million) hosting the largest numbers of migrants from India.

Other countries hosting large numbers of migrants from India included Australia, Canada, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar and the UK. Between 2000 and 2020, the size of the migrant population abroad grew for nearly all countries and areas of the world. India experienced the largest gain during that period at nearly 10 million, followed in order of magnitude by Syria, Venezuela, China and the

Philippines. Migration from India is largely motivated by labour and family reasons, Director of Population Division at UN DESA John Wilmoth told reporters at the launch of the report here, adding that forced displacement is a much smaller category (about 10 per cent) in the total.

Menozzi said the Indian diaspora is comprised predominantly of persons who are working, but also students and people who moved for family reasons. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Covid clouds over Oz Open

**Melbourne:** Three coronavirus cases have been detected among charter flights carrying tennis players, coaches and officials to Melbourne ahead of the Australian Open, health authorities and tournament organizers said on Saturday. A total of 47 players from the two affected flights arriving from Los Angeles and Abu Dhabi are now in a strictly enforced 14-day quarantine without the ability to leave their hotel rooms even to practice. The Australian Open is scheduled to start in February 8. Health authorities said two positive Covid-19 cases emerged from a charter flight from Los Angeles and Tennis Australia said there was a third positive case from a flight from Abu Dhabi. The cases from Los Angeles involved an aircrew member and a passenger who was not a player. — AP

## Lanka dig in after Root double ton

**Galle, Sri Lanka:** Joe Root completed his fourth double century for England on Saturday but insisted it will mean nothing if his side cannot overcome a defiant Sri Lanka in the first Test. The England captain made 228 of his team's 421 all out — 26 runs short of his brilliant 254 career best against Pakistan at Old Trafford in 2016. But Lahiru Thirimanne led Sri Lanka's stubborn resistance, hitting an unbeaten 75 while Kusal Perera made 62 as the home team reached 156-2 in their second innings. After their disappointing 135 in the first innings, they need another 130 to reach England's total. Root's 321 ball innings with a six and 18 fours dominated the day. — AFP

**Brief scores: Sri Lanka 135 & 156/2 in 61 overs** (Thirimanne 76\*, Perera 62) **vs England 421 in 117.1 overs** (Root 228, Lawrence 73).

## Man U face acid test at Liverpool

**London:** Liverpool and Manchester United face off on Sunday as the Premier League's top two teams for the first time since 1997 — with the rivalry between England's most successful clubs rekindled by a fascinating title race. United top the table after the New Year for the first time since Alex Ferguson's retirement in 2013 thanks to an 11-match unbeaten run to take them past Jurgen Klopp's men. Liverpool have surrendered top spot after three league games without a win and could drop to fifth place on Sunday if results go against them. The last time United and Liverpool locked horns in a title race was 12 years ago. Back then United were hardened winners under Ferguson, who saw off Rafael Benitez's challengers to win a third consecutive league title. — AFP

## Pandya brothers' father no more

**Vadodara:** India cricketers Hardik and Krunal Pandya lost their father Himanshu, who died on Saturday after suffering a heart attack. He was 71. "Krunal, who was leading Baroda in the Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy, left the bio-bubble created for the tournament to be with his family," association secretary Ajit Lele said. Hardik is not playing the national T20 tournament as he is preparing for the white-ball series against England. He has also left Mumbai, where he was training, for Vadodara. Himanshu had played a key role in the success of his cricketer sons. — PTI

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**Sri Lanka vs England:** First Test, Day 4 from 10 am on Sony Ten 2

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy T20 Tournament:** Mumbai vs Puducherry from 11:55 am; Hyderabad vs Delhi from 6:55 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

**Australia vs India:** Fourth Test Day 4 from 5:30 am (Monday) on Sony Six, Ten 1, HD

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Sheffield United vs Tottenham Hotspur from 7:30 pm; **Liverpool vs Manchester United** from 10 pm; **Manchester City vs Crystal Palace** from 1:30 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301. Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 57290/94. Price in Nepal - Nep. Rs. 20.00 per copy.

## OPENING WOES

## Rohit, Shubman fail to give India strong start on Day Two

**Brisbane, Jan. 16:** Rohit Sharma's indiscreet shot selection pegged India back after rookie bowling attack restricted Australia to 369 on a rain-curtailed second day of the fourth Test on Saturday.

With heavy thunder-showers preventing any play in the post tea session, India ended the day at 62 for 2.

Rohit was elegant as ever in his 44 off 74 balls before Nathan Lyon in his 100th Test enticed him to come down the track but the half-chip-half-loft was safely pounced by Mitchell Starc in the deep.

India also lost Shubman Gill (7) who edged one off Pat Cummins to Steve Smith. Cheteshwar Pujara (8) and Ajinkya Rahane (2) added only two runs in the 6.1 overs before the break.

There were six boundaries from Rohit but he did not fiddle at deliveries in and around the off-stump channel even as Cummins and Josh Hazlewood bowled a testing spell under overcast conditions.

The shot of the session was an on-drive off Cummins which came after a streaky boundary through the slips in the same over. Another delightful stroke was an off-drive off Cameron Green as 49 runs were added for the second wicket.

There wasn't much swing on offer but the pace off the track has increased compared to the first day and it only helped that the Australian pace attack is a more well built one with average speed being at least 6-7 kmph more than their Indian counterparts.

Pujara, at the other end was playing his usual 'grinding out' game but it didn't look too arduous till Rohit kept the score-board ticking at the other end. It wouldn't be an over statement to say that among all top order batsman across both sides, Rohit looked the most comfortable and till his dismissal never looked like being troubled by the four-pronged attack. — PTI

## INDIAN FAN COMPLAINS OF RACISM DURING 3RD TEST

**Sydney, Jan. 16:** Sydney Cricket Ground officials have launched an investigation after an Indian supporter alleged that he was subjected to racial profiling and abuse by a security officer during the final day of the third Test.

The incident took place after Indian fast bowler Mohammed Siraj was allegedly racially abused by spectators on the third and fourth day of the drawn Test at SCG.

Sydney resident Krishna Kumar met Venues NSW legal personnel on Thursday to lodge an official complaint, accusing the

security at the venue of racial profiling and unjustified frisking.

Kumar told Venues NSW that he was targeted after trying to carry four banners reading: "Rivalry is good, racism is not", "No racism mate", "Brown inclusion matters" and "Cricket Australia more diversity please".

A security officer stopped Kumar, informing him that that one of the banners exceeded the permitted dimensions.

When he requested to speak to a security supervisor, Kumar was asked to leave. — PTI



Washington Sundar (centre) is congratulated by teammates after taking the wicket of Australia's Nathan Lyon on the second day of the fourth Test at the Gabba in Brisbane on Saturday.

— AP

## SCORECARD

**Australia first innings (overnight 274/5):** David Warner c R. Sharma b M. Siraj 1, Marcus Harris c W. Sundar b S. Thakur 5, Marnus Labuschagne c R. Pant b T. Natarajan 108, Steven Smith c R. Sharma b W. Sundar 36, Matthew Wade c S. Thakur b T. Natarajan 45, Cameron Green b W. Sundar 47, Tim Paine c R. Sharma b S. Thakur 50, Pat Cummins lbw b S. Thakur 2, Mitchell Starc not out 20, Nathan Lyon b W. Sundar 24, Josh Hazlewood b T. Natarajan 11. Extras (b-4, lb-5, nb-6, wd-5) 20. **Total (all out in 115.2 overs) 369.**

**FoW:** 1-4, 2-17, 3-87, 4-200, 5-213, 6-311, 7-313, 8-315, 9-354.

**Bowlers:** Mohammed Siraj 25-10-66-1, T Natarajan 24.2-3-78-3, Shardul Thakur 24-6-93-3, Navdeep Saini 7.5-2-21-0, Washington Sundar 31-6-89-3, Rohit Sharma 0.1-0-1-0.

**India 1st Innings:** Rohit Sharma c M. Starc b N. Lyon 44, Shubman Gill c Smith b Cummins 7, Cheteshwar Pujara batting 8, Ajinkya Rahane batting 2. Extras (nb-1) 1. **Total (For 2 wks, in 26 overs) 62.**

**FoW:** 1-11, 2-60.

**Bowling:** Mitchell Starc 3-1-8-0, Josh Hazlewood 8-4-11-0, Pat Cummins 6-1-22-1, Cameron Green 3-0-11-0, Nathan Lyon 6-2-10-1.

## Indian bowlers impress McDonald

**Brisbane, Jan. 16:** Australia's assistant coach Andrew McDonald on Saturday praised the highly inexperienced Indian bowling attack for the final Test and singled out Washington Sundar, saying the young off-spinner filled the shoes of Ravichandran Ashwin "quite well".

Hit by a barrage of injuries through the series, India picked debutants Washington (3/89) and medium pacer T. Natarajan (3/78) in the

playing eleven on Friday.

The duo was travelling with the squad as net bowlers.

"I thought they (the Indian bowlers) were very consistent. I thought Washington Sundar in particular was disciplined and fill that role of Ravi Ashwin quite well and kept it tight and was able to take some key wickets on the way," McDonald said at the virtual post-day press conference after Day Two.

"So, for me I suppose, he

is a bowler who controlled well the tempo of the game and I think it stood out for me."

McDonald, who also coaches in the IPL, was also impressed by Natarajan.

"...Natarajan shaped the ball early, there is lot (to like) about him, left-arm swing bowler; no doubt he is inexperienced but has enough played first-class games to be play his first Test on this tour, (that) is a great achievement, so I think they held their

own," the 39-year-old said.

The left-arm pacer had impressed in the limited overs leg of the tour after making the Indian team at the back of a stellar IPL.

"They (Indian bowlers) applied pressure throughout the innings and they made (it) difficult for ourselves. Times when we felt we would get on the top, they were able to bounce back and get key wickets at crucial times. It was great arm-wrestle, so full credit to their attack." — PTI

## Rohit speaks highly of debutant Natarajan

**From ball one, Natarajan was right up there. He showed a lot of composure, is a strong character who doesn't speak much but we all know he has a solid personality**

— ROHIT SHARMA  
Indian batsman

strong character who doesn't speak much but we all know he has a solid personality. He wants to do well for the team and also for himself. He is here to stay."

For Rohit, considering that cumulative experience of the bowling attack was four Test matches, they needed to be lauded for keeping Australia under check on a good batting wicket.

"They showed a lot of discipline and overall if I had to analyse the performance of these bowlers, I would say they bowled pretty well. This is a great experience for them bowling against the best batters, and test themselves," he said. — PTI

and bowling to such batsmen, it wasn't going to be easy and he was not under any pressure," Rohit said about the debutant, who was the pick of the bowlers with 3/78 in 24.2 overs.

"From ball one, he was right up there. He showed a lot of composure, is a

Shami, and K.L. Rahul too were already back in India because of injury Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Vihari, Ravindra Jadeja and Umesh Yadav were still in Australia, but all *hors de combat*.

This made picking the playing XI excruciating easy at one level, excruciating at another: few players to choose from, yet how to assemble the best combination to fight the Aussies?

The batting, despite Kohli not being there, was not as badly dented as the bowling. Having rightly decided be on the attack rather than defend (difficult, given the players available), the big question was whether to play two spinners and three pacers, or four pacers and a spinner.

The history of matches at the Gabba, where fast

bowlers have been more successful, swung the mandate in favour of Thakur and Natarajan to join Siraj and Saini. For the spinner's slot, Washington Sundar was preferred over Kuldeep Yadav to shore up the batting.

This meant India's bowling attack had a collective experience of four Tests (Siraj 2, Saini 1, Thakur 1) and two debutants (Sundar and Natarajan) when they took the field at Brisbane! I can't think of a less experienced bowling attack since representing independent India.

India's performance so far at Brisbane has been admirable. The rookie bowling attack has handled the pressure well, shown fine skill and restricted Australia to 369. It's not a small score, but nowhere near 450 that Tim Paine was expecting after

choosing to bat first.

Had Rohit Sharma, after a sparkling 44, not been seduced into indiscretion by a delivery that Lyon held back cleverly seeing the batsman jump out of the crease, India would have been on equal terms with Australia going into the third day. Now Australia are a nudge ahead.

However, with Pujara and Rahane at the crease, Pant, Agarwal and Sundar to follow, there is quite a lot of batting to come. If India survive the first session without too much damage, this Test could be heading for a tantalising finish too.

Where grit, tenacity, commitment and character are concerned, India's performance in this tour has been outstanding. Nevertheless, the number of players that have been

## All eyes are on Kerala's Azhar

**Chennai, Jan. 16:** Kerala's Mohammed Azharuddeen wouldn't have set out on the arduous journey to emulate the Mohammed Azharuddin of Hyderabad, if not for a cricket-crazy elder brother and a die-hard fan of the former India captain.

From his name to his career option, everything to do with Azharuddeen was decided by Kamaruddeen. The journey continues, though.

While the first step towards fulfilling his family's dream was taken when he was chosen to represent Kerala in 2015, he shot into the national limelight recently with his 37-ball 100 in the domestic T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match against Mumbai.

"I have met him like twice or thrice. Once in my hometown and once in Hyderabad when we were there to play Ranji Trophy and he was the head coach of Hyderabad. I shared the story of how I was named after him with Mohd Azharuddin sir," Azharuddeen said.

"To be frank, like my elder brother, I did not follow Azharuddin sir: I have just watched a few videos of his on Youtube," the Kerala stumper added.

The 26-year-old from Thalangara in north Kerala's Kasaragod town, known for its love for cricket rather than football, said the blistering knock would have surely pleased his brother Kamaruddeen, who had changed his youngest brother's name from Ajmal to Azharuddeen after his birth.

Azharuddeen has seven brothers and all are big-time cricket fans. "My family is a cricket family. I have seven elder brothers. Everyone has played cricket. Obviously they follow the game when I play. Even if they don't watch, they used to follow the scorecard," he says.

About his memorable



Mohammed Azharuddeen

knock against Mumbai, which was the third fastest T20 ton by an Indian batsman, Azharuddeen said he had not made any special preparation prior to that.

The player's game was affected after he was dropped down in the batting order by former coach Dav Whatmore.

"I am an opener. After Dav Whatmore came as coach he made me a middle-order player. I came down the order due to team requirements. It was not a good slot for me. I just requested the coach (Tinu Yohannan) to allow me to bat in the right slot, which is opening.

"I like to hit straight. One of my strengths is hitting straight. I am good at hitting straight, against fast bowling and spin bowling. It was a true wicket (in the game against Mumbai) and I batted with confidence," he added.

Asked if he was looking forward to the IPL auction scheduled next month, Azharuddeen said he was not too worried about it. "I am in a good zone. I am not worried about the IPL auction or something. I am just concentrating on our fourth match against Andhra," he said.

When asked about his goals, Azharuddeen mentioned playing in the IPL and scoring hundreds in Ranji Trophy. — PTI

## Baroda continue winning streak

**Vadodara, Jan. 16:** Baroda continued their winning run in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy by claiming a 60-run victory over Maharashtra in an Elite C Group game here on Saturday.

This is Baroda's fourth win on the trot in the league stage after having defeated Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in their first three outings.

Put in to bat, Baroda rode on stand-in skipper Kedar Devdhar's stroke-filled unbeaten 99 off 71 balls to post a competitive 158 for four.

Right-arm medium pacer Atit Sheth (4/17) then wreaked havoc to scuttle out Maharashtra for a meagre 98 and give his team four full points.

**TAMIL NADU SCORE 4TH WIN ON A TROT**

In Kolkata, Assam pulled off an upset 13-run win over Bengal in an Elite Group B match while Tamil Nadu won their

fourth straight match to go top of the points table.

Bengal opted to field and saw the talented Riyan Parag (77) help Assam put up a fighting 157 for 5 in 20 overs. The visiting team restricted Bengal to 144 for 8.

In another match, skipper Dinesh Karthik (40 not out) and N. Jagadeesan (78 not out) saw Tamil Nadu home against Hyderabad after a brief stutter in the middle of the innings.

TN lead the group with 16 points after four consecutive wins followed by Bengal (12 points from 4 matches). — PTI

## BRIEF SCORES

■ Baroda 158/4 in 20 overs (Kedar Devdhar 99 not out, 28; Taranjitsingh Dhillion 2/30) lost to Maharashtra 98 in 16.5 overs (Naushad Shaikh 32; Atit Sheth 4/17, Ninad Rathwa 3/21).

■ Hyderabad 152/7 in 20 overs (B. Sandeep 41, Pragmay Reddy 30, B. Aparajith 2/22) lost to Tamil Nadu 155/3 in 19.3 overs (N. Jagadeesan 78 not out, Dinesh Karthik 40 not out).

## Board should look into India's alarming rate of injuries



Ayaz Memon  
Over The Top

What an extraordinary Test series this is turning out to be! After India lost the first match from a potentially winning position in a 'freak' hour's batting that saw them being bowled out for an abysmal 36, a white-wash by Australia looked the likely outcome, more so with Virat Kohli and Mohamed Shami (for different reasons) no longer available.

What's transpired since has been straight out of Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

Shrugging off the trauma of the sensational col-

lapse at Adelaide, India went on to win the second Test in a remarkable turnaround. Perhaps even more amazing was the manner in which the third was saved, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant, Hanuma Vihari and Ravichandran Ashwin batting out the last day against all odds.

By the time the fourth match started, India's squad was severely depleted, resembling a battalion of the 'walking wounded' in a war zone.

Eight key players were out of commission, Kohli was on paternity leave.

Shami, and K.L. Rahul too were already back in India because of injury Ashwin, Jasprit Bumrah, Vihari, Ravindra Jadeja and Umesh Yadav were still in Australia, but all *hors de combat*.

This made picking the playing XI excruciating easy at one level, excruciating at another: few players to choose from, yet how to assemble the best combination to fight the Aussies?

The batting, despite Kohli not being there, was not as badly dented as the bowling. Having rightly decided be on the attack rather than defend (difficult, given the players available), the big question was whether to play two spinners and three pacers, or four pacers and a spinner.

The history of matches at the Gabba, where fast

bowlers have been more successful, swung the mandate in favour of Thakur and Natarajan to join Siraj and Saini. For the spinner's slot, Washington Sundar was preferred over Kuldeep Yadav to shore up the batting.

This meant India's bowling attack had a collective experience of four Tests (Siraj 2, Saini 1, Thakur 1) and two debutants (Sundar and Natarajan) when they took the field at Brisbane! I can't think of a less experienced bowling attack since representing independent India.

India's performance so far at Brisbane has been admirable. The rookie bowling attack has handled the pressure well, shown fine skill and restricted Australia to 369. It's not a small score, but nowhere near 450 that Tim Paine was expecting after

choosing to bat first.

Had Rohit Sharma, after a sparkling 44, not been seduced into indiscretion by a delivery that Lyon held back cleverly seeing the batsman jump out of the crease, India would have been on equal terms with Australia going into the third day. Now Australia are a nudge ahead.

However, with Pujara and Rahane at the crease, Pant, Agarwal and Sundar to follow, there is quite a lot of batting to come. If India survive the first session without too much damage, this Test could be heading for a tantalising finish too.

Where grit, tenacity, commitment and character are concerned, India's performance in this tour has been outstanding. Nevertheless, the number of players that have been

injured is aalarming. It is abnormal, and in many ways have hurt the team's prospects.

Kohli's unavailability after the first Test was known in advance, as was Rohit's unavailability for the first two Tests. There is not much that could be done with Shami and Jadeja suffering fractures either. But what of the others?

Umesh and Vihari have done in their hamstringings, Bumrah has an abdominal strain, Ashwin a sore back, and Saini limped off the field on the first day at Brisbane with an ankle problem that may see him not take any further part in the match.

Remember, Ishant Sharma and Bhuvaneshwar Kumar, two seasoned fast bowlers, could not make the cut after getting similarly

injured during the IPL. What are the factors causing so many Indian players — compared to those from any other country — to suffer such injuries?

Is it work overload, training regimens that don't match individual physique, players not being attentive about their own fitness, poor assessment and treatment of niggle (by sports medicine experts attached to the Board) which then flare up into serious problems? Or are there other reasons?

This situation needs to be inquired into. The BCCI would do well to have a committee of experts study the issue and come out with a white paper on how to lick it. There are long term implications of the problem which must not be lost in the acclaim over the heroic performances in Australia.