

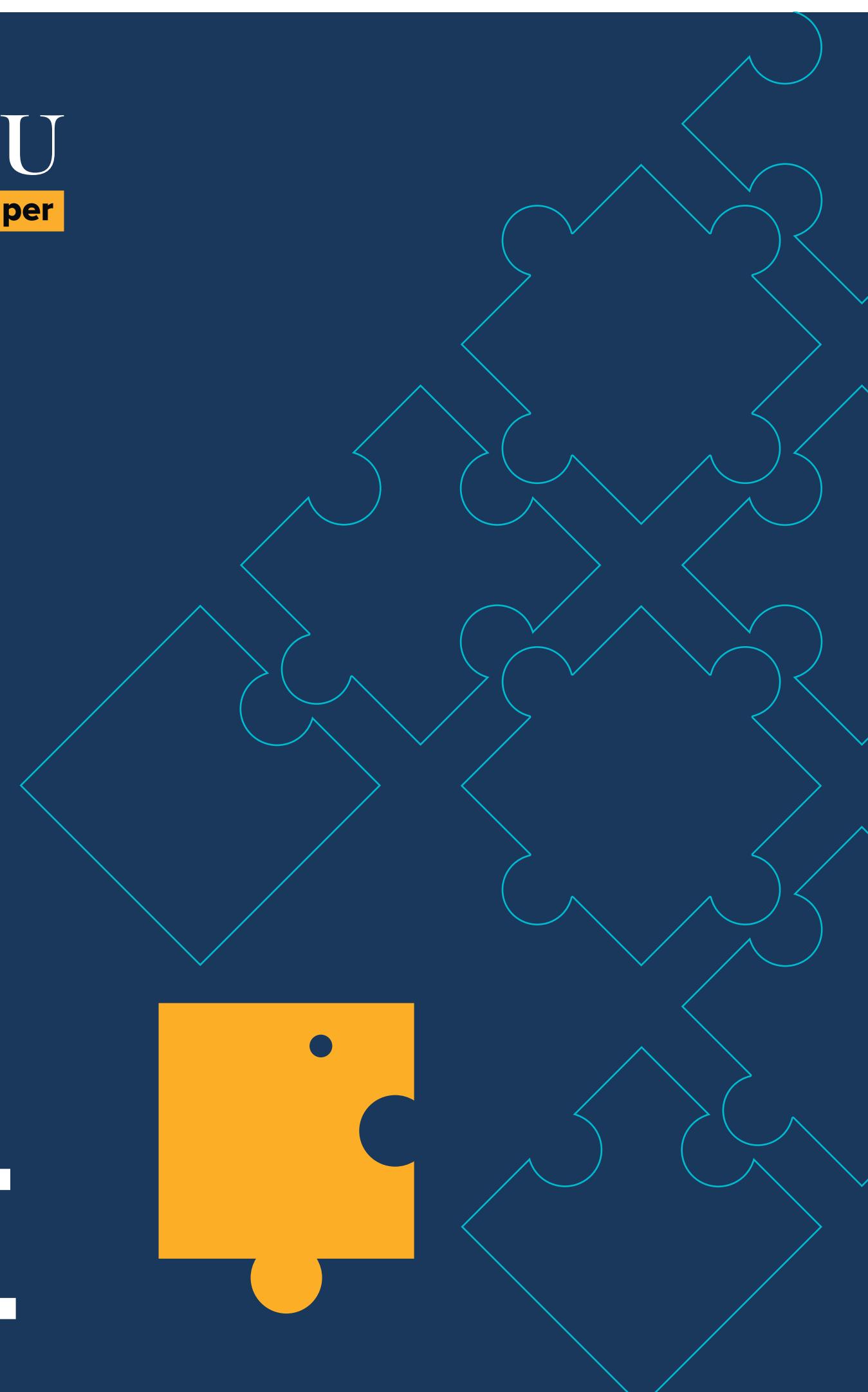
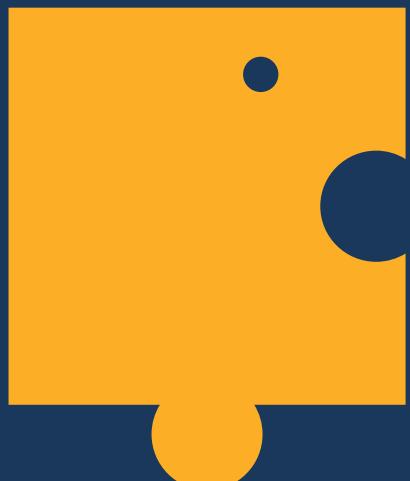


THE HINDU

e-Paper

Introducing The Hindu e-Paper
DAILY QUIZ
★★★ FREE ★★★

TAKE
THE FIRST
CRACK AT
UPSC
with ease!



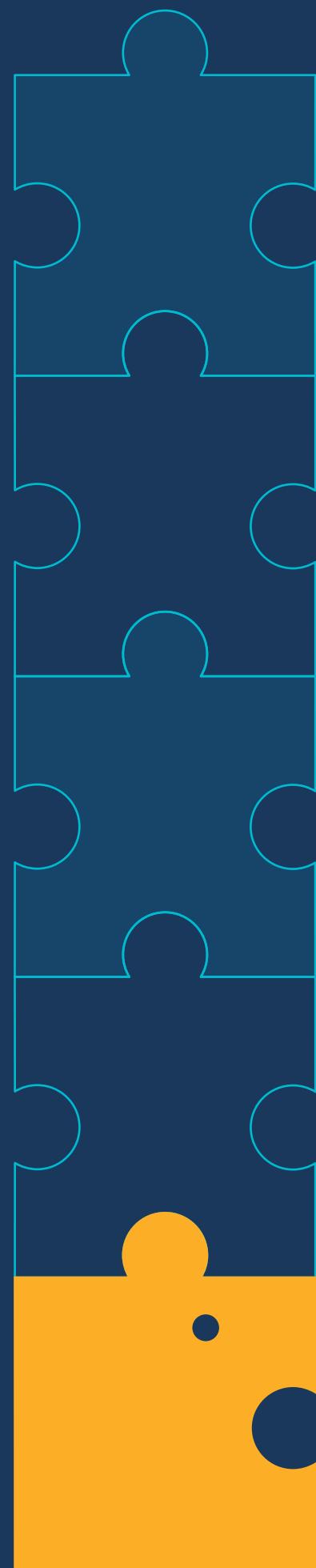
Just scan the QR code and enter your email ID;
let's get cracking!

To know more Visit: EPAPER.THEHINDU.COM/QUIZ.HTML

THE HINDU

e-Paper

READ THE HINDU E-PAPER REGULARLY AND ACE YOUR UPSC EXAM IN 5 EASY STEPS:



Take our FREE news quiz for the day with 10 questions from across topics

Get your score

Read the brief explanation on the answers

Click the accompanying links to read the reports in detail

Come back the next day
for more!

Just scan the QR code below and enter your email ID; let's get cracking!



To know more

Visit EPAPER.THEHINDU.COM/QUIZ.HTML



/thehindu



/The_Hindu



/the_hindu



LPG price hiked again,
domestic cylinder to
cost ₹25 more

Page 10



French ex-President
Sarkozy sentenced to
jail for corruption

Page 11



Govt. gets bids worth
₹77,146 cr. on day 1
of spectrum auctions

Page 12



Batting legend Viv
Richards slams critics
of Indian pitches

Page 13

PRINTED AT • CHENNAI • COIMBATORE • BENGALURU • HYDERABAD • MADURAI • NOIDA • VISAKHAPATNAM • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • KOCHI • VIJAYAWADA • MANGALURU • TIRUCHIRAPPALLI • KOLKATA • HUBBALLI • MOHALI • MALAPPURAM • MUMBAI • TIRUPATI • LUCKNOW • CUTTACK • PATNA

NEARBY



Farm, trade unions to launch joint campaign

NEW DELHI
Farm unions under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha banner and 10 Central trade unions have agreed to carry out a joint campaign, combining their demands and planning common actions. The decision was taken at a meeting of representatives from both sides on Monday, but will need to be ratified by the wider SKM at its general body meeting on Tuesday.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

WhatsApp's new policy being examined: govt.

NEW DELHI
The Central government on Monday informed the Delhi High Court that it was examining WhatsApp's controversial new privacy policy, which is scheduled to come into effect from May 15, at the highest level. The court granted three weeks' time to the Centre to submit a status report on the issue and posted the case for further hearing on April 19.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE DRIVEN PRELIMS CRASH COURSE 2021

with MK YADAV

REGISTER NOW
9560082909

25 lakh sign up for COVID jab on day 1 of expanded rollout

Registration through Co-Win portal only: govt.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Twenty-five lakh potential beneficiaries had registered on the Co-Win portal on Monday, the first day of the second phase of COVID-19 vaccination covering those over 60 and people with specified comorbidities over the age of 45, the Union Health Ministry said.

"Out of this, 24.5 lakh are citizens and the rest are healthcare workers (HCWs) and frontline workers. About 6.44 lakh appointments were booked today by the citizen beneficiaries," the Ministry said.

Over 1 crore doses given
It added that a total of 1,47,28,569 vaccine doses had been given so far, as per the provisional report till 7 p.m. on Monday and these include 66,95,665 HCWs, who have taken the first dose, and 25,57,837 HCWs who have taken the second dose; 53,27,587 frontline workers (1st dose), 1,28,630 beneficiaries more than 60 years old and 18,850 beneficiaries aged 45 and above with specific co-morbidities.

However, the first day of the wider roll-out saw several glitches in registration,



First day, first shot: Prime Minister Narendra Modi being administered a COVID-19 vaccine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi on Monday. ■ PTI

Modi takes first dose of Covaxin at AIIMS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi early on Monday took the first shot of Covaxin, the Indian-researched and produced anti-COVID-19 vaccine (manufactured by Bharat Biotech) at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi.

Twitter post
Tweeting a picture of himself getting a shot, Mr. Modi said, "Took my first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at AI-

IMS. Remarkable how our doctors and scientists have worked in quick time to strengthen the global fight against COVID-19. I appeal to all those who are eligible to take the vaccine. Together, let us make India COVID-19 free!"

It was learnt that the nurse who administered the vaccine to Mr. Modi was P. Niveda of Puducherry, assisted by Rosamma Anil, a nurse from Kerala.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
ANOTHER REPORT ▶ PAGE 9

Chinese cyber attack foiled:
Power Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

"State-sponsored" Chinese hacker groups targeted various Indian power centres, the Union Power Ministry said on Monday, but added that these groups have been thwarted after government cyber agencies warned it about their activities.

While the government refused to confirm or deny *The New York Times* report, based on a U.S. cybersecurity firm's claim that the Mumbai power outage in October 2020 was part of a coordinated cyberattack by China, it said it has suffered "no data breach".

"There is no impact on any of the functionalities carried out by the Power Sector Operations Corporation (POSOCO) due to the referred threat. No data breach/data loss has been detected due to these incidents," the Ministry said in a statement, which made no direct mention of the Mumbai power outage on October 12, 2020, that lasted several hours.

"Prompt actions are being taken by the Chief Information Security Officers at all these control centres under operation by POSOCO for any incident/advisory received from various agencies," it added.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8
ANOTHER REPORT ▶ PAGE 9

Minor girl found dead in Aligarh village

Post-mortem confirms asphyxiation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

In yet another horrific incident in Uttar Pradesh, a minor Dalit girl was allegedly smothered to death in a village in Akrabad tehsil of Aligarh on Sunday when she went to collect fodder.

The Aligarh police have registered a case against unidentified persons on charges of rape and murder. Five persons have been arrested in the case so far.

Injury marks

Senior Superintendent of Police, Aligarh, Muniraj P. said on Monday that the post-mortem report confirmed death by asphyxiation. "The report suggests

death by strangulation and smothering. There are external injury marks on the body caused by dragging. Skin on the chin has peeled off. There are nail marks on the chest and face. However, no internal injury was found in the autopsy. Rectal and vaginal swabs have been collected for microscopic investigation," he said.

Mr. Muniraj said he suspected that the victim was dragged into the fields for the purpose of sexual assault but when she resisted, she was killed.

However, villagers insisted that the victim had been raped and then killed.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

'G-23' lambasts Congress alliance with Furfura peer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Days after a show of strength by a section of the Congress group of dissenters ("G-23") in Jammu, a key member of the group, Anand Sharma, on Monday lashed out at his party for having an alliance with the Indian Secular Front in West Bengal, and asserted that the poll tie-up "militates against the Congress ideology".

On Sunday, West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is also the party's leader in the Lok Sabha, had shared a stage with Left leaders and Indian Secular Front founder Abbas Siddiqui of Furfura Shariif at a public rally of the grand alliance.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 9

+ SC asks man accused of rape if he can marry girl

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked a State government employee whether he would marry a girl he was accused of raping repeatedly while she was a minor. The man refused saying he was married.

A Bench led by Chief Jus-

tice Sharad A. Bobde subsequently stayed his arrest for four weeks so he could apply for regular bail.

The court asked the lawyer for the accused to find out if his client would be willing to marry the victim or risk the prospect of going to jail. "We are not forcing you..." Chief

Justice Bobde said. "I had initially asked for marriage... Right now, I cannot marry her. I am married," the lawyer reported to the court on what his client said.

The accused in his petition recounted the prosecution allegations that he had sexual intercourse with the girl since

she was in high school, stalked and threatened her. It was alleged that his mother had promised marriage when the girl turned 18, but they later backed out.

The accused had moved the SC against the cancellation of his anticipatory bail by the Bombay High Court.

HC flays police report on Tanha 'confession' leak to media

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday expressed displeasure at the city police's vigilance inquiry report on the allegation of leaking to media a confessional statement of a Jamia Millia Islamia student arrested in connection with the north-east Delhi riots.

Justice Mukta Gupta said, "This vigilance inquiry is even worse than what they do in an ordinary inquiry in a petty theft case. These are not files sent through couriers, these are hand-held files." The High Court ordered the Special Commissioner of Police (vigilance) to be present in the virtual proceedings on March 5.

The court's direction came while hearing the plea of Asif Iqbal Tanha, who was aggrieved by various news reports appearing in electronic media that alleged that he had confessed to organising and inciting riots in north-east Delhi last year.

During the hearing, the police said it had sent the case file to the Delhi government and the Home Affairs Ministry. Reacting to this, the court said, "Where did you do the inquiry, who did you inquire of? Where were the files sent? Who took them to the Delhi government and MHA and who brought them back? There is nothing in the report. It is completely silent."

Justice Bobde said. "I had initially asked for marriage... Right now, I cannot marry her. I am married," the lawyer reported to the court on what his client said.

The accused in his petition recounted the prosecution allegations that he had sexual intercourse with the girl since

she was in high school, stalked and threatened her. It was alleged that his mother had promised marriage when the girl turned 18, but they later backed out.

The accused had moved the SC against the cancellation of his anticipatory bail by the Bombay High Court.

SBI HOME LOANS

HOME LOANS @ JUST 6.70%* ONWARDS

PROMOTION

PERFECT HOME LOAN FOR YOUR DREAM HOME

UP TO 70 BPS* INTEREST CONCESSION

ZERO* PROCESSING FEE

CONCESSIONS VIA YONO APP*

FOR ASSISTANCE, CALL: 1800 11 2018

SMS HOME TO 92235 88888 OR GIVE MISSED CALL ON 72089 33140

Visit: homeloans.sbi/www.sbiyono.sbi/www.sbloansin59minutes.com

5 GENERAL INSURANCE

11 LIFE INSURANCE COMPANIES

This product maps to the following SDGs and contributes towards Sustainable India.

Follow us on

Ahmedabad : 7600038007 | Chandigarh : 9876024600 | Hyderabad : 9701556713 | Mumbai : 8291141105
Bengaluru : 9448993279 | Chennai : 9445395294 | Jaipur : 9950755666 | Pune : 7875559707
Bhopal : 8458879990 | Delhi NCR : 9810839993 | Kolkata : 9674710070 | Patna : 9962078390
Bhubaneswar : 9437024472 | Guwahati : 8969944455 | Lucknow : 7080244411 | Thiruvananthapuram : 9539388815 | Vishakhapatnam : 9819600774

Sabse Pehle Life Insurance

The 100-year plan!

LIC's JEEVAN UMANG

UIN: 512N312V02 PLAN NO: 945
A Non-Linked, Participating, Individual, Life Assurance Saving (Whole Life) Plan

Get GUARANTEED Survival Benefit equal to 8% of Basic Sum Assured each year after the final premium, till Age 99 and lump sum maturity benefit on survival to Age 100.

FEATURES:

- Age Eligibility : 90 days to 55 years
- Minimum Basic Sum Assured : ₹ 2,00,000/-
- Maximum Basic Sum Assured : No limit
- Premium Paying Term : 15, 20, 25 and 30 years
- Policy Term : (100 minus age at entry) years

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Life long risk cover till Age 100
- Bonus throughout the term
- Final additional bonus (if any)
- Loan facility

Contact your agent/branch or visit our website www.licindia.in or SMS 'YOUR CITY NAME' to 56767474 (e.g. 'Mumbai')

Follow us on

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS / FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint.

For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read the sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

IRDAI Regn No.: 512 Zindagi ke saath bhi, Zindagi ke baad bhi.

LIC
भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

LICAR/20/17/ENG

Toolkit case:
Nikita Jacob
moves court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

Nikita Jacob, who is accused along with climate activist Disha Ravi in connection with allegedly being involved in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest, Monday moved a Delhi court seeking anticipatory bail.

The application moved by Ms. Jacob, who is charged with the case of sedition, is likely to come up for hearing Tuesday before Additional Sessions Judge Dharmander Rana.

She had got transit anticipatory bail from Bombay HC on February 17 with direction to approach the court concerned in Delhi, where the case is lodged.

The court on February 23 had granted bail to Ms. Ravi who was arrested by the Delhi police from Bengaluru. The Sessions court on February 25 granted protection from arrest to another co-accused, Shantanu Muluk, till March 9, when it will hear his anticipatory bail application. Ms. Ravi, Mr. Muluk and Ms. Jacob were booked for alleged sedition and other charges.

Roadblock, Parliament gherao on cards as farmers bid to step up stir

Donations down to less than ₹1 lakh/day, says member of stage management panel

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

While the protest at the Singhu border is going strong and the crowd has remained steady, talks are being held on how to take movement forward, said stage management committee members on Monday.

A roadblock is being planned, said a member of the stage management committee and District Pradhan of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Kadian), Amrik Singh.

Meetings lined up

A meeting of Samyukt Kisan Morcha leaders was held on Sunday and another is expected to take place on Tuesday to talk about how to take the protest forward.

A roadblock is being planned in the coming days to shake the government out of its slumber for us," he said, adding that another possibility is Parliament gherao.

If the government doesn't move forward, then parliament gherao can also be considered. A repeat of January 26 can be called in



Farmers continue their protest against the new farm laws at the Singhu border in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

terms of crowd and not violence. Probably, if planned, the march will be on foot," he said.

Another member said donations have gone down to less than ₹1 lakh a day.

"On most days, it's around ₹70,000-₹80,000. Very rarely it reaches ₹2 lakh. Before Republic Day, we used to get ₹5-₹7 lakh, which further came down to ₹1-₹2 lakh," he said.

He also said if they fall short of money, farmer leaders will arrange funds by themselves to keep the protest going.

A major part of expenses is spent on medical bills of protesters, he said. "If any farmer has a major health problem at any of the three borders, the cost is borne by us," he said. Mr. Singh said two main NGOs - Khalsa Aid and United Sikhs - have not contributed to the money collected by SKM for running the protest. They voluntarily work at the three sites for the protesters.

Medical plans

The makeshift hospital at the Singhu border is also

A repeat of January 26 can be called in terms of crowd and not violence. Probably, if planned, the march will be on foot

AMRIK SINGH
Member of stage management committee

planning to expand its area and add an in-patient department for admissions. They have also removed the divider which separated the pharmacy and the hospital.

"We will add another space - in the form of a tent - to this hospital to be able to admit more patients. There will be tiles on the floor in that tent," said Avtar Singh, who runs the hospital started by Life Care Foundation.

He said they are also planning to shut the other hospital, which is about 2 km ahead, and merge into one. Facilities like cardiology, orthopaedic, gastroenterology, pulmonology, endocrinology, dermatology, urology among others will be made available in the new set-up.

At 85, this protester from Punjab polishes shoes at Singhu border

Nachhatar Singh firm on staying on even as family wants him back

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Nachhatar Singh, an 85-year-old protester from Ludhiana, has been polishing shoes for the past month at the Singhu border.

He has been stationed at the protest site since November 26 and his family is calling him back home. They are worried because of his age.



Come rain or shine: The 85-year-old protester, Nachhatar Singh, polishing a shoe at the Singhu border in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

I won't - very strictly. My son also says that I should come back but I have told him that I am doing my job and he should do his," he said.

Mr. Singh said he also celebrated his grandson Dilawar Singh's birthday here behind the main stage on February 9 when he was visiting.

For him, the protest started three months before November 26 because they were all carrying out rallies in their villages on two-wheelers. "When we came

to Delhi, we thought it was only a two-day event but because of the government, we are still here," he said.

All for my children'

Mr. Singh, who is fully aware of the new farm laws, said he is protesting for his children's safe future.

"I only have 1.5 acres of land. I don't want my children to beg," he said.

He walks 2 km for the job and the same distance back to the tents where he is lodging along with the tractors from his village.

Court grants bail to man in R-Day violence case

'Accused did not attempt to hurt police'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Monday granted bail to a man in a case related to the Republic Day violence during farmers' tractor parade against the Centre's three new farm laws, saying no specific role has been assigned to him.

The court said the accused was not alleged to have attempted to kill or hurt the police personnel deployed.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat granted the relief to Ashish Kumar on furnishing a bail bond of ₹15,000 with one surety of like amount in the case.

The court said the ground of bail calls for balancing the paramount right of the individual, that is right to liberty, on one hand and right of the investigating agency to probe.

"As per the case of the

prosecution on January 26, 2021, applicant [Ashish] was detained at Chintamani Chowk since at around 12.50 p.m. around 500 protesters on tractors rally and cars were coming from Apsara Border flyover and they had broken the barricade in the violent manner. People driving tractors had tried to run over the police personnel.

"However, there is no specific role assigned to the accused in as much as the accused himself is not alleged to have attempted to kill or hurt the police personnel deployed."

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat granted the relief to Ashish Kumar on furnishing a bail bond of ₹15,000 with one surety of like amount in the case.

The court said the ground of bail calls for balancing the paramount right of the individual, that is right to liberty, on one hand and right of the investigating agency to probe.

"As per the case of the

Green day



A woman and her children harvest cauliflower at Singhu village in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

HC relief for scribe over 'defamatory' RSS article

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed a complaint filed by a man against a business daily and a journalist, Mitali Saran, over an article, which he claimed contained "some defamatory insinuations" against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait said Lohitaksha Shukla, an advocate, has not been able to show as to how he is the "person aggrieved" in the present case. "Thus, the contents of complaint suffers from vices of illegality or infirmity," the court said, adding: "...no hesitation to hold that the complaint in question is not maintainable and is liable to be dismissed".

Mr. Shukla had alleged that the article titled - *The Long and Short of it* - is not based on facts and contains some defamatory insinuations against RSS. He said the

article had contents that "accused members of RSS being oppressive to Indians, mentally disturbed and disrespectful to Indian National Symbols ridden with psychosexual complexes, practitioners of discrimination based on caste and physically unfit".

Mr. Shukla also said being a member of RSS, his reputation has been adversely affected. On the other hand, Ms. Saran claimed her literary style involves using satire, irony and humour to comment on the latest political and social developments. She argued that Mr. Shukla has not established that he was authorised by the RSS to file the complaint on its behalf or that he holds any post in the RSS.

The court said: "In the present case, Mr. Shukla has not led any evidence to establish how his reputation was harmed as a result of the said article".

DTC gives nod to procure 300 AC low-floor e-buses

These vehicles will have real-time passenger information, CCTVs among other facilities

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) in its board meeting on Monday approved bids for the procurement of 300 AC low-floor electric buses.

With the induction of these, in addition to 1,000 CNG buses, which are in the process of being procured, the DTC intends to achieve a total fleet strength of 5,060.

According to the government, these 300 low-floor 12 metres BS-VI compliant AC buses will be equipped with facilities, including



Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot

real-time passenger information systems, CCTVs, panic buttons, GPS and other facilities along with being differently abled friendly.

They will, the government said, also be integrated with the newly built Command and Control Centre at Kashmiri Gate to ensure passenger safety, especially of women passengers.

Earlier, the DTC had floated an open tender for the procurement of 300 low-floor 12-metre full electric AC buses in December 2020.

Completion date
These 300 electric buses after approval by the Cabinet will start arriving in October 2021 and the entire

induction will be completed by February 2022, the government said.

The public transporter has already issued Letters of Award for 1,000 low-floor AC buses (BS-VI compliant) and the buses will start arriving in May 2021 and the entire fleet of 1000 CNG buses is likely to be inducted by September 2021.

Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot later said, "With the arrival of these 300 electric buses, Delhi will take its first huge leap to its dream of a fully electric public transport in the city."

The court noted that it looked like blackmailing litigation. An HC Bench also imposed a cost of ₹1 lakh on petitioner NGO Prerna Ek Disha Foundation.

"The so-called PIL looks like blackmailing litigation.

Petition seeking demolition of over 40 buildings in south Delhi dismissed

HC says PIL looks like blackmailing litigation, fines NGO ₹1L

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The High Court on Monday dismissed a petition by an NGO, seeking demolition of more than 40 buildings on grounds of alleged unauthorised construction in south Delhi's Deoli.

The court noted that it looked like blackmailing litigation. An HC Bench also imposed a cost of ₹1 lakh on petitioner NGO Prerna Ek Disha Foundation.

"The so-called PIL looks like blackmailing litigation.

The petition is dismissed with a cost of ₹1 lakh, to be deposited with the legal service authority," the Bench said.

The court said the counsel for the NGO has not argued anything on the legality of the construction and merely because some construction material is lying on the road, does not mean that it was illegal.

"This can't be a presumption of illegality of the construction. There is a wrong notion because the

material is on road, the construction is illegal. The legality of the construction cannot be proved on the basis of photographs placed with the petition," the Bench said.

It said stringent and cogent evidence is required to prove the legality or illegality of a construction.

The NGO had relied on various photographs showing construction material lying on the roads and alleged that it illegal construction.

NGT asks DJB to act against sewage plant in Kondli

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Following a plea seeking action against a sewage treatment plant operating in violation of norms in Kondli, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi Jal Board to take action.

Noting that the DJB has "consistently failed" to take action, the NGT said that a fine of ₹5 lakh per month will be imposed on the CEO of the DJB if steps are not taken by May 31.

A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "Counsel for the DJB submits that requisite steps have still not been taken, but the same will be completed before the month of May, 2021."

"Even though for consistent failure of the DJB, we are inclined to award heavy costs. We defer this aspect till the next day with a direction that if the needful is not done even by May 31, the CEO, DJB, will be liable to pay cost of ₹5 lakh per month till compliance," the Bench said.

The directions came when the panel was hearing a plea moved by a resident welfare association that sought remedial action against the plant in Kondli.

Restobars told to share locations using Google Maps

Delhi Excise Department's directions aim at preparing a digital database

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Excise Department has directed owners of clubs, restaurants and hotels in the city to share the location of their establishments using Google Maps, a move aimed at preparing a digital database, officials said on Monday.

The department said non-compliance of its directions will be viewed seriously. There are over 1,000 hotels, clubs and restobars in the national capital with excise licences to serve liquor to their customers.

In a written communication, the department has asked the establishments to send information relating to their location using longitude and latitude.

An official said the move will also help to know geographic locations of such establishments in a particular area. "It is digitally easy to find location of clubs, hotels and restaurants in a particular area. If we have a digital database, we can take decisions accordingly. Such database can also be utilised for excise policy in the coming months," the official told

Health Minister Satyendar Jain and Law Minister Kailash Gahlot are part of the GoM.

It is examining all aspects of the current system of excise duty administration and will go through the report of the expert committee and the suggestions received from stakeholders and the public.

Last week, the department had warned clubs, hotels and restaurants of strict action if they are found serving alcohol to customers from liquor bottles not bearing 2D bar-codes.

It said a team led by K.K. Pant and his research group in the Catalytic Reaction Engineering Laboratory at Chemical Engineering Department have adopted a methodology that uses e-waste as an "Urban Mine" for metal recovery and energy production. Researchers are using their method, e-waste is shredded and pyrolyzed to yield liquid and gaseous fuels, leaving behind a metal-rich solid fraction. On further separation using a novel technique, the leftover solid residue yields a 90-95% pure me-

tal mixture and some carbonaceous materials. The carbonaceous material is further converted to aerogel for oil spillage cleaning, dye removal, carbon dioxide capture, and use in supercapacitors. The technology is an outcome of a Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, funded project and developed technology will cater to the need of "Smart Cities," "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan," and "Atma-nirbhar Bharat" initiatives of the government, IIT-Delhi said.

metal recovery and energy production. Researchers are using their method, e-waste is shredded and pyrolyzed to yield liquid and gaseous fuels, leaving behind a metal-rich solid fraction. On further separation using a novel technique, the leftover solid residue yields a 90-95% pure me-

tal mixture and some carbonaceous materials. The carbonaceous material is further converted to aerogel for oil spillage cleaning, dye removal, carbon dioxide capture, and use in supercapacitors. The technology is an outcome of a Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, funded project and developed technology will cater to the need of "Smart Cities," "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan," and "Atma-nirbhar Bharat" initiatives of the government, IIT-Delhi

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, MAR. 02
RISE 06:45 SET 18:22
RISE 21:42 SET 08:50
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 03
RISE 06:44 SET 18:23
RISE 22:47 SET 09:28
THURSDAY, MAR. 04
RISE 06:43 SET 18:23
RISE 23:54 SET 10:07

Delhi Weather max min
Delhi City 29 12
Safdarjung 29 12
Palam 28 14

Delhi Palam Today
29°C Weather will remain dry with cool haze morning. Largely comfortable day with moderate breeze likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
30°C Day temperature would remain above normal, warm day likely. Dryness likely to increase.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2019
All rights reserved.

THE HINDU

DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate inquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any publication in this newspaper. THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not accept responsibility for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products or services. The liability of the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/company shall be held responsible/liable in any manner for damages or losses and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

Air Quality of Delhi-NCR		
Delhi 177	Gurugram 180	
Ghaziabad 208	Faridabad 166	
Noida 169	Greater Noida 215	
■ Good 4-50	■ Satisfactory 51-100	■ Moderate 101-200
■ Poor 201-300	■ Very Poor 301-400	■ Severe >400
Air Quality Index at 4 p.m. yesterday (Average of past 24 hours) Source: CPCB		

Delhi records 'moderate' air quality index

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The air quality of Delhi, Gurugram, and Noida was in 'moderate' category on Monday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

Surface winds are moderate and forecast to increase and stay high for the next 48 hours. The intermittent lifting of local dust under the prevailing meteorological conditions continues to remain the dominating factor to influence the AQI adversely. Delhi's AQI is forecast to stay within 'moderate' to 'poor' category in the next three days," said a statement by government-run monitoring agency SAFAR.

The agency said that the day-time high surface wind speed, warmer temperature and elevated boundary layer height have improved the ventilation and dispersion substantially and are influencing the AQI positively.

Senior citizens, those with comorbidities get first shot

Pre-registration and walk-in registration facilities available at most centres

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

COVID-19 vaccination for people aged 60 and above and those in the 45-59 age bracket with comorbidities started in Delhi from Monday.

A total of 15,521 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Monday and there was only one Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson.

Of the total beneficiaries, 5,176 were people who are 60 years of age and above, 1,009 between 45 and 59 years of age, and the rest were healthcare workers and front-line workers.

While many senior citizens told *The Hindu* that the process was "smooth", some complained that they had to wait for more than "four hours" and that there was no separate counter for senior citizens. Multiple hospitals said that they faced technical issues with the CoWIN software and that led to delays.

Beneficiaries have the option to pre-register via CoWin 2.0 or Aarogya Setu app, or walk in at any of the registered vaccination sites, register and get vaccinated.

Those with comorbidities have to get a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner, detailing their condition before registering.

Want to travel
Recalling how they lived in fear for the past one year, many beneficiaries said that they want to travel to meet their family members once they complete both the doses of the vaccine.



An enthusiastic senior citizen couple after getting vaccinated at a city hospital on Monday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

Some also said that the government should have started vaccination for senior citizens earlier and added that a lot of time had been "wasted". Some people even changed hospitals after registration to avoid getting Covaxin vaccine.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that 308 centres were set up at 192 hospitals for vaccination. "There are 12-15 lakh people belonging to the age group of 60 and 2-3 lakh are from the age group of 45-59 with co-morbid conditions," he said.

Both pre-registration and walk-in registration facilities were available at most centres. While the 136 private vaccination centres will be allowed to charge up to ₹250 per person per dose, it is free at the 56 government hospitals.

"Vaccination for general public started around 11 a.m. While people who had registered for vaccination online had come, walk-in registration without any prior booking was also available. A total of 80 people took the vaccine today," said Chhavi Gupta, spokesperson of Delhi government-run Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital.

Also, 35 healthcare workers were administered the second dose of the vaccine at the hospital on Monday. At other hospitals vaccination was conducted for general public, healthcare workers, and front-line workers.

"There were some glitches in the system in the morning," an official at Lok Nayak Hospital said. The hospital did not officially share the number of beneficiaries, but it was less than 20, as per hospital sources.

City witnesses 175 new cases

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI
The Capital witnessed 175 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,39,464, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Monday.

One death was reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,911. A total of 39,733 tests were done in a day.

Of the total cases, 6,27,149 people have recovered and there are 1,404 active cases.

The number of active cases has shown a slight increase over the past one week.

Vaccine portal faces glitches

'Apps unable to deal with volumes lead to disappointments'

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

Eager senior citizens waiting for their turn to register for COVID-19 vaccine on Monday had technology come in their way as the CoWIN portal showed errors or displayed a message that the server was busy.

While the government claimed that over one million registrations were done in the first few hours, many took to Twitter to express problems that they faced with the portal.



Senior citizens getting registered for vaccination at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi on Monday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

recently developed the Open Book Examination system for Delhi University that received many complaints at the start, but was ultimately successful, says that sometimes developers cannot envisage all types of user cases particularly when there is so much diversity in user behaviour.

"What is usually the case is that something needs to be delivered immediately and we do not have the time to test it out properly by launching a beta version or testing it on volumes as per standard practice," Mr. Singh said.

He said, for example, when Google started its email services, they ran it for about five-six years in the beta version to understand user behaviour and functionality, but here, due to time constraints, we develop a service because of its immediate need.

Speaking about the experience of students facing glitches while taking their examinations, Mr. Singh said that it was developed overnight for such a huge number of users and was not experienced by anybody

Allow us to resume mining in Aravali Hills, Haryana tells SC

Pandemic has ground the State's economy to a halt

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI
The Haryana government has appealed to the Supreme Court to permit it to resume mining in the Aravali Hills on the grounds that the pandemic had ground the State's economy to a halt. The Supreme Court is slated to hear the petition on Thursday.

Mining in the region has been banned since 2002 under the Supreme Court orders, unless expressly permitted by the Union Environment Ministry. Ho-

wever, mining continued illegally.

Illegal mining

A 2018 report by a Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) said 25% of the Aravali range had been lost due to illegal mining in Rajasthan since 1967-68.

Vikrant Tongad, environmentalist and with the Social Action for Forest Environment, told *The Hindu* that the Haryana government had proposed to allow mining activities in 600

hectares.

Following the move, Mr. Tongad filed his own petition on Monday requesting the court to allow him to "intervene" in the ongoing writ petition.

The Aravali Hills spanning Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi are an ecologically sensitive zone but have for years borne the brunt of quarrying and environmental degradation.

The consequences of this mining has been a destruction of aquifers and deforestation.

Ex-civil defence worker held for harassing woman

Accused also attacked a constable

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old man was arrested for allegedly attacking a Delhi Police constable and harassing a woman, the police said on Monday.

The accused identified as Shivram, a resident of Sangam Vihar in south Delhi, was accused of abusing, molesting and misbehaving with the woman. She had filed a complaint against him at K.M. Pur police station on February 27. The accused allegedly threatened her of dire consequences and forced her

to meet him, the police said. After receiving the complaint, sub-inspectors Komal and Sandeep Yadav and Constable Nehru rushed near INA circle where the accused had called the woman to meet, a senior police officer said. When Shivram saw the police, he jumped into a drain. Mr. Nehru chased him and Shivram hit him with a brick on his forehead.

The accused was held and both he and Mr. Nehru were taken to AIIMS for treatment. Shivram used to work in Civil Defence.

Man killed in Delhi for objecting to rash driving

Three arrested, case registered

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A man was allegedly killed and his brother sustained injury when they objected a youth for rash driving in Dwarka's Bindapur, the police said on Monday.

A case was registered at Bindapur police station and three persons have been arrested, Santosh Kumar Meena, DCP (Dwarka), said.

The arrested accused have been identified as Piyush Sharma (19) alias Kaku and his accomplices Sandeep Sharma (31) and Shiv

Narayan (32), the police said, adding that the weapon of offence has been recovered.

The incident took place on Sunday night when Suraj Prakash Singh (30) and his brother Chander (28) were on the way to a market. They objected the youth for riding his motorcycle rashly. The two sons got into a heated argument and the accused called his accomplices and attacked the brothers with a knife, the police said. Suraj died during treatment and Chander is out of danger.

The police said that both the accused have criminal history.

Two including minor held for shooting at constable

Yogesh Verma, a resident of Bakhtawarpur.

The police said that the incident took place on February 25 evening, when Constable Sandeep and Bhupender of Bhalswa Dairy police station were at a police post. The accused came on a motorcycle bearing a "defective" number plate. The policemen signalled them to

stop. When the policeman tried to flee, the policemen tried to catch him and he fell down and then fired at Mr. Sandeep.

The other accused also fired at Mr. Bhupender, who did not, however, sustain any injury, the police said.

The police said that both the accused have criminal history.

Upto 15th March DILLI HAAT INA , NEW DELHI

An exhibition-cum-sale showcasing the arts, crafts and looms of Ladakh by the artisans and crafts people of Kargil and Leh

Live cultural programme every evening

Inauguration
2nd March 2021, 5:30 PM
By
Shri Radha Krishna Mathur
Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh

In presence of

Shri Feroz Ahmed Khan
CEC - LAHDC Kargil

Shri Jamyang Tsering Namgyal
Member of Parliament Ladakh

Shri Tashi Gyalson
CEC - LAHDC Leh

Shri Shantmanu, IAS
Development Commissioner (Handicrafts)
Ministry of Textiles , Government of India

Shri Sanjay Rastogi , IAS
Development Commissioner (Handlooms)
Ministry of Textiles , Government of India

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE:

www.thehinduads.com

011-43579738 • 43579797

EDUCATIONAL

ECONOMICS OPTIONAL
by Ravindra N. Jha

REGULAR BATCH & TEST SERIES

CSE - 2019 RESULT

INDIAN ECONOMIC SERVICE (IES) - 2021
REGULAR BATCH & TEST SERIES
ADMISSION OPENBLISS POINT STUDIES®
join the best ... to do your best

OLD RAJENDER NAGAR, 57/17, 1st floor NEAR HDFC BANK

North Delhi 2518 (Third Floor), Hudson Line

9811343411, 9811343938, 9811343464

PHOTONS IAS

EO/AO-EPFO

26 SELECTIONS IN APFC 2012-13

UNDER SUPERVISION OF SHRI DASARATHI NAG

REGIONAL PROVIDENT FUND COMMISSIONER

SPECIAL TOPICS

LABOUR LAWS, INDUSTRIAL

RELATIONS, G.ACCOUNTING

PRINCIPLES & S.Security

CRASH COURSE + TEST SERIES

5th MARCH 2021

534, G.FLOOR, MUKHERJEE NAGAR, DELHI

9810478303, 8837407092

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, ANITA Singh, D/o Smt. Purnima Singh, R/o 46, Aryan Residency, Chandrapura, Bangalore, Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560001. I have changed my name from Anita Singh to Akshara Manikandan vide affidavit Dt: 24/02/2021 sworn before notary Beena Srivastava, Varanasi.

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I KUM. Manju Meena Alia Manju Kumar Meena D/o Sh. Jagdish Prasad Meena W/o Roshan Lal Meena R/o Gaur Green vista nayak khand 1 indirapuram ghaziabad have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Manju Bhangar

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE PRINCIPAL DISTRICT MUNISIF TUTCORIN R.P.NO.64/2018 In O.S.NO 165/2014

D.Malarvizhi Madhava (through her power agent P.S.Jeyachandran) Plaintiff v/s

1. Pearls Dream Palaces Construction Ltd through its managing Director, No.301, 3rd Flr,Windsor Plaza, Sansar Chand Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan.

2. Pearls Dream Palaces Construction Ltd through its authorized signatory, Mr.Chirantan Chaturvedi, No.7, Room, Gopaldas Bhawan, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. Defendants

NOTICE Take notice, her the plaintiff has filed a petition to get back the documents from the court and the same is posted on 05.04.2021 for the defendants appearance. Therefore, the defendants are asked to appear before the above said court on 05.04.2021 in person or through their advocate at about 10 AM. Otherwise the matter will be decided ex parte.

N.Selvaraj B.Sc.B.L.L. Advocate

S.Prem Anand B.A.B.L. Advocate

111,Shumugapuram North, Tutcorin-2

01.03.2021

Skills Desired :

✓ Comfortable in translation (English to Hindi)

✓ Work Experience (at least 1 year)

✓ Have written Civil Services (Main) examination

Send your updated resume to recruitment@visionias.in

EDUCATIONAL

BHARTI CONCEPT

A COMPLETE STUDY CENTRE

REASONING

SPECIAL BATCH

By J.S. Dhankhar Sir

3 Days Free Demo Classes

NEW BATCH STARTS ON

2nd March 2021

Offline Batch Start

8:00 AM to 9:30 AM

Head Office - MUKHERJEE NAGAR

1st Floor Batta Cinema Complex Delhi-9

Mob: 913635283, 9250291082

SITUATION VACANT

GENERAL

YOUTH DESTINATION

IAS+PCS

WE ARE HIRING

Counselor (English Medium)

(Min. 2 yr. experience in IAS Institute)

Content Writer

(Appeared for Mains - IAS/PCS)

Interview on Monday at 12.00 noon

Vacancy for immediate posting

Job location : Mukherjee Nagar

Send CV : 9971696493

Youthdestination99@gmail.com

COUNSELLOR

WANTED

For Reputed IAS Coaching Institute

✓ Age: 30+

✓ Fluent in English

✓ Must have Appeared in UPSC CSE Mains at least twice

✓ Salary Negotiable

Send Your Details to validmail.2018@gmail.com

PUBLICATION

PUBLIC NOTICE

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

On behalf of the Managing Committee, Shiksha Vihar Sehkar Awas Samiti Ltd, Ghaziabad, Expression Of Interest (EOI) with regard to Construct Multi-story flats of 250nos on the land measuring 7.5 acres allotted to the society by Ghaziabad Development Authority in Abhay Khand-II, Indrapuram, NH-24, Ghaziabad, UP are invited from well reputed builders on collaboration basis. The proposal by the interested builders with their EOI may be submitted in sealed cover in the society office on or before 09 March 2021 up to 2pm. The interested parties are required to furnish the Financial and Technical details along with other relevant information. The relevant/EOI documents may be purchased from the society office on payment of Rs. 5000/- w.e.f 2nd March 2021 between 11am - 4pm except Tuesday and Sunday before 09 March 2021 up to 11am. All sealed EOI will be opened at 4 pm on 9 March 2021 in the presence of interested participants in the society office.

The Citizens for Justice and Peace (CJP) petitioned the court after its survey of 10 District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) establishments revealed they were understaffed with under-trained para legal volunteers and poor infrastructure.

Monitored by the Supreme Court, the NRC published on August 31, 2019 had left out 19.06 lakh of the 3.3 crore applicants in Assam. A majority of those excluded are believed to be Bengal-origin Muslims, Bengali Hindus and Gorkhas.

The communication was related to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

ASLSA assurance

The ASLSA in November 2020 responded by saying it has enough machinery to deal with any action taken by the government with regard to the NRC and that legal camps would be organised after rejection slips are handed out to the 19.06 lakh people.

ple explaining why they were not included in the list.

"But the ASLSA letter also revealed that only two taluk-level legal services authorities are functioning in a State that has 78 talukas," the CJP said.

The NGO subsequently contacted the DLAs in the 10 districts and found they have 273 active advocates appointed for legal aid and 333 para legal volunteers whose educational qualifications varied from district to district. "But no training on citizenship, immigration, NRC, Foreigners' Act and related issues was provided in any of these 10 DLAs," the CJP said.

The High Court has issued notices to the authorities concerned and fixed April 5 as the next date of hearing.

District Legal Services Authority understaffed, it tells HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A human rights organisation

has approached the Gauhati

High Court seeking proper

legal aid for those left out of

the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

The Citizens for Justice and

Peace (CJP) petitioned the

court after its survey of

10 District Legal Services

Authority (DLSA) establish-

ments revealed they were

understaffed with under-

trained para legal volunteers

and poor infrastructure.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019, that legal assistance would be provided to the NRC-excluded people who need it.

The communication was related

to the Ministry of Home Affairs' statement on August 20, 2019,

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY RAIN MAX MIN CITY RAIN MAX MIN

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...33.4	23.0	...	Kozhikode	...34.8	26.4	...
Ahmedabad	...34.8	22.8	...	Kurnool	...38.1	22.8	...
Aizawl	...24.7	12.7	...	Lucknow	...31.9	16.7	...
Allahabad	...34.2	15.5	...	Madurai	...34.7	21.6	...
Bengaluru	...33.6	17.4	...	Mangaluru	...34.9	24.7	...
Bhopal	...34.8	16.2	...	Mumbai	...35.4	21.4	...
Bhubaneswar	...39.0	23.4	...	Mysuru	...33.0	15.0	...
Chandigarh	...26.7	11.1	...	New Delhi	...29.0	11.8	...
Chennai	...34.3	23.0	...	Patna	...33.2	18.6	...
Coimbatore	...34.6	20.2	...	Port Blair	...30.6	21.8	...
Dehradun	...27.7	9.6	...	Puducherry	...32.3	19.8	...
Gangtok	44.8	13.3	11.1	Raipur	...36.4	22.0	...
Goa	...33.2	23.6	...	Ranchi	...37.2	22.6	...
Guwahati	...30.2	17.4	...	Shillong	...33.4	17.9	...
Hubballi	...34.0	19.0	...	Shimla	...23.3	13.3	...
Hyderabad	...36.8	22.2	...	Srinagar	...14.8	1.4	...
Jaipur	...29.8	13.5	...	Thiruvananthapuram	...33.6	24.2	...
Kochi	...30.8	18.4	...	Tiruchi	...34.8	21.4	...
Kohima	...21.4	9.6	...	Vijayawada	...35.6	23.2	...
Kolkata	...35.5	24.0	...	Visakhapatnam	...31.6	24.0	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES SO NO CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE

CITIES	SO	NO	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	29	79	24	135	—	...
Bengaluru	9	75	26	69	110	...
Chennai	11	21	48	47	51	...
Delhi	60	49	18	256	300	...
Hyderabad	4	97	37	144	131	...
Kolkata	28	20	38	181	159	...
Lucknow	20	110	63	211	152	...
Mumbai	16	121	37	256	208	...
Pune	6	80	106	81	86	...
Visakhapatnam	16	58	33	68	112	...

In observation made at 4:00 p.m. Durango, West Bengal recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 326 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 34

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

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

NO: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Opposition walks out over govt. stance on development boards

No appointments to the boards before Governor clears names of 12 MLCs: Ajit Pawar

STAFF REPORTER
MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Budget session was off to a stormy start on Monday after the Opposition walked out of the Assembly protesting the government stand to wait till the appointment of 12 Council members from the Governor's quota before making appointments to the Vidarbha and Marathwada statutory development boards.

Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis said that the government was making an excuse to deny the underdeveloped Marathwada and Vidarbha regions their due share of development by not making the appointments.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who also holds the finance portfolio, said the Ma-

ha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government was committed to their development and the budget that he was going to present in the next week would ensure adequate funds to these regions.

As Mr. Pawar presented the supplementary demands worth ₹21,076.32 crore on the first day of the session, Mr. Fadnavis raised the issue of funds to these boards and asked why no appointments had been made.

The Finance Minister said that the moment Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari cleared the appointment of 12 MLCs as recommended by the State Cabinet, the appointments to these boards would be announced. This led to uproar from the Opposition benches who alleged bias towards the two regions. "We want to establish the boards, but are waiting for the Governor's approval for 12 MLCs," Mr. Pawar said.

To this, Mr. Fadnavis, who was supported by former Finance Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, said, "You cannot play with the development of the two regions for 12 MLCs. This is our constitutional right."

"The statutory development boards are essential for these regions," Mr. Mungantiwar said.

The statutory development boards were created to ensure equitable distribution of funds for these regions which have lagged in development ever since they became part of Maharashtra. The boards, which have representatives from the legislature, get extension every five years; the previous tenure came to an end on April 30, 2020.

The MVA government has



Making a point: Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole protests the fuel price hike on the first day of the Budget session, in Mumbai on Monday. ■ PTI

sent a proposal to appoint 12 MLCs from the Governor's quota which has been pending with Mr. Koshyari for approval for over five months. According to sources, appointments to the boards without filling the total capacity of the legislature may lead to legal problems.

Congress MLA Nana Patole

said that while these boards were essential, a white paper must be tabled on what financial allocations the previous BJP-led government had made for these regions during its tenure. This proposal was accepted by Mr. Pawar.

Claiming that his request to the Finance Minister to make the appointments was

not heard, Mr. Mungantiwar said that the Opposition was staging a walk-out.

Mr. Pawar reiterated that there would be sufficient budgetary allocations for both the regions. "We have also sent a proposal of development boards for Konkan and north Maharashtra," he added.

Maharashtra govt. can cut taxes, reduce fuel prices, says Fadnavis

He says bars in Worli remain open till late night despite curbs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Maharashtra BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said the MVA government was misleading people on fuel price hikes as it could cut taxes and provide relief.

He said taxes imposed by the Centre on per litre of petrol came up to ₹70, which were paid to States in various ways, while the amount charged by the State was ₹27.

"The state government can reduce the amount it charges and provide relief to the common man," the former Chief Minister said.

Taking a swipe at Tourism Minister Aaditya Thackeray, Mr. Fadnavis said bars and pubs in the Sena leader's Worli Assembly constituency remained open till late night despite COVID-19 curbs in place Statewide.

"Aaditya himself is a champion of nightlife, which includes bars and pubs remaining open even after midnight. Though the Chief Minister has appealed to people to maintain social dis-

tancing, Worli area seems to be following his (Aaditya's) intentions," he said.

Speaking on the resignation of minister Sanjay Rathod after the latter's name was linked to the death of a woman in Pune, Mr. Fadnavis said verification of audio clips connected to the deceased must be verified. Speaking further on the case, the former CM said he also wanted clarification on the abortion of a woman in Yavatmal and who was behind it.

He also said the BJP would raise its voice against the rampant electricity disconnection drive undertaken by the MVA government as it was causing distress to people, especially farmers.

Asked about Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole holding a cycle rally to protest the rising fuel prices, Mr. Fadnavis said the former might be "trying to seek credit of tax cuts on fuel as there is a buzz about possible slashing of taxes".

He also said the BJP would raise its voice against the rampant electricity disconnection drive undertaken by the MVA government as it was causing distress to people, especially farmers.

The State's active case tal-

lent stands at 77,618 while the total cases have reached 21,61,467. The cumulative recoveries have touched 20,30,458. However, the lower surge figure corresponds to lesser samples being tested – around 63,000 – in the last 24 hours as opposed to the daily average of 80,000. "Of 1,63,46,358 laboratory samples tested thus far, 21,61,467 have returned positive with over 62,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer said.

Compensation sought for wrongful confinement

Lucknow man has spent 12 years in jail in 2008 Jaipur blast cases

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

Civil rights groups here have raised the issue of wrongful confinement of Lucknow resident Shahbaz Ahmad, who after spending over 12 years in jail, was acquitted in eight cases related to the Jaipur bomb blasts of 2008, but was rearrested in a ninth case in the same matter. The Rajasthan High Court had released Mr. Ahmad on bail last week.

The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) has demanded payment of ₹1 crore as compensation to Mr. Ahmad, 48, for the loss of 12 years of his life and strict action against the police officers who had falsely implicated him in a "concocted case". PUCL said Mr. Ahmad and his family had undergone an ordeal.

"These years cannot be returned to Mr. Ahmad, but those who conspired to implicate him should get punishment under the criminal law and face disciplinary action," PUCL-Rajasthan president Kavita Srivastava said here on Monday.

Rearrested in 2019

The Anti-Terrorism Squad of Rajasthan police had rearrested Mr. Ahmad in December 2019 shortly after he was acquitted by a special court in the 2008 serial blasts cases. The arrest was made in connection with a bomb strapped to a bicycle parked in a market, which was defused by the police personnel before it could explode on May 13, 2008.

Eight other ammonium nitrate-based bombs, packed with metal splin-

ters, went off at different locations within a 2-km radius in the densely populated Walled City here, killing 71 persons and leaving about 200 injured.

The trial in eight cases resulted in the conviction of four persons from Uttar Pradesh, but the case pertaining to the planting of unexploded bomb was not tried with the rest of the blast matters. The four convicted persons were awarded death penalty, while Mr. Ahmad was acquitted.

Mr. Ahmad, a resident of Lucknow who was the first one to be arrested three months after the blasts, was charged with sending an email which claimed responsibility for the blasts on behalf of the Indian Mujahideen, but the court did not find evidence beyond doubt to connect him with the crime.

ATS had claimed to have cracked the Jaipur blasts case after arresting Mr. Ahmad from his computer and career consultancy centre in Aminabad locality of Lucknow. He was referred to as the mastermind of serial blasts in Jaipur and elsewhere till the controversial Batla House encounter took place in Delhi on September 19, 2008, and some alleged IM operatives were arrested in Mumbai and Pune.

Granting bail to Mr. Ahmad, Justice Pankaj Bhandari at the High Court's Jaipur Bench expressed surprise at the fact that he was not arrested in the ninth case when he was "languishing" in jail. "I am using the term 'languishing' in jail because [the] petitioner remained in custody for 12 years and was ultimately found not guilty in all cases," the Judge observed in his three-page order.

Maharashtra adds more than 6,000 fresh cases

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

After nearly a week of witnessing single-day surges of more than 8,000 COVID-19 cases, Maharashtra reported a comparatively lower spike of 6,397 new cases on Monday. Likewise, recoveries, too, were comparatively higher than discharge figures in the last week, with 5,754 patients being discharged in the last 24 hours. As many as 30 deaths pushed the toll to 52,184.

The State's active case tal-

lent stands at 77,618 while the total cases have reached 21,61,467. The cumulative recoveries have touched 20,30,458. However, the lower surge figure corresponds to lesser samples being tested – around 63,000 – in the last 24 hours as opposed to the daily average of 80,000. "Of 1,63,46,358 laboratory samples tested thus far, 21,61,467 have returned positive with over 62,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," State Surveillance Officer said.

Further details against the above NIT can be seen on



High stakes

As disenchantment rises, voters will look for viable, alternative governance platforms

Assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry will be taking place in changed circumstances. Polls will begin on March 27, with the results on May 2. Politics in these regions is not the same as it was five years ago. The BJP's unrelenting pursuit of influence has unsettled conventional calculations in all these areas that are outside the core of the party's traditional catchment area. In 2016, of the 824 seats in the fray, the BJP had won only 64 but it emerged as the ruling party in Assam. It hopes to retain power in Assam and win West Bengal, besides expanding its influence in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In 2016, the BJP had won only three seats in West Bengal, but its rise was dramatic in the 2019 Lok Sabha election when it won 18 of the 42 seats and 40.64% of votes. The BJP's performance in West Bengal will be the most eagerly watched aspect in these elections. The significant strength of Muslim voters in West Bengal is often cited as a demographic barrier for the Hindu nationalist party, but communal politics works best in areas where minorities mobilise in significant proportions. Assam and Kerala too have minority populations that are formidable in elections, and there are plausible combinations that could work to the BJP's advantage. In Assam, the BJP's twin agenda of the CAA and the NRC is a double-edged sword, and their electoral potency will be on test. What will matter most is the level of disenchantment with the ruling parties, and the alternative governance platform on offer.

The underperformance of the Congress in the DMK-led alliance contributed to a consecutive victory for the AIADMK in 2016, a rarity in Tamil Nadu. With the passing of Jayalalithaa and M. Karunanidhi, Dravidian politics is at the crossroads and the BJP is looking for an opening. In Kerala, the LDF is hoping to retain power for a second consecutive term, contingent on a slide of the Congress. Such a scenario would also mean significant gains for the BJP. Across these places, regional parties are in general on the back foot. In Assam, the AGP is reduced to irrelevance and new outfits with a narrow focus have emerged. As the BJP raises its stakes, concerns that the Centre might play a partisan role in these elections are already high. West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has termed the phasing out of polls in the State into eight segments a conspiracy to unseat her. The Election Commission must scrupulously play its role as an impartial umpire. There are also disturbing signs that communal polarisation could be higher, particularly in Assam and West Bengal. There could be some defining trends emerging from this round of elections, with long-term implications for politics in the country.

Cold comfort

Pakistan avoided the blacklist, but it should address cross-border terror

To Islamabad's deep disappointment, the Paris-based 39-member Financial Action Task Force has decided once again to keep Pakistan on its "grey list" of countries under "increased monitoring", giving it another three months to complete its commitments. After being removed from that list in 2015, Pakistan was put back on it in June 2018, and handed a 27-point action list to fulfil. On Thursday, FATF President Marcus Pleyer announced that although Pakistan has made "significant progress", it had three remaining points of the 27 that were only partially addressed, notably all in the area of curbing terror financing. The body listed the remaining tasks: demonstrating terror-funding prosecution is accurate, effective and dissuasive, and thoroughly implementing financial sanctions against all terrorists designated by the UN Security Council, which include LeT founder Hafiz Saeed, JeM chief Masood Azhar, other leaders of terror groups in Pakistan, and those belonging to al Qaeda. Pakistan's former Interior Minister Rehman Malik has protested the decision most vociferously, even suggesting that the FATF should be taken to The Hague, given that other countries that have completed nearly all the points on their task lists have been dropped from the grey list. He also cited a recent report that calculated Pakistan has lost \$38 billion because of its time on the grey list (2008-2015 and 2018-the present). It is cold comfort for Islamabad that the FATF chief also ruled out downgrading Pakistan to the "blacklist", as he said that Pakistan has made progress on its commitments and this is not "the time" to contemplate the extreme step – this would mean enhanced sanctions and restrictions, as Iran and North Korea face at present. Mr. Pleyer advised Pakistan to complete the remaining tasks by June 2021, when the FATF will meet again to vote on the issue.

The FATF decision coincides with the first signs of a thaw between India and Pakistan since 2016. The decision of the Directors General of Military Operations, also on Thursday, to strictly observe the ceasefire agreement at the LoC, and revelations in the media, which have not been contradicted by the government, that National Security Adviser Ajit Doval has been in touch with senior officials including the Pakistan Army Chief, are both significant. The joint statement also commits to resolving "core issues" that lead to violence between the two sides, indicating more dialogue between India and Pakistan could be on the cards; there are no political, trade, cultural ties at present. Pakistan's next steps on the FATF directive to successfully prosecute terrorists and terror financers identified by the grouping are in its own interests. Any proposed New Delhi-Islamabad engagement in the next few months would get a much-needed boost if Pakistan traverses this 'last mile' on the FATF grey list, addressing India's main grievance on cross-border terror that emanates from its soil.

The vital but delicate task of reviving the Iran deal

Time is running out for the Joe Biden administration, but there is an opportunity for Brussels to take a lead role



RAKESH SOOD

Of all the foreign policy challenges facing the Joe Biden administration, none is more critical than salvaging the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the Iran nuclear deal that has been unravelling over the last three years when Donald Trump unilaterally discarded it. It also seems the most straightforward because Mr. Biden has consistently advocated a return to the JCPOA provided Iran returns to full compliance; Iran has always reiterated its commitment to the JCPOA maintaining that the steps it took are reversible as long as the United States lifts the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration since 2018. And yet, it is complicated and time is running out as both Iran and the U.S. struggle to overcome the impasse.

U.S. policy reversal

The JCPOA was the result of prolonged negotiations from 2013 and 2015 between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union, or the EU). It happened, thanks to the back channel talks between the U.S. and Iran, quietly brokered by Oman, in an attempt to repair the accumulated mistrust since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Former U.S. President Barack Obama described the JCPOA as his greatest diplomatic success. Iran was then estimated to be months away from accumulating enough highly enriched uranium to produce one nuclear device. The JCPOA obliged Iran to accept constraints on its enrichment programme verified by an intrusive inspection regime in return for a partial lifting of economic sanctions. Faced with a hostile Republi-

can Senate, Mr. Obama was unable to get the nuclear deal ratified but implemented it on the basis of periodic Executive Orders to keep sanctions waivers going.

Mr. Trump had never hidden his dislike for the JCPOA calling it a "horrible, one-sided deal that should have never, ever been made". After ranting about it for a year, he finally pulled the plug on it in May 2018 and embarked on a policy of 'maximum pressure' to coerce Iran back to the negotiating table. The U.S. decision was criticised by all other parties to the JCPOA (including the European allies) because Iran was in compliance with its obligations, as certified by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

For the first year after the U.S. withdrawal, Iran's response was muted as the E-3 (France, Germany, the U.K.) and the EU promised to find ways to mitigate the U.S. decision. But by May 2019, Tehran's 'strategic patience' was wearing out as the anticipated economic relief from the E-3/EU failed to materialise. As the sanctions began to hurt, Tehran shifted to a strategy of 'maximum resistance'.

The unravelling of the JCPOA

On the nuclear front, beginning in May 2019, Iran began to move away from JCPOA's constraints incrementally: exceeding the ceilings of 300kg on low-enriched uranium and 130 MT on heavy-water; raising enrichment levels from 3.67% to 4.5%; stepping up research and development on advanced centrifuges; resuming enrichment at Fordow; and violating limits on the number of centrifuges in use. Finally, in January 2020, following the drone strike on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Gen. Qasem Soleimani, Tehran announced that it would no longer observe the JCPOA's restraints, though its cooperation with the IAEA would continue.

Tensions rose as the U.S. pushed ahead with its unilateral



sanctions, widening their scope to cover nearly all Iranian banks connected to the global financial system, industries related to metallurgy, energy and shipping, individuals related to the defence, intelligence and nuclear establishments and even senior political leaders, including the Supreme Leader and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. By end-2020, the U.S. had imposed nearly 80 rounds of sanctions targeting close to 1,500 individuals and entities.

Events in Iran

This came on top of COVID-19 that affected Iran badly, which had over 1.6 million infections and more than 60,000 deaths. The Iranian economy contracted by 7% in 2019 and another 6% in 2020. In mid-2020, Iran was shaken by a series of unexplained fires and blasts at a number of sensitive sites including one at the Natanz nuclear facility and another at Khorjir, a missile fuel fabrication unit. The damage at Natanz, described as 'sabotage', was significant, leading Tehran to announce that it would be replaced by a new underground facility.

Last November, Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, a senior nuclear scientist and head of the Research and Innovation Organisation in the Iranian Defence Ministry was killed outside Tehran in a terrorist attack amid rumours of external intelligence agencies' involvement.

Days later, Iranian Parliament, dominated by the conservatives, passed a bill seeking enrichment to be raised to 20%, acceleration of deploying new cascades and suspending implementation of some

of the special inspection provisions with the IAEA within two months if sanctions relief was not forthcoming.

No appetite for talks

Clearly, Mr. Trump's policy may have provided comfort to Israel's leader Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, but it failed to bring Iran back to the negotiating table and only strengthened the hardliners. Iran has suffered and there is no appetite for more negotiations. The E-3's promised relief Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), created in 2019 to facilitate limited trade with Iran has been a disappointment; its first transaction only took place in March 2020. EU-Iran trade fell from €18 billion in 2018 to less than a third in 2019 and dropped further last year.

A recent IAEA report has confirmed that 20% enrichment had begun as had production of uranium metal at Isfahan. However, a recent visit by IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi to Tehran enabled a 'technical understanding' to postpone Iran's withdrawal from the Additional Protocol (that it had voluntarily accepted in 2015) by three months. Moreover, Iranian elections are due in June and it is likely that President Hassan Rouhani's successor may not be from the 'moderate' camp. Though the nuclear dossier is controlled by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, he too had to wait for the moderate Rouhani/Zarif combine to be elected in 2013 for the JCPOA negotiations to commence.

If the U.S. waits for Iran to return to full compliance before lifting sanctions or Iran waits for the U.S. to restore sanctions relief before returning to full compliance, it can only lead to one outcome – the collapse of the JCPOA with Iran going nuclear like North Korea; an outcome that would create major reverberations in the region and beyond. Only good intentions will

not be enough to overcome this impasse.

Overcoming the impasse

The Biden administration has made a good start by appointing Robert Malley as the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran but he will need help. Positive steps along multiple tracks are necessary for creating a conducive atmosphere. Release of European and American nationals currently in custody in Iran would help. Clearing Iran's applications to the International Monetary Fund for COVID-19 relief and for supply of vaccines under the international COVAX facility can be done relatively easily. Oman's quiet facilitation helped create a positive environment for the JCPOA. After the Al Ula summit, Qatar and Kuwait too are well placed to play a diplomatic role and together, they can urgently explore the possibilities for forward movement in Yemen, with help from the EU and the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths.

The E-3/EU need to fast track deals worth several hundred million euros stuck in the INSTEX pipeline, with a visible nod from the U.S.. Not all U.S. sanctions can be lifted instantly, but reversing Mr. Trump's Executive Order of May 8, 2018 is possible as also removing sanctions on Iranian political leaders; both would send a positive signal. If not with Iran, the U.S. should share with the E-3/EU a 45-60 day time frame for progressive restoration of sanctions relief. Meanwhile, Iran needs to refrain from any further nuclear brinkmanship. The IAEA and the E-3/EU should work on a parallel reversal of steps taken by Iran to ensure full compliance with the JCPOA. Brussels has long wanted to be taken seriously as an independent foreign policy actor; it now has the opportunity to take a lead role.

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

A loan waiver rain and a State fiscal capacity drought

In Tamil Nadu, politicians seem oblivious to the lack of fiscal space and the opportunity cost of expenditure profligacy



R. SRIVIVASAN

The Government of Tamil Nadu, in early February, announced a waiver for farm loans from cooperative credit societies to the extent of ₹12,100 crore. There is now a clamour to include the farmers' loans from banks as well in this scheme and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) has also promised to waive farm loans and jewel loans within certain limits.

The DMK has also announced

that it would waive educational loans from banks and loans of self-help groups from cooperative societies if voted to power in May 2021.

It could likely be followed by a series of loan waivers for weavers and small traders, interest subvention, subsidised electricity and a host of open ended subsidies in the election manifestos. (A waiver of jewel loans from cooperative societies up to eight grams was also announced, citing novel coronavirus pandemic distress, but given its scale, it does not come under the purview of this article.)

What is of interest is the fiscal capacity of the Tamil Nadu government to implement these schemes and the opportunity costs of such schemes.

There has been special interest

in the media to discuss the implications of the speech of the Tamil

Nadu Finance Minister, on February 23, introducing the Interim Budget 2021-22 (<https://bit.ly/3uHb8W7>). The Budget speech is only a statement of intent, as the real Budget is the passage of finance and appropriation bills in the Assembly followed by the assent of the Governor.

It is obvious that the vote-on-account, probably for the first two months of the fiscal 2021-22, passed after the presentation of the Interim Budget 2021-22 alone needs to be considered for any practical purpose. That vote-on-account is not in the public domain; however, it is only a simple two-month projection of revenue and expenditure based on the Budget 2020-21 passed in the Assembly last year.

Therefore, any discussion on the Finance Minister's speech introducing the Interim Budget 2021-22 shall remain an academic exercise and a political discourse to affect the full Budget for 2021-22 that will be presented by the new government after the 16th Legislative Assembly election is held.

No support to PSUs

In this context, delving into the fiscal indicators and finding out the fiscal capacity of the Government of Tamil Nadu to finance subsidies in the ensuing years are apt. The opportunity cost of squeezing the Budget to finance subsidy is the lack of direct budgetary support to public sector undertakings (PSUs) that provide public utilities.

Subsidies increase revenue expenditure, and without corresponding increase in tax and non-



tax revenue for the government, the revenue deficit should naturally increase. Though every year the government claims that the revenue deficit ratio and fiscal deficit ratio are within statutory limits, the desirability and sustainability of debt have yet to be examined.

Revenue deficit ratio

The farm loan waiver announced in 2016 has been provided the funds in the subsequent five Budgets. In spite of this, the revenue deficit ratio was around 1.5 in the three-year period, 2017-20. During the same period, the all States' average revenue deficit ratio was around 0.4, it was a near revenue balance in Karnataka and Telangana, and it was more than 2 in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

The cause for the elevated revenue deficit ratio in Tamil Nadu has been the increasing primary deficit ratio from 0.9 to 1.3. Primary deficit is the revenue deficit net of interest payments and the implication is that the government is unable to contain recurring expenditure such as subsidies and other discretionary expenditures within the limits of recurring non-debt re-

venue. So, the primary deficit ratio is the leading indicator for the revenue deficit ratio to follow and increasing primary deficit is the surest route to higher revenue deficit and unsustainable debt servicing in future. In the immediate pre-COVID-19 period, the trends in the revenue account summarised in the two deficit ratios show that there is little fiscal room to increase expenditure for new schemes.

Obviously, the next question is this: what is the possibility for increasing the recurring revenue? When we move to a rule-based fiscal policy that includes harmonisation of commodity taxation and restriction of deficit ratios, higher economic growth and tax elasticity alone can help us. But this is a long-term solution and politics suffers from short sight in economic policy visualisation.

Moreover, the trend in Tamil Nadu's own tax revenue has not been buoyant in recent times and COVID-19 has further reduced tax buoyancy. We have little hope in the central government's benevolence to support Tamil Nadu, if we believe the Finance Minister's lament about declining central transfers both in the share in central taxes and grant-in-aid – tied or untied.

Extra-budgetary transactions

What is the opportunity cost of this public benevolence? We need to examine the extra-budgetary transactions for this.

In general, PSUs offer public utilities, which otherwise should be directly provided by the go-

vernment. It is important that the government provide adequate direct budgetary support to PSUs if they price the public utilities below the unit cost.

The adequacy and quality of public utilities depend on the financial health of these PSUs. But in the absence of direct budgetary support, we can fix the financial sickness of PSUs to be a symptom of a fiscal tumour. For instance, in 2017-18, (the latest year for which we have the data), the total stock of borrowings of PSUs was ₹1,67,844 crore, interest payment was ₹4,043.03 crore, while incurring a loss of ₹17,423.56 crore. A case in point is the example of the Road Transport Corporations, which incurred a loss of ₹5,503.36 crore and interest payment of ₹7,160.91 crore.

Almost all the PSUs should have incurred massive losses and amassed unserviceable debt during the COVID-19 period – and this will accelerate in the couple of years to come.

If we add to this the PSUs borrowing and interest payments to the government's debt and interest payments, the fiscal situation is unnerving.

The lack of fiscal space and opportunity cost of expenditure profligacy of the State show that politicians only think 'in the long run we are all dead' and 'let us achieve short-run electoral victories by showing the low hanging fruits of subsidies' modes.

R. Srivivasan is Professor, Department of Econometrics, University of Madras

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

ISRO soaring

At a time when the media continue to have only news of murky politics, the sight of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C51, lifting off majestically from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Sunday and successfully placing in orbit Brazil's Amazonia-1 and 18 other co-passenger satellites was heart warming and refreshing (Page 1, March 1). The event is a perfect and fitting gift to the nation just after National Science Day. ISRO has truly become the synonym for hard work,

perseverance and team spirit. That some of the satellites were developed by students should serve as a source of inspiration for our youth. Finally, that India is looking toward space diplomacy will certainly give a fillip to the nation's global ties.

B. SURESH KUMAR,
Coimbatore

Regulatory framework
There is no case that all forms of news media, whether print or digital, should come under a similar regulatory architecture. The reach of

digital news media is deeper and more intimately entwined with people's daily lives than that of the non-digital news media. Consequently, the digital news media's immediacy magnifies its capacity to inform as well as to disturb social order and peace. It is significant that the government will have the occasion to adjudicate on disputes and grievances as the last resort after the first and second tiers of internal regulators fail to

The rush to appropriate icons

Political parties are trivialising Vivekananda, Tagore and Bose to win the West Bengal elections



AVIJIT PATHAK

When mainstream politics becomes recklessly instrumental, nothing is spared; even great idols and cultural symbols are trivialised through a process of appropriation in order to manipulate people's emotions. In the campaign to the Assembly elections in West Bengal, we have been witnessing the competitive game of demonstrating one's affinity with the icons of Bengal, such as Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. The Bharatiya Janata Party is at pains to demonstrate that it is not a north Indian party; and even if it loves to chant 'Jai Shri Ram', it understands what the average Bengali bhadralok regards as his 'cultural capital'. No wonder the leaders of the party, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, often express their close 'attachment' to Vivekananda, Tagore and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

Bhadralok consciousness

This symbolic politics of cultural appropriation cannot be adequately understood without looking at the consciousness of the Bengali bhadralok. Possibly, this consciousness has not yet been able to come out of its attachment to lost glory. The colonial encounter, the birth of the new intelligentsia, the nuanced conversation with the West or its 'Enlightenment' philosophies, and the rigorous process of inner churning led to what is generally regarded as the 'Bengal Renaissance'. In a way, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to Tagore, or from Swami Vivekananda to Sri Aurobindo, Bengal witnessed its cultural fineness in the 19th and early 20th century. Possibly, the likes of Satyajit Ray or Amartya Sen sought to carry this legacy forward in contemporary times.

However, the harsh reality is that because of the trauma of Partition, the division of Bengal, the influx of refugees, economic decline and widespread social unrest, Bengal began to lose much of its cultural aura in independent India. In fact, this fall led



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to Rabindranath Tagore on his 158th birth anniversary, during the Lok Sabha election campaign, in Bankura, West Bengal in May 2019. ■ PTI

to the bhadralok fixation on 19th century Bengal, and associated nostalgia.

Consequences of a fixation

This fixation led to a mechanised process of ritualisation; instead of a living and organic engagement with Vivekananda and Tagore, people reduced them to objects of worship. It would not be an exaggeration to say that average Bengalis often equate spirituality with routine visits to Belur Math or the Dakshineswar Kali temple and buying a couple of pocketbooks containing the messages of Vivekananda. Likewise, the middle class from Kolkata occasionally visits Shantiniketan, reduces it to a tourist spot, and uses *Rabindrasangeet* as some sort of ritualistic mantras.

Not only that. A Bengali child, as I recall from my own experiences, often grows up with a belief that Bose was the ultimate icon of the freedom struggle and both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were not nice to him.

In fact, no political party in Bengal, be it the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or the Trinamool Congress, is free from this cultural politics. The BJP too seems to have understood this Bengal weakness; it is seeking to demonstrate that it can quote selectively from Vivekananda, appreciate Tagore's paintings, and glorify Netaji's heroism.

Amid this 'invocation' of Vivekananda and Tagore, we see the manifestations of ugly politics. The language of this politics is toxic; the continual classification of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' votes pollutes the collective psyche; and as everything becomes a utilitarian transaction, nothing is impossible – a politician in the Trinamool yesterday joins the BJP today; or a 'leftist' becomes a militant nationalist. While Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seems to be becoming angrier and more restless with every passing day, Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah have begun to visit West Bengal quite frequently. Amid all this, there is no creative breakthrough or critical reflection. For the political class, Vivekananda and Tagore are just names; there is no honest engagement with their lives.

Misfits in the world of Hindutva
What is quite absurd is that the proponents of Hindutva – an ideology of hyper-masculine nationalism – are trying to possess Tagore. Imagine Tagore's sublime prayers in *Gitanjali*, his poetic universalism, his rhythmic engagement with the abundance of nature, and his tender, feminine and spiritually enriched aesthetic sensibilities. Imagine Tagore's profound reflections on the dangers of hyper-nationalism and the resultant psychology of violence. Imagine some of the characters Tagore created in his

novels – Gora with his existential quest and realisation of India as a maternal/inclusive space without walls of separation; Nandini with her feminine grace questioning the gigantic/hyper-masculine machine; and Nikhilesh seeing the dangers of communalisation of politics in the name of nationalism. Imagine Tagore nurturing the art of Nandal Bose, conversing and debating with Gandhi, and experimenting with a kind of education that expands one's horizon and nurtures the aesthetics of living. The politics that the proponents of Hindutva practise is the negation of almost everything Tagore stood for.

Likewise, it is important to realise that Swami Vivekananda, despite his saffron and visibly 'Hindu' look, cannot be fitted into the discourse of Hindutva. The monk sought to activate the conscience of a defeated nation, pleaded for "muscles of iron, nerves of steel and gigantic will", celebrated the idea of a resurgent nation with a 'soul', and created an organisation of monks for social/spiritual work. But there is hardly any similarity between this project and what the likes of V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar sought to create. After all, Vivekananda's message was that of Upanishadic oneness and 'practical Vedanta' – an engaged religiosity that is not indifferent to the plight of the subaltern, or a religiosity that seeks to arouse the potential we all carry. Possibly, a hermeneutic engagement with the radical monk would inspire us to spread the message of love and altruistic action, not hatred and exclusion.

Who will educate our noisy politicians? We are living at a time when lies are transformed into gospels of truth, words have lost their meaning, political speeches have become mere rhetoric, and democracy has been reduced to election mathematics. It is perhaps futile to expect anything higher or nobler from the political class. But then, the question is whether average Bengalis are really ready to have a deep engagement with Vivekananda and Tagore. Or will they continue to reduce these figures into just brands for a false cultural pride?

Avijit Pathak is Professor of Sociology at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, JNU, New Delhi

An unusual new media code

There is little exploration of alternative policy approaches, or the longer-term consequences of Australia's new law



FERGUS HANSON

This week, the Australian Parliament passed a world-first law targeting Google and Facebook. The lead up to the bill pitted the government against two of the world's largest corporations and the discussion reached the world's top leaders: the U.S. President weighed in and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison discussed it. At the peak of the crisis, Facebook blocked all Australian users from posting or viewing any news on the platform. The law matters because it is likely to be copied by countries around the world, but there are some limitations to what has been agreed in Australia and opportunities for others to try alternative solutions.

Intent of the law

So, what is the law all about? The Mandatory Bargaining Code is an unusual piece of policy. It attempts to address two problems in one hit: how to tax large, multinational technology companies; and how to ensure that Australia maintains a strong, independent media. The code's solution is to mandate transfer payments from the tech companies to news media organisations. At this point you could be forgiven for thinking: 'But isn't Australia a market economy?' And that's one of the most perplexing aspects of the new law. What it effectively does is require one industry to pay money to an unrelated industry. This is like forcing computer manufacturers to sustain typewriter manufacturers.

The underlying assumption is that Google and Facebook derive benefit and revenue by helping users access links to news stories. That is true to an extent, but by that logic every single business that receives a referral from a platform should be paid for it. If I searched the menu of a local restaurant, Google would have to pay that restaurant for my action. That model ignores the benefit businesses derive from the referral business, creates odd incentives and is not scalable.

The other unusual feature of the law is that it doesn't apply to any company. The intention behind the legislation was to use it as a threat rather than to have it actually apply to the companies. In this respect it's a little like a democratic version of a shutdown. If the companies don't agree to pay news media outlets enough money in private deals, they face the risk of being designated by the Minister and forced to abide by the code.

The code's mandatory provisions are so onerous that the tech companies are highly incentivised to make generous payments to media companies to avoid the provisions. The payments agreed to in private deals can easily exceed revenue actually generated by the platform from displaying the news links. This is because the amounts they would be forced to pay under the code would likely be far higher, so it is better to overpay outside the scheme than risk failing under it.

As you might suspect, a law that proposes giving news organisations money for doing nothing new was received well among news businesses. Politically, it was an astute way to go after the tech giants because there was not a dissenting voice to be heard in the Australian mainstream media. The downside was that it meant there was little exploration of alternative policy approaches, or some of the longer-term consequences of the code.

Alternatives

Some might say, that might be true, but a strong independent media is the lifeblood of democracy and the tech companies need to pay more tax, so if a clunky policy solution is the price of getting there, I'm okay with that.

There is no doubt that societies around the world need to ensure they can sustain strong, independent news media. There are also lots of reasoned policy discussions on the best way to tax digital service companies. So, what are the alternatives?

A former Australian Prime Minister has mounted the public case that a tax on digital advertising would be a better way to go. This could cover all online advertising or just advertising platforms of a certain size. That would provide a scalable way to tax the platforms without creating the precedent of having one industry subsidising another.

On the issue of supporting news media, the new Australian law has one advantage in that it removes government from the role of deciding which outlets get cash injections. This removes the obvious conflict that government would have to hand out money to the least critical news outlets, defeating the whole purpose of the exercise. But as many governments that fund public broadcasters have learnt through bitter experience, there are effective ways of funding independent journalism at arm's length.

The law is understandably going to be of great interest to media organisations everywhere, keen to copy their Australian counterparts and fill their coffers with some tech company cash. But it would be a shame if the rush for cash got in the way of a discussion of other approaches that could be explored.

Fergus Hanson is the Director at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the author of 'Internet Wars'

Master and the roster

The collegium system has failed to keep executive interference at bay

PRANAV VERMA

The Supreme Court recently laid to rest the proceedings inquiring into a conspiracy to threaten the independence of the judiciary on the basis of sexual harassment allegations against the former Chief Justice of India (CJI), Ranjan Gogoi. After two years, the proceedings remained inconclusive.

Singular power

This was a missed opportunity, for it failed to recognise that recent experiences are anything to go by, the threat to judicial independence comes from a source closer to home. This is the singular power of the CJI as the Master of the Roster – i.e., the vesting of exclusive discretion in the Chief Justice to constitute benches and allocate cases. In fact, this power lay at the heart of the controversy surrounding the proceedings the Court has now closed. It enabled Justice Gogoi to institute *suo motu* proceedings despite being an accused; label the case as a matter of judicial independence; and preside over it.

From the standpoint of judicial independence, the Master of the Roster power makes the CJI's office a high stakes one. It makes the CJI the sole point of defence of the Court against executive interference. However, this has a flip side. With the CJI as the sole Master of the Roster, any executive seeking to influence the Supreme Court needs only a pliant CJI. In other words, a pliant Master of the Roster carries the danger of producing a pliant Court.

This power is predicated upon the CJI's seniority in the top court and the resultant presumption of propriety. However, B.R. Ambedkar had forewarned the Constituent Assembly: "...after all, the Chief Justice is a man with all the failings, all the sentiments and all the prejudices which we as common people have". Yet, the Supreme Court has been reluctant to dilute this power. In *Asok Pande v. Supreme Court of India* (2018), a three-judge bench of the Court held that Master of the Roster is the CJI's exclusive power. Thereafter, a two-judge bench in *Shanti Bhushan v. Supreme Court of India* (2018) rejected

the plea that the Master of the Roster should be interpreted as the collegium. Therefore, while the CJI's other powers such as recommending appointments to constitutional courts are shared with other senior judges, the power of Master of the Roster is enjoyed without scrutiny.

Justice Gogoi finds himself in a unique position of being both a vocal critic of this power and also championing its execution. Despite levelling allegations of favouritism in how CJI Dipak Misra allocated cases, through the judges' press conference, Justice Gogoi's tenure as CJI did not prove much different. Apart from hearing many sensitive cases such as Ayodhya and Rafale himself, he also used this power to ignore conflict of interest when he presided over the proceedings on sexual harassment allegations against him.

Judicial reforms

Reforms in the Indian judiciary have been a continuing project, mostly responding to crises of the time. Hence, when Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister ordered punitive transfers of High Court judges and superseded judges to appoint the CJI, the Supreme Court formulated the collegium system in response. However, this system has failed to keep executive interferences at bay from the Supreme Court. This is for two reasons: first, as Justice Gogoi's case shows, there is an attractive lure of post-retirement jobs; and second, as the privilege of Master of the Roster shows, the CJI's allocation of cases is an unchecked power. The continuing project of judicial reforms should thus address these two issues. A cooling-off period between retirement and a post-retirement appointment has often been suggested as a way to deal with the first problem. For the second, the power of Master of the Roster needs to be diversified beyond the CJI's exclusive and untrammeled discretion. Whether these should vest with a larger cohort of serving judges is an issue that invites public debate and introspection within the institution of the Supreme Court.

Pranav Verma is an LLM candidate at the University of Cambridge



DATA POINT

Glimmer of hope

Following data from Israel, numbers from England also show the positive impact of the COVID-19 vaccines on the population. By mid-February, in England, the number of new COVID-19 cases, related hospitalisations, and deaths of those aged 85+ and between 65 and 84 declined rapidly. Though the figures fell across all age cohorts, the pace of reduction was higher for these two age groups. The fact that England prioritised the elderly and that the higher pace of reduction in cases and deaths among the elderly came about 2-3 weeks after the first dose could well be the impact of the inoculation drive. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Suman Sen

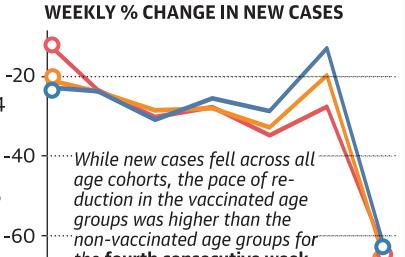
PRIORITY GROUP | As of Jan. 10, 2021, 34.6% of people aged 80+ had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in England. In contrast, only 1.5% aged below 65 had at least one dose. According to a study*, it takes two to three weeks for immunity to build after vaccination

Age cohort	Single-dose beneficiaries
>80	34.6%
65-80	2.5%
<65	1.5%

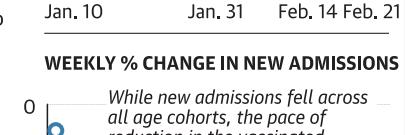


Source: "COVID-19: Is vaccination roll out reducing cases and deaths in the UK?", British Medical Journal; UK COVID-19 dashboard

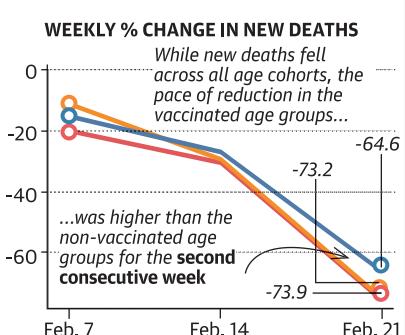
CASES | The chart depicts the weekly % change in new cases among those aged 20 to 64 (blue), 65 to 84 (orange) and 85+ (red) in England. For instance, 63.6% fewer cases were recorded among people aged 85+ in the week ending Feb. 21 compared to the week before



HOSPITALISATIONS | The chart depicts the weekly % change in new COVID-19-related hospital admissions for the same age groups. Among those aged 85+, 50.6% fewer admissions were recorded in the week ending on Feb. 21 compared to the week before



DEATHS | The chart depicts the weekly % change in new COVID-19-related deaths for the same age groups. For instance, 74% fewer deaths were recorded among people aged 85+ in the week ending February 21 compared to the previous week



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 2, 1971

Elephant comes to poll booth

A mahout, who took his baby elephant with him to a booth in the Saidapet constituency in the City [Madras, March 1], was turned back by the police. Urchins in the locality, clustering noisily around the animal, and its keeper distracted voters for a time. The mahout came to the booth and cast his vote after leaving the elephant at a nearby temple.

"Rahu kalam", the 90-minute period observed as inauspicious by the people, kept queues thin till nine in the morning in some areas of the City.

An 85-year-old woman, who arrived at a City polling station riding piggy back on her grandson, found to her dismay that her age was given in the electoral roll as 38. She was allowed to vote after she had convinced the polling officials that the error was not of her making.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 2, 1921

Riot at Howrah Railway Station

Calcutta, March 1: Further details of last evening's riot at Howrah Station go to show that all local and main line train services were suspended for over six hours and traffic was disorganised for several hours

FROM PAGE ONE

25 lakh sign up on day 1 of vaccine rollout

"I have been saying from the beginning that both our vaccines are safe and perfect as far as immunogenicity is concerned. We are thankful to the Prime Minister. He has always told us that you have to lead by example. He took the jab first when the vaccination of people above 60 years has begun," said the Minister.

The Health Minister added that Mr. Modi took Covaxin, against which a lot of misinformation was spread even when it was scientifically perfect. "I think the Prime Minister has given a clear message to the country. All misinformation and hesitancy should be buried once and for all," he said.

The Minister encouraged all eligible beneficiaries to come forward and take the

Modi takes first dose of Covaxin at AIIMS

Ms. Niveda said the Prime Minister was in good spirits and even jokingly asked if a syringe used by veterinarians was required to administer the vaccine "since politicians are supposed to have very thick skins". He later complimented the nurses for the ease with which the jab was administered.

In an interesting coincidence, Kerala and Puducherry are both going to polls in April. Mr. Modi wore an Assamese gamcha, another State going to polls. Sources said no special route was laid out for the Prime Minister and the lack

of traffic early morning was used to make the visit painless for Delhi commuters.

At a meeting of Chief Ministers on vaccine disbursal, Mr. Modi had said that political leaders and legislators should allow health and frontline workers to get the jab first as they needed protection. He had said that most political leaders would get their turn when senior citizens above 50 would be allowed to get the jab. Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also got the first dose of the vaccine on Monday.



Sharmila firm on new party, launch soon

RAVI REDDY
HYDERABAD

Less than a month after dropping enough hints that she was serious about launching a new political party in Telangana, Y.S. Sharmila, daughter of the late Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy and sister of present CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, is most likely to announce the launch date on April 9 at a public meeting in Khammam.

Sources privy to the discussions held between Ms. Sharmila and a few loyalists of Rajasekhara Reddy on Monday maintained that three dates were deliberated. The leaders zeroed in on April 9 – the day Rajasekhara Reddy launched his padayatra in 2003, May 14 – when he first took oath as Chief Minister of united A.P. in 2004, and July 8 – his birth anniversary.

While May 14 was ruled out because of the summer, July 8, the leaders felt was too far away and hence it was felt that Ms. Sharmila could formally make an announcement about launch date of her new party on April 9. "We plan to hold a massive public meeting in Khammam on that date to make the announcement," sources close to Ms. Sharmila said on Monday.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to the fact that the body was found face down in a semi-nude condition and the wheat crop at the spot was completely trampled. They said the 14-year-old girl was speech impaired and that could be the reason why the perpetrators targeted her.

On Sunday evening, when a police team went to take the body for a post mortem, irate villagers set fodder on fire to block its passage. The SHO of Gangiri police station was also injured in stone-throwing.

It was only around 10.30 p.m. that the body could be taken to Aligarh for post mortem.

Mr Muniraj said the SHO suffered minor injuries when he was confronted by angry villagers. "It took some time to pacify the villagers. It seems they wanted the media and their leaders to reach the spot. Now, we are getting their support. The last rites have been performed peacefully," he said.

The police have detained five persons, two of whom were working at a nearby tuwell at the time of the incident. The three others are brothers from the same village. Sources said police had found empty glasses and pouches of liquor around 200 metres from the spot. "Five teams are working on the case," said Mr. Muniraj.

The victim's father worked as a labourer in Aligarh and her mother works at a restaurant. The girl was one of the four children and has been living with her maternal grandmother for the last 10 years.

On Sunday, around noon, she had gone out to collect fodder for her goats. When she didn't return till late in the afternoon, villagers started searching for her. Her body was found in a field, around one kilometre from the village.

Members of political parties reached the village and raised slogans in front of the Akbarabadi police station.

They point to

Chinese may have targeted power systems, ports, says U.S. firm

Cybersecurity report links malware attack to Oct. 12 grid failure in Mumbai

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

Chinese state-sponsored actors may have deployed malware into Indian power grids and seaports as border tensions between India and China began escalating last May, culminating in a deadly clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in mid-June. The alleged cyber-intrusion was discovered and revealed by U.S. cyber security and intelligence firm, Recorded Future, according to *The New York Times*, which broke the story. An October 12 grid failure in Mumbai may have been caused by the Chinese malware, as per the report.

The Massachusetts-based firm found that in the lead-up to the clashes, they noticed an increase in malware

targeting the government, defence organisations and the public sector. The Power Ministry confirmed that while attempts to breach systems were made, the sector had not been impacted.

Recorded Future told *The Hindu* that there is still some evidence of ongoing intrusion although a significant amount of it has subsided recently.

'Govt. was alerted'
"There is evidence that some of the intrusions remain ongoing; however, a significant proportion of the activity appeared to cease in early to mid-February following notification," a spokesperson for Recorded Future, Caitlin Mattingly, told *The Hindu* via email on Monday.



Massive outage: Commuters stranded at a Mumbai station after the power cut on October 12, 2020. ■ FILE PHOTO

While the government has not contacted Recorded Future since *The New York Times* published its report, according to Ms. Mattingly, the company had been in touch with the government prior to the report's publication.

"We shared technical details of the intrusions with the Indian government that would allow them to identify and respond to the incidents. We are not an incident response firm and so do not directly typically investigate internal incidents in

organisations," Ms. Mattingly said when asked if Recorded Future is helping the government patch up the vulnerabilities, which it alerted the government to soon after it noticed them.

The intrusions, which began in May 2020 continued throughout the year.

The New York Times report quoted Recorded Future COO Stuart Solomon as saying the Chinese state-sponsored group (which the company calls 'Red Echo') "has been seen to systematically utilise advanced cyber intrusion techniques to quietly gain a foothold in nearly a dozen critical nodes across the Indian power generation and transmission infrastructure."

Specifically, Recorded Future identified 21 IP addresses targeting 10 power organisations (RLDCs and SLDCs – Regional Load Despatch

Centres and their State counterparts) and two seaports: the V.O. Chidambaranar Port and Mumbai Port Trust. Other intrusions included a high-voltage transmission substation and a coal-fired thermal power plant.

The report links the malware attacks to a massive power outage in Mumbai and its suburbs last October which impacted hospitals, businesses, the stock market, homes and transport systems.

"Additionally, local media reporting previously linked an October 2020 power outage in Mumbai to the identification of malware at a Padga-based State Load Despatch Centre. At this time, the alleged link between the outage and the discovery of the unspecified malware variant remains unsubstantiated. However, this disclosure provides addition-

al evidence suggesting the coordinated targeting of Indian Load Despatch Centres," the report says.

"The intrusions in May 2020 onwards, which were China-linked but separate to the Red Echo activity highlighted in the report, were all reported to the Indian government shortly after discovery," the spokesperson said.

Both the U.S. and Indian authorities had been informed and acknowledged receipt of the information and said they would investigate the findings, she added.

A State Department spokesperson told *The Hindu* they were aware of the reports. "In general, we continue to have concerns about states' dangerous and coercive actions, including in cyberspace, and we reaffirm the importance of joint action on cybersecurity, criti-

cal infrastructure, and supply chain security," the spokesperson said.

Irresponsible: Beijing

China's Foreign Ministry hit out at the report, calling it "irresponsible," and attacked it for not offering evidence. "China firmly opposes and cracks down on all forms of cyber attacks," spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

"Speculation and fabrication have no role to play on the issue of cyber attacks, as it is very difficult to trace the origin of a cyber attack," Mr Wang said. He said it was "highly irresponsible to accuse a particular party when there is no sufficient evidence around," adding that "China is firmly opposed to such irresponsible and ill-intentioned practice."

(With inputs from Ananth Krishnan)

Trinamool amplifies 'Bengal wants own daughter' pitch

Party launches dedicated website around the slogan

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

Highlighting the party's election slogan *Bangla Nijer Meye ke Chai* (Bengal wants its own daughter), the Trinamool Congress on Monday launched a dedicated website around the slogan and held an outreach programme across the 23 districts on it.

Party sources said the campaign would have a separate theme in the districts. Not only had many posters come up in the city on the theme but the Trinamool leadership is also highlighting that Mamata Banerjee was the only woman to become the Chief Minister of West Bengal. A number of women leaders also held a programme giving details of women empowerment, including nomination of 41% women candidates in the Lok Sabha by the party.

Finance Minister Amit Mitra took to the social media claiming that he had "busted the negative propaganda on investment in Bengal". "Mo-Shah's negative propaganda on investment busted by 100 Bankers in Meet. Banks in Bengal lent ₹63,000 crore for investment to Medium-Small industry [medium



Joining hands: RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav greeting West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on Monday. ■ PTI

Will support Mamata'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav on Monday met Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the Secretariat and extended support to her in the Assembly poll. Mr. Yadav said the first priority should

be to stop "communal forces" and appealed to his supporters to put their "full force behind Mamataji to ensure that the BJP is defeated". Asked whether the RJD will contest in Bengal, he said, "If Mamataji is contesting it means we are contesting."

small] April 2020-Jan 21, with State govt's support. Result: 23 lakh new jobs as per GoI capital/labour ratio. Mo-Shah bolun?" Mr. Mitra said.

Another star joins BJP
Popular film actor Srabanti Chatterjee on Monday

joined the BJP. She was welcomed by party national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and State president Dilip Ghosh. Ms. Chatterjee has joined the list of popular stars like Payel Sarkar and Yash Dasgupta who have joined the BJP recently.

'G-23' lambasts Congress alliance with Furfura peer

Tie-up militates against the party's ideology, leaders say

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Days after a show of strength by a section of the Congress group of dissenters (the "G-23") in Jammu, a key member of the group, Anand Sharma, on Monday lashed out at his party for having an alliance with the Indian Secular Front (ISF) party in West Bengal, and asserted that the poll tie-up "militates against Congress ideology".

On Sunday, West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is also the party's leader in the Lok Sabha, had shared a stage with Left leaders and ISF founder Abbas Siddiqui of Furfura Sharief at a public rally of the grand alliance.

Mr. Sharma's outburst came on a day when the Congress tried to create a divide among the G-23 – leaders who had sought a complete revamp of the party in a letter to party president Sonia Gandhi last August – by appointing one of the letter writers, Prithviraj Chavan, as the head of screening committee to shortlist party candidates for poll-bound Assam.

Issuing a strong counter,

Left leaders caution ISF chief not to target Cong.

KOLKATA
Left Front chairperson Biram Bose on Monday cautioned Indian Secular Front chief and Furfura peer Abbas Siddique not to target the Congress party leadership. "When we are in alliance, we should speak in one voice. We hope that he will heed the advice and not repeat that in future," Mr. Bose said referring to remarks made by Mr. Siddique.

Anand Sharma

Mr. Chowdhury told *The Hindu* that Mr. Sharma should have spoken to him first to "find out ground realities" and asserted that Congress' alliance was with the Left parties for 92 seats and other secular forces are part of the grand alliance.

"Congress' alliance with parties like ISF and other such forces militates against the core ideology of the party and Gandhian and Nehruvian secularism, which forms the soul of the party. These issues need to be approved by the CWC [Congress Working Committee]," tweeted Mr. Sharma, the Deputy Leader of the Congress in the Rajya Sabha.

"Congress cannot be selective in fighting communalists but must do so in all its manifestations, irrespective of religion and colour. The presence and endorsement [of] West Bengal PCC [Pradesh Congress Committee] president is painful and shameful, he must clarify," he added.

His comments targeting the Congress came barely 24 hours after his senior colleague, Ghulam Nabi Azad, heaped praise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "not hiding his humble background of selling tea and washing utensils".

Mr. Azad's comment embarrassed the Congress, which is in the midst of fighting Assembly elections.

Farm, trade unions to launch joint campaign

SKM will meet today to discuss plan

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ DAMINI NATH
NEW DELHI

Farm unions under the Samyukta Kisan Morcha banner and 10 Central trade unions have agreed to carry out a joint campaign, combining their demands and planning common actions.

The decision was taken at a meeting of representatives from both sides on Monday evening, but will need to be ratified by the wider SKM at its general body meeting on Tuesday.

The SKM will also discuss the possibility of jointly campaigning against the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections. Some members have already chalked out such plans, but others are not too keen.

The meeting decided to undertake a joint campaign, with five common demands: three demands from the farmers' side – repeal of the farm reform laws, withdrawal of Electricity Bill and legal guarantee for MSP – and two demands from the workers' side – to withdraw the labour codes and stop privatisation," said All India

Kisan Sabha treasurer Krishnaprasad, who attended the meeting.

All-India Trade Union Congress general secretary Amarjeet Kaur said that farmers and workers' representatives discussed coming out with a joint statement and programme, which would be announced after the farmers' meeting on Tuesday.

The BKU's Balbir Singh Rajewal is also likely to join in election campaigning against the BJP in Kerala, according to a farm leader who did not wish to be named.

Gurnam Singh Chaduni, who heads another faction of the BKU in Haryana and is known to be close to the Aam Aadmi Party, is planning to campaign in Bengal, the leader said.

Office of The Superintendent, Associated Group of Hospital, Jodhpur.
No. F Acc/AGH/Ju./2020/2554 Date : 19 FEB 2021

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING BID 08/2020-21

Bids for cleaning and sanitation at M.G. Hospital on job basis and rate contract for medical oxygen gas, liquid medical oxygen and nitrous oxide gas are invited from interested bidders upto 03:00 pm on 02.03.2021.

Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal <http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> and [www.urban.lsg.rajasthan.gov.in](http://urban.lsg.rajasthan.gov.in) of the state website.

UBN NO. SMC2021SLOB00370

SMC2021GLRC00371

Superintendent
Associated group of hospital jodhpur

DIPR/C/1988

GUJARAT MARITIME BOARD
ONLINE TENDER NOTICE No.12 of 2020-21
On behalf of Chairman, Gujarat Maritime Board, Executive Engineer (Civil), Construction Division, G.M.B, Porbandar-360575 Phone No. (0286-2242559) invites on-line tenders in two cover bid for the Following works.

1 Construction of Approximate 200 m Jetty & Approach at Okha Port (Gujarat) (2nd Attempt) Rs.32.95 Cr.

The bid document will be available from 19/02/2021 to 12/03/2021 up to 18.00 hrs on website <http://www.gmb.procure.com> and www.nprocure.com

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens.
Office of the Director, Ground Floor, Podium Block, V.V.Tower, Dr.B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore-01. Ph.No. 080-22866066, 080-22866046 E-Mail Address: dirdwdsc@gmail.com

No: DWD/PLN/C/95/59/2020-21 Date: 01.03.2021

Short term Tender Notification (Through E-Procurement only)

Tender is invited by the Director, Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, under e-Procurement platform/e-portal in two parts (i.e., Technical bid and Financial bid) system for the supply of Talking Laptops and Braille Kit for the visually Impaired, to the Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, The interesting bidders may see further details and may login in website : www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in

The tender can be submitted on or before 08.03.2021 till 05.00 pm. The technical bid will be opened on 09.03.2021 at 05.30 pm and the financial bid will be opened on 10.03.2021 at 4.00 pm. Department reserves all rights to accept, reject, incorporate changes and re-tender without giving any reasons. The details can be obtained from the Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, Podium Block, V.V. Tower, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-560001, Phone No:080-22866066, 080-22866046 E-Mail Address: dirdwdsc@gmail.com

Sd/-

Director, Department for the Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, Bengaluru.

DIPR/DDU/Zen/R.0/2961/2020-21

COVID-19 - DON'T SPREAD RUMOURS, ACT RESPONSIBLY, AVOID INFECTION-NOT THE INFECTED.

Wear Mask

Follow Physical Distancing

Maintain Hand Hygiene

My bail is not a victory: Naudeep

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Trade union activist Naudeep Kaur, who was arrested on January 12 after a demonstration to demand workers' wages in Haryana's Kundli, on Monday said her release on bail last week was not a victory.

Addressing a press conference here, Ms. Kaur said, "My case is still on, we haven't won yet. The Dalits and workers still sleep on empty stomachs. Our wages are still with companies."

Ms. Kaur said she and fellow activists of the Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan had been holding protests to demand the "lockdown wages" of workers in the Kundli industrial area. She said she was arrested after one such protest, where she alleged police dragged her by her hair and roughed her up. Once in jail, the young Dalit woman said she was subjected to caste abuse.

'We had only flags'
Denying the charges of attempt to murder and extortion against her and other unionists, Ms. Kaur said the workers were carrying flags, not weapons. "Whoever raises their voice gets labelled as anti-national and is jailed. It shows that the state is afraid. We don't even have the freedom to distribute pamphlets. The state is afraid of a so-called 'weak' Dalit girl," she said.

Ms. Kaur said while the workers had been protesting for months, it was when they decided to show solidarity with the ongoing farmers' agitation that things changed. "Their [the state] fear is that we are with the farmers," she said.

She said the farmers and workers' protests against the farm laws and new labour codes required mass support.

Earlier, during the press conference, Rajbir, the father of Shiv Kumar, the Mazdoor Adhikar Sangathan president who remains in jail in the same case, said his son had been beaten and tortured in jail.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES	
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER & BASIN MANAGER, SUBARN	



Leading the way: NCP Leader Sharad Pawar getting vaccinated in Mumbai; Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu at the Government Medical College in Chennai; senior citizens after getting their shot in New Delhi and a health worker giving instructions at a hospital in Hyderabad on Monday. ■ ANI, PTI, R.V. MOORTHY AND G. RAMAKRISHNA



Comorbidities list for vaccine eligibility seen as too narrow

Focus on severe ailments excludes many: experts

R. PRASAD

CHENNAI

The Union Health Ministry's list of 20 comorbidities that make people in the 45-59 year age group eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine is seen by some medical professionals as too narrow.

"The list of comorbidities is overly restrictive and complicated. Many conditions, including obesity, have been left out," said Dr. Gagandeep Kang, Professor of Microbiology at CMC Vellore.

"The focus seems to be on people with severe diseases and combination of comorbidities," Dr. Anant Bhan, a researcher in global health and bioethics in Bhopal said.

Hypertension, a common condition that increases the risk of progressing to severe COVID-19 disease and even death, alone does not qualify unless it is accompanied by diseases such as diabetes or conditions such as angina.

SC judges won't be allowed to select vaccine: Centre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Health Ministry on Monday clarified that Supreme Court judges will not be allowed to choose the COVID-19 vaccine for inoculation and that the process will be done entirely through the Co-Win

stage, said Dr. Giridhara Babu, epidemiologist at PHFI, Bengaluru.

"Large sections of the population don't even know if they have comorbidities. It would have been better had we followed the U.K. example, which has gone with age bands instead of comorbidities," Dr. Kang added.

Diabetes is a major comorbidity resulting even in death in COVID-19 patients. However, only those with over 10 years of diabetes plus hypertension are eligible for vaccination.

Similarly, only those with end-stage kidney disease and on haemodialysis are included. People with stroke are eligible only if they also have hypertension or diabetes. Many suffer from stroke from aneurysm or haemorrhage even in the absence of hypertension or diabetes.

While asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease have not been specified, the list includes those using corticosteroids for a "prolonged period" as being eligible. "Prolonged" is not defined, however.

cond phase of vaccination, made people aged over 60 years and those above 45 years with comorbidities eligible to get a vaccine from March 1.

With each comorbidity increasing the chances of severe disease and death, focusing on people with more than one comorbidity would have been acceptable in case of vaccine shortage. But with millions of doses of both vaccines available in India, it is not clear why the focus is on diseases at an advanced

across the world, people with comorbidities have been identified as a high-risk group. The risk is higher in older people with comorbidities. India, as part of the se-

cure

Twenty States and Union Territories, including Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Assam and Manipur, did not report any deaths.

"Six States, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, have shown a surge in new COVID cases in the last 24 hours. Also the total number of cases with U.K., South Africa and Brazil variants of the COVID virus in the country as on date are 213," the Ministry said.

Five States have 84% of active cases

Country registers 106 deaths related to the COVID-19 infection in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

With several States in the country continuing to report an increased number of daily new COVID-19 cases, India has reported 106 deaths in the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Monday with five States accounting for 86.79% of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the highest casualties (62). Kerala follows with 15 daily deaths and Punjab reported seven deaths, the Health Ministry noted in its release.

Twenty States and Union Territories, including Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Assam and Manipur, did not report any deaths.

"Six States, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, have shown a surge in new COVID cases in the last 24 hours. Also the total number of cases with U.K., South Africa and Brazil variants of the COVID virus in the country as on date are 213," the Ministry said.

It added that 15,510 new



Important shot: Workers waiting to give their swab samples for COVID-19 testing in Amritsar. ■ AFP

cases were registered in the last 24 hours with Maharashtra continuing to report the highest daily new cases at 8,293. It is followed by Kerala with 3,254 while Punjab has reported 579 new cases. Of the new cases, 87.25% are from these six States.

"The Centre is continuously engaging with the States and UTs manifesting a higher caseload of active cases and those reporting a rise in the daily new COVID cases. States/UTs have been advised to maintain a continued rigorous vigil for containing the spread of COVID-19. Need for effective

testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts are strongly emphasised," added the Ministry.

Upward trajectory
Currently, eight States are displaying an upward trajectory in the daily new cases – Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka and Haryana.

India's total active caseload was 1,68,627 on Monday. India's present active caseload now stands at 1.52% of India's total positive cases.

Five States account for 84% of the total active cases in the country and Maharashtra alone accounts for 46.39% of India's total active cases, followed by Kerala with 29.49%.

Also, 21 States/UTs have reported less than 1,000 active cases. Arunachal Pradesh has reported no active cases in the last 24 hours and 15 States/UTs have registered more than 1,000 active cases. Kerala and Maharashtra are the two States with more than 10,000 active cases, while the rest of the 13 States/UTs have between 1,000-10,000 active cases.

More than 1.07 crore (1,07,86,457) people has recovered so far and 11,288 patients have recovered and been discharged in the last 24 hours.

Of the new recovered cases, 85.07% are observed to be concentrated in six States. Kerala has reported the maximum number of single day recoveries with 4,333 newly recovered cases. In Maharashtra, 3,753 people recovered in the past 24 hours, followed by 490 in Tamil Nadu.

CISCE Class 12 exams from April 8; Class 10 from May 5

Series of guidelines issued to conduct the tests safely

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) will conduct its Class 12 exams from April 8 to June 16 and Class 10 exams from May 5 to June 7.

Besides domestic LPG, the price of 19-kg cylinder meant for use in commercial establishments, primarily tea stalls, eateries and restaurants, was also increased on Monday. In Hyderabad, the price increased by ₹103, taking the cost of the cylinder to ₹1,773 each.

mid-March. Students were evaluated on the basis of internal assessment for the papers they had missed.

Physical classes

Although students have been out of the classroom for much of this academic year, most Class 10 and 12 students have returned for physical classes over the past two months as the number of COVID-19 cases dropped.

The CISCE has issued a series of guidelines to ensure that the examinations are conducted safely, with minimal risk of spreading the virus.

Students are required to wear masks, carry hand sanitiser, and maintain a six-foot distance between each other. Schools have been directed to ensure there is no crowding on their campuses at any point during the examination.

LPG cylinder price goes up again

The hike is the second revision in five days and the fourth since February 4

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

Cooking gas cylinders used by households turned dearer on March 1, with national oil marketing companies increasing the price of the 14.2-kg liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) refill by ₹25 each.

It is the second such increase in five days. The new rate is effective for deliveries made from March 1.

In Delhi, the cylinder will now cost ₹819 (from ₹794); in Kolkata, ₹845 (₹820); in Mumbai, ₹819 (₹794) and in Chennai, ₹835 (₹810). In

Hyderabad, households need to pay ₹871.50 (₹846.50) for the refill.

This is the fourth increase in LPG prices from February 4 and the sixth since December 2020, totally adding ₹225 to the cylinder cost.

In February, the price per cylinder went up by ₹25 on February 4, by ₹50 on February 15 and by another ₹25 on February 25. The pricing of LPG is determined by the international prices of propane and butane and the dollar-rupee exchange rate.

There is a small subsidy component on the cylinders for eligible customers. The subsidy, paid directly into users' bank accounts, is only for the first 12 cylinders purchased in a year.

The subsidy varies across the country and, according to sources, has remained unchanged for some months now though the prices have been increased several times.

The subsidy is about ₹40 per cylinder in Hyderabad and ₹25 in Chennai. Since a Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of the subsidy is done,

the eligible households, including the economically weak that were made to switch from kerosene and firewood to LPG under the Ujjwala scheme, need to pay the prevailing price at the time of taking delivery.

Besides domestic LPG, the price of 19-kg cylinder meant for use in commercial establishments, primarily tea stalls, eateries and restaurants, was also increased on Monday. In Hyderabad, the price increased by ₹103, taking the cost of the cylinder to ₹1,773 each.

Prime Minister Modi in 2014 to incentivise production in India. The report describes the Trump administration's revocation of India's preferential trading status under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) program in June 2019 and the ensuing discussion to achieve a mini trade deal ("package") throughout 2020. In a section on Digital Service Tax, a Section 301 investigation on India's DST, which began in June last year, is highlighted. The investigation is ongoing, as per the report.

WhatsApp's new policy being examined: govt.

Delhi HC seeks report in 3 weeks

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI



A plea said that WhatsApp's new policy violated the right to privacy.

citizens – who form a very substantial part of WhatsApp user base. This differential treatment is a cause of concern to the government.

The court was hearing a petition filed by advocate Chaitanya Rohilla, who has claimed that WhatsApp's new privacy policy violates the right to privacy guaranteed under the Constitution.

The plea said the new policy "virtually gives a 360-degree profile into a person's online activity" without there being any supervision from the government.

The plea sought direction to issue guidelines to ensure such change in privacy policy by WhatsApp are carried out.

U.S. trade report flags issues from 'Make in India' policy

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON DC

The U.S. tried to resolve "long-standing market access impediments affecting U.S. exporters" during 2020 with India, says the 2021 President's Trade Agenda and 2020 Annual Report – an annual report submitted by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to Congress, calling India's policies "trade-restrictive" and saying the "Make in India" campaign epitomises the challenges to the trade relationship.

"While India's large mar-

ket, economic growth, and progress towards development make it an essential market for many U.S. exporters, a general and consistent trend of trade-restrictive policies have inhibited the potential of the bilateral trade relationship. Recent Indian emphasis on import substitution through a "Make in India" campaign has epitomised the challenges facing the bilateral trade relationship," the report says.

The Make in India campaign was launched by

Cong. gen. secy. launched two-day campaign in the State on Monday

BJP rule has made Assam unsafe for women: Priyanka

Cong. gen. secy. launched two-day campaign in the State on Monday

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI**

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has said Assam has become unsafe for women under the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance government.

Launching her two-day campaign in the poll-bound State on Monday, she also said Assam's strength was her cultural diversity. This was in reference to the campaign of the State Congress to save "Assamese culture"

from "Nagpuria (Hindutva ideology emanating from Nagpur)" culture.

Ms. Vadra interacted with party office-bearers and diverse groups of people besides interacting with tea garden women workers and self-help group members in the north-eastern part of the State.

She launched an all-out attack on the Sarbananda Sonowal government for the rising rate of crimes against women in Assam.

"Assam has the highest rate of crime against women and the BJP government has been turning a blind eye to this issue. The upcoming elections are very important for the women of the State. You have the power to vote, use it responsibly," she said in her address to tea garden workers, mostly women.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, Assam reported the highest rate of crimes against women at 177.8 per lakh population in 2019.

Appealing to the youth to save Assam, Ms. Vadra said the State's diverse culture was its strength and the Congress "stands with the people of Assam in the fight to save the State". She also asked the people of Assam to teach BJP a lesson for "pushing the common man into abject misery through continuous hike in the prices of fuel and essential commodities".

State Congress leader Bobbeeta Sharma said Ms. Vadra would be addressing public meetings in north-central Assam's Tezpur town before departing the State.

'Food processing revolution needed'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

was now overdue for several decades.

"In the 21st century, in a time of increasing agricultural production, India needs a post-harvest food processing development as well as in the food processing space, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Addressing a webinar on Monday on budget announcements for the farm sector, he said a food processing revolution

speedily, apart from the participation of farmers, public-private partnerships were also needed.

It was critical that storage facilities and processing units were available near the fields, he said.

Seaweed, beeswax, millets, coarse cereals and organic vegetables were the other sectors with significant potential, the Prime Minister said.

In order to ensure that such a revolution takes place

Biohacking health with Deepak Chopra

The doctor-author-speaker on integrative medicine and how to embrace bio-regulation in the age of wearable tech

SUNALINI MATHEW

"Stress is the number 1 epidemic of our time," says Deepak Chopra, on his promotional video that talks about his Mindful Method series, now on Fitbit Premium. Those who own the device and subscribe to the paid, personalised service, can now access 10 audio clippings ranging from three to 16 minutes. These span subjects including rest, sleep, breathing, and emotional health such as 'How to let go', 'Bring harmony and peace to your day', 'Fall asleep with Deepak Chopra's guided beach visualisation'.

Chopra, an endocrinologist who studied at AIIMS, Delhi, and is currently a voluntary clinical professor at the UC San Diego School of Medicine, has propagated integrative medicine from the 1980s.

With Fitbit, he taps into the deepest concern of our time that also impacts the largest number: stress. The sessions will be built up to 30 over the next few months.

Chopra says thanks to his meditative practice, he has a sleeping heart rate of 50 beats per minute and a resting heart rate of 65 beats per minute. "My biological markers are in their 30s right now," he says, adding that he

is not on any sort of medication, at 74.

Excerpts from an interview:

People can access you across many media already. Why this new partnership?

● When I started writing in 1980, there wasn't much conversation around mindfulness or meditation, even spirituality,

but now we have the ability to measure every experience that you have – whether it is a mental, emotional, physical. There is a record of it in the brain and the body that translates into biometrics in real time.

With Fitbit, the advantage now is that you have this on your wrist and you can, in real time, look at your heart rate, your heart rate variability, your breathing, your oxygen saturation, and many other features which instantly inform you of the state of your body-mind in the moment, and then [have] real time intervention with these practices...

The era of biofeedback was a decade ago; now we are entering the era of bio-regulation.



I am an enthusiast for technology, for the simple reason it's part of our evolution. We can't stop it. That's one of the basic ideas of evolution - either you adapt or you become irrelevant.

First you get the feedback, and it is done through technology, but then bio-regulation is done through the mind.

What is next in personal health tech?

● I remember when I was training as an intern, it would take me all night to read an EKG. Now that is done automatically through AI in less than five seconds. VR will be the next revolution. You will be able to change your biology through VR in real time. We are entering a new era when it comes to technology and the future of well-being. What we are doing with Fitbit is the basis where medical treatment will be personalised, preventable and predictable. It will require your participation, and it will be a process. Instead of pharmaceuticals, you will be getting electroceuticals through your handheld device.

Of all the data that is currently available on my device, what is the most important number?

● Heart rate variability (HRV) is the most sensitive, and it is the best indicator of health and well-being. Also, now we know that chronic illness, except for 5%, is associated with low-grade depression, low-grade anxiety, and low-grade inflammation in the body, to

the point that the person feels something is wrong but cannot identify it.

Heart rate variability indicates the opposite of what your sympathetic nervous system does. When your sympathetic nervous system is in overdrive, it causes inflammation, compromises the immune system, causes metabolic syndrome, is associated with diabetes, heart disease, inflammatory disorders, Alzheimer's, many kinds of auto-immune illnesses.... When you stimulate the vagus nerve, either through deep breathing, chanting, or singing, or through mantra, or different types of *pranayama*, you actually override sympathetic stimulation, and stimulate homeostasis, which is self-regulation.

In addition to sleep, nutrition, emotional regulation, exercise, and developing a mind-body connection, you also talk about grounding. Why is that so important?

● Three years ago, the Nobel Prize in Medicine went to the discovery of what they call biological clocks. Our biology monitors four rhythms: the first is called circadian rhythm, which is the cycle of night and day. [The other three are] seasonal rhythms, the earth going around the sun; lunar rhythms, that governs the menstrual cycle; gravitational rhythms, the effects of gravity on the ocean.

What we have discovered through our studies is that through direct contact with the

5 BOOKS TO READ

- Deepak Chopra picks these must-reads of his 90 books
- The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*
- Quantum Healing*
- You Are The Universe*
- Meta Human: Unleashing Your Infinite Potential*
- Total Meditation*

take you outward?

● In the eight limbs of yoga, there is one called *pratyahara*. That, in biology is referred to as interoceptive awareness (perception of the inside world). Yogic practices expand interoceptive awareness. You can train a person to regulate their autonomic nervous system, their breathing, their heart rate variability, enhance interoceptive awareness, so you actually control your autonomic nervous system, which in western physiology is not even a notion...

Right now, we can enhance the experience of *pratyahara*, which took you years to learn – now you can accelerate this to less than a few weeks. I am an enthusiast for technology, for the simple reason it is part of our evolution. We can't stop it. That is one of the basic ideas of evolution – either you adapt or you become irrelevant.

It is time for us to use technology and see how we can actually expand on the traditions of the East, which have been ignored even by biologists.

Now when we have science backing it up, there cannot be any more ignoring of these traditions.

Zippy action
Screenshots from the video game

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Another Cyber-funk

CD Projekt, the developer of Cyberpunk 2077, has delayed the delivery of patch 1.2 for the game to second half of March, the company said on Twitter. Earlier this month, the Polish game developer had announced that it was hit by a targeted ransomware attack, which had compromised some of its internal systems. "While we dearly wanted to deliver Patch 1.2 for Cyberpunk 2077 in the timespan we detailed previously, the recent cyberattack on the studio's IT infrastructure and extensive scope of the update mean this unfortunately will not happen – we'll need some additional time," it tweeted. "Our goal for Patch 1.2 goes beyond any of our previous updates. We've been working on numerous overall quality improvements and fixes."



Let your body talk

How smart are your tattoos? Scientists at UCL and the IIT-Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia (Italian Institute of Technology) have developed a temporary tattoo with light-emitting technology used in TV and smartphone screens. The tattoo electronics tech, which uses organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs), is applied in the same way as water-transfer tattoos.

On the potential use cases of these tattoos, Prof Franco Cacialli, senior author of the paper, says, "These could be for fashion – in sports, they could be combined with a sweat sensor to signal dehydration. In healthcare, they could emit light when there is a change in a patient's condition – or, if the tattoo was turned the other way into the skin, they could potentially be combined with light-sensitive therapies to target cancer cells."

CM YK

On the one hand, there is Persona 5, which is part of the legendary Persona series. It recently got a brand new Royal Edition as well.

On the other hand, you have the team that brought you Dynasty Warriors, the crowd control action game series. You put these two together and you get Persona 5 Strikers.

It is a Musou-type game, starring a bunch of high school children who masquerade as thieves who steal hearts.

This sounds like a disaster waiting to happen, right? Ex-

JULIAN ALMEIDA

Personality 5 Strikers has less of high school simulator roleplaying and more of flashy action with groovy soundtracks



cept it is the complete opposite.

Taking place right after the events of Persona 5, you assume the role of Joker, who with his friends – Ann, Ryuji, Makoto, the talking cat, Morgana, and the rest of the Phantom Thieves – go on a summer vacation. A wonderful road trip across the country is ruined by a new supernatural phenomenon that sees people stripped off their hearts' desires. They get caught in the prison realm and you have to free them.

Much like the original Persona 5, the game's narrative touches upon the dark world of social media. While not as in-depth as the original, Strikers manages to impress.

The game does not primarily focus on the 'social calendar' of a high school student, which was the mainstay of the series. Previously, you have to obsessively plan each day, thinking about whom to spend

it with. In Strikers, things are much simpler. I missed the calendar, which was my favourite aspect of the Persona games. Nevertheless, it is good to be back with the gang with

The graphics are true to the original; so, it feels like a sequel. Where the game shines is in the music department, as you will find yourself humming to its groovy soundtrack.

The voice acting is top-notch too especially considering the pandemic had made difficult for the voice artists. They had to record their bits from home with equipment sent by Atlus. Despite that, the actors seemed to slip into their roles beautifully.

If you were sad that Persona 5 ended, then Strikers will give you one more chance to spend some time with these beloved characters. Now, bear in mind, if you have not played Persona 5, then you should do that first before starting Strikers. Else, despite the new story, you might miss a lot of references and context.

An action game format
If you have played a Dynasty Warriors game, then you would know what to expect from Strikers. Your four-member party is overwhelmed by a horde of enemies. You have to

their infectious cheer and hilarious banter.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel



Disrupting with biosignals
Bio-regulation is the new discourse around wearable technologies
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The doctor-author-speaker on integrative medicine and how to embrace bio-regulation in the age of wearable tech

First you get the feedback, and it is done through technology, but then bio-regulation is done through the mind.

What is next in personal health tech?

● I remember when I was training as an intern, it would take me all night to read an EKG. Now that is done automatically through AI in less than five seconds. VR will be the next revolution. You will be able to change your biology through VR in real time. We are entering a new era when it comes to technology and the future of well-being. What we are doing with Fitbit is the basis where medical treatment will be personalised, preventable and predictable. It will require your participation, and it will be a process. Instead of pharmaceuticals, you will be getting electroceuticals through your handheld device.

In addition to sleep, nutrition, emotional regulation, exercise, and developing a mind-body connection, you also talk about grounding. Why is that so important?

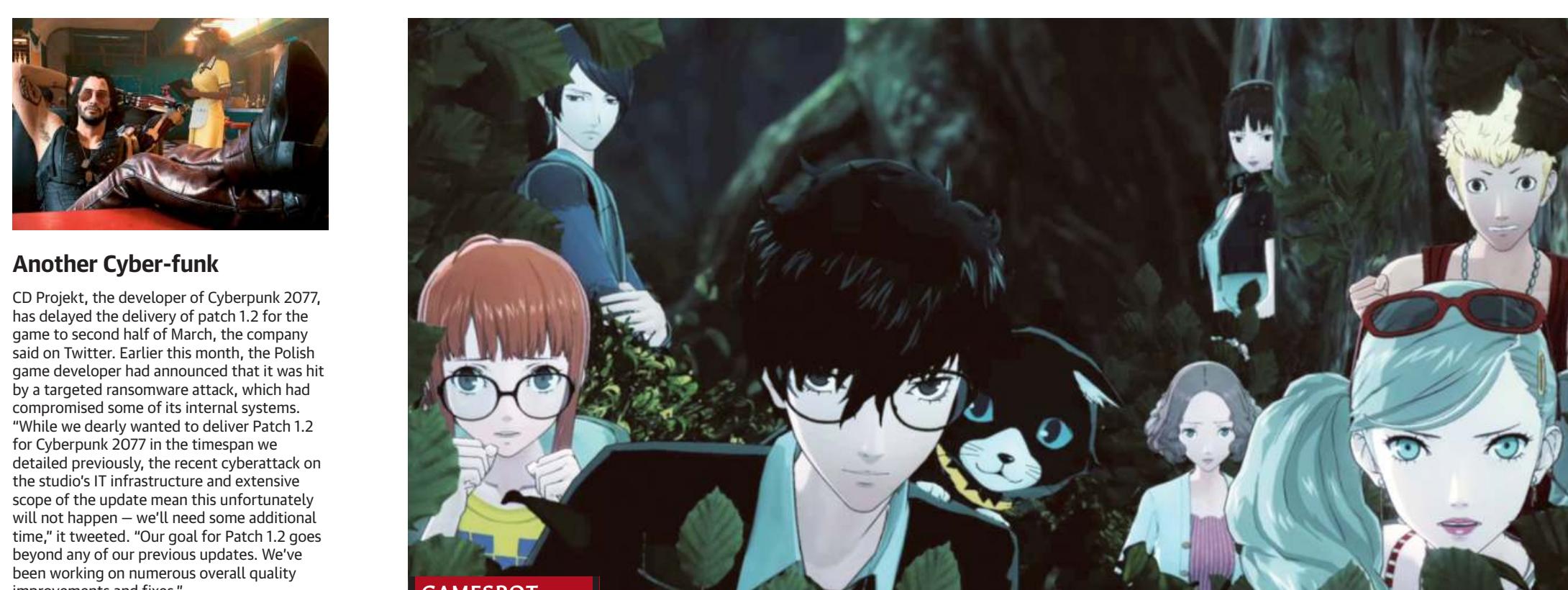
● Three years ago, the Nobel Prize in Medicine went to the discovery of what they call biological clocks. Our biology monitors four rhythms: the first is called circadian rhythm, which is the cycle of night and day. [The other three are] seasonal rhythms, the earth going around the sun; lunar rhythms, that governs the menstrual cycle; gravitational rhythms, the effects of gravity on the ocean.

What we have discovered through our studies is that through direct contact with the

earth, negative ions come from the earth into your body. They interact with the free radicals that build up in your body as a result of stress, and decrease inflammation. So one of the best ways to get over jetlag is to take a walk for 20 minutes on the beach, or on grass, or the earth. You'll balance your biological rhythms.

America being America, and technology being technology, I am right now sitting on a grounding mat. If you go on the Internet, you will find all kinds of grounding devices.

The aim of meditation is to withdraw from the senses and still the mind, but doesn't an app or device



Another Cyber-funk

CD Projekt, the developer of Cyberpunk 2077, has delayed the delivery of patch 1.2 for the game to second half of March, the company said on Twitter. Earlier this month, the Polish game developer had announced that it was hit by a targeted ransomware attack, which had compromised some of its internal systems.

"While we dearly wanted to deliver Patch 1.2 for Cyberpunk 2077 in the timespan we detailed previously, the recent cyberattack on the studio's IT infrastructure and extensive scope of the update mean this unfortunately will not happen – we'll need some additional time," it tweeted. "Our goal for Patch 1.2 goes beyond any of our previous updates. We've been working on numerous overall quality improvements and fixes."

CM YK

On the one hand, there is Persona 5, which is part of the legendary Persona series. It recently got a brand new Royal Edition as well.

On the other hand, you have the team that brought you Dynasty Warriors, the crowd control action game series. You put these two together and you get Persona 5 Strikers.

It is a Musou-type game, starring a bunch of high school children who masquerade as thieves who steal hearts.

This sounds like a disaster waiting to happen, right? Ex-

CM YK

On the one hand, there is Persona 5, which is part of the legendary Persona series. It recently got a brand new Royal Edition as well.

On the other hand, you have the team that brought you Dynasty Warriors, the crowd control action game series. You put these two together and you get Persona 5 Strikers.

It is a Musou-type game, starring a bunch of high school children who masquerade as thieves who steal hearts.

This sounds like a disaster waiting to happen, right? Ex-

CM YK

On the one hand, there is Persona 5, which is part of the legendary Persona series. It recently got a brand new Royal Edition as well.

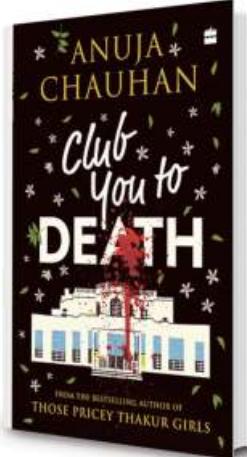
On the other hand, you have the team that brought you Dynasty Warriors, the crowd control action game series. You put these two together and you get Persona 5 Strikers.

It is a Musou-type game, starring a bunch of high school children who masquerade as thieves who steal hearts.

This sounds like a disaster waiting to happen, right? Ex-

CM YK

Batting for creative control



MINI ANTHIKAD CHHIBBER

In Anuja Chauhan's latest book, *Club You To Death*, (Harper Collins, ₹399) a hunky trainer is found dead in the posh Delhi Turf Club. The death immediately opens a can of worms with politics, surgical strikes, blackmail and skeletal remains crawling out of the swanky woodwork.

Anuja's sixth book contains the wit and sass that made her novels such as *Battle For Bittora* (2010) and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (2013) such fun.

Anuja, who was responsible for some of the best remembered catch phrases in '90s advertising from 'Oye Bubbly' to 'Yeh Dil Maange More', prefers writing novels to ad copies or screenplays. "A novel gives you the most creative control, a movie gives you some and advertising none," she says over phone from her house in the outskirts of Bengaluru. "Advertising is shiny crayons, big budgets and film stars. That is lovely, but what you can draw with the shiny crayons is limited."

The Zoya Factor, Anuja's debut novel was made into a movie of the same name, directed by Abhishek Sharma and starred Dulquer Salmaan and Sonam Kapoor. Sonam is set to star in the adaptation of *Battle for Bittora* as well. "I usually find that if I read the book before watching the movie, I won't like the movie while there are chances that I might like the movie if I haven't read the book."

Twin worlds
The 50-year-old author says she does

Author Anuja Chauhan discusses her new book, *Club You to Death*, and why she prefers writing novels to ad copies or screenplays

not write her books as a blueprint for a movie. So the question of whether *The Zoya Factor* turned out how she pictured it, does not arise. "I envisioned *The Zoya Factor* as a book. And it is the most complete manifestation of my vision. I always tell people, 'please read the book,' because that is what I am responsible for. That is what I have creative control over and that is my vision."

After writing five romances, Anuja said she was feeling a little restricted by the format. "I still love writing romance, but there are so many more aspects of romance. I like having a propulsive track to the novel. In a romance, I'm taking the reader along, because we want

PAWSOME JOURNEY

Apart from writing fun books, Anuja has been busy finding homes for indie dogs. She adopted Chhabbis, an indie on January 26 — hence the name. "He had fallen into a manhole and was crying his heart out. During the lockdown, I rescued and fostered four puppies who were thrown in the trash. They flew to the US by Lufthansa and got placed in amazing homes all over the New England area. After that, people are just showing up with puppies at my place and now I have four new puppies."

to see the couple get together. In a mystery, the reader goes along because they want to find out whodunit. In a crime novel, I like the fact that I can pick an interesting theme, do social commentary, think about larger issues and at the same time, not lose the reader."

Sunny side up
Club You To Death has a range of colourful suspects from the beautiful Bambi to the dishy Akash. Anuja says she had the most fun with the avuncular ACP Bhawani Singh who is in charge of the case. "I wanted to write about a genius, garrulous 50-year-old cop, a father of daughters. Nowadays you have macho

cops with an alcohol problem and all kinds of angst. I wanted to write a character who was an anti-thesis of that."

Location is important in a crime novel and Anuja says while *Club You To Death* would have probably worked in any other city, it becomes more authentic when the city is Delhi. "What one tries to do is write something specific, which can also be universal."

On when will we get to read a Bengaluru novel, Anuja says, "I don't know if I have the chops yet. I am working very hard to get the cred, but I feel I don't have the keys to the city yet." Preferring to work on happy topics, Anuja says she tends to gravitate towards sunny spaces. "I don't like to go to places that are too dark and depressing."

Anuja is not a big fan of labels. "I think they dumb you down, they put you in a box and tell you not to punch above your weight. They tell you if you are a literary writer, don't try to write something fun or frothy and if you are a popular writer, please don't try and comment on the state of the nation."

Future plans include a screenplay, a movie which Anuja has written, an OTT adaptation of *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* and if *Club You To Death* does well, ACP Bhawani Singh will have a second outing.



SHILPA NAIR ANAND

Vintage ka-POW!



At it since 1998 Comics are sequential art, believes Arun Prasad (below) • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Keeping them safe

Comic books, since they used to be printed on newsprint, disintegrate easily. The problem compounds with age, and storage becomes important. To prevent the pages from turning brown, Arun Prasad places comic books along with acid-free boards — used by artists — and slides them into polypropylene bags. These are then placed vertically in cartons in a dedicated space in his home.

Arun Prasad, one of India's largest comic book collectors, is working on a project that traces the history of comics in India

till the 1930s. One gets the sense that regional languages had a strong culture of comic books well into the 1960s-70s. Abid Surti, creator of *Bahadur*, one of the first *desi* super heroes, caught up with him at a comic con event asking if Prasad had come across his earlier works (cartoons) for the Gujarati magazine *Ramakudu*.

Prasad's collection is the result of painstaking work done over two decades and multiple sources. *Phantom* is his favourite superhero, and he has the complete collection of *Phantom* comics published by Indrajal — all 803 of them — in the nine languages it was printed in. He even tracked down the first 10 issues of *Amar Chitra Katha* (ACK).

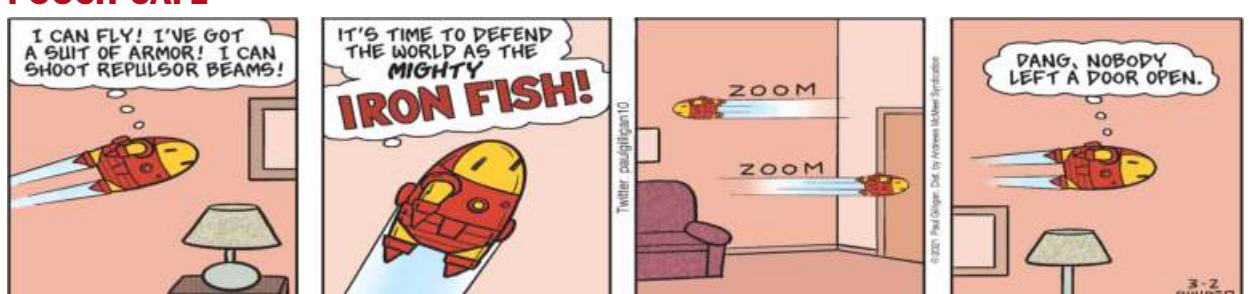
"The first issue of ACK comics is numbered 11. The question, 'Why 11?' nagged me for a long time. The answers I came across were vague, like 11 being auspicious. I wasn't convinced," says Prasad. He found that with issue number 11 ACK comics acquired their highly individualistic, signature Indian style by telling Indian stories. The issues from one to 10 were based on western fairy tales such as *Pinocchio*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella* and others translated into Indian languages. He is in the process of cataloguing his comics.

The software-generated homogeneity of modern-day comics does not appeal to him. A traditionalist when it comes to comic books, he says, "You could feel the artist through the hand-drawn works, now it is 'system generated', the soul is somewhere lost. I don't feel like reading those," Prasad says. However, he is happy with the evolution of the genre once considered a low form of pop art. He says, "They are being considered literature — comics are winning Pulitzers, featuring in art biennales... the scene has changed. As also the indie-comic scene, where anyone with a story and who can draw, with access to a photocopier, can print and sell... in India there is a revolution on."



+1

POOCHE CAFE



PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



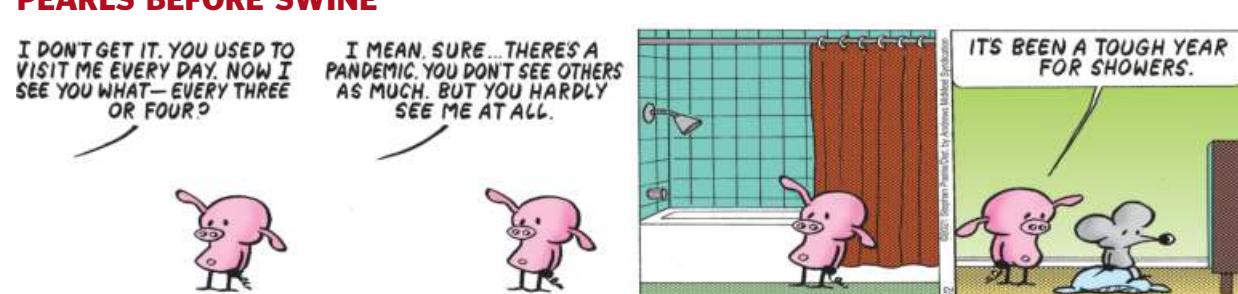
CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



CMYK

M ND-NDE

Suu Kyi hit with two new criminal charges

She is now accused of breaching communications laws and with intent to incite public unrest

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
YANGON

Ousted Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with two new criminal charges in a court appearance via video link on Monday, a month after a military coup triggered relentless mass protests.

Ms. Suu Kyi has not been seen in public since being detained on February 1, and her appearance came as demonstrators took to the streets again across the country in defiance of an escalation of deadly force by the junta.

At least 18 people died on Sunday as troops and police fired live rounds at demonstrators in cities across Myanmar, according to the United Nations, which cited its own credible information.

Ms. Suu Kyi, 75, was already facing obscure criminal charges for possessing unli-



Tense moments: Protesters running with their shields after tear gas was fired at them during a protest in Yangon. ■ AFP

censed walkie-talkies, as well as violating coronavirus restrictions by staging a campaign event during last year's election.

She is now also accused of breaching communications laws as well as intent to incite public unrest, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said.

"We can not say for sure

how many more cases Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will face in this period," he told reporters in Naypyidaw.

"Anything can happen in this country at this time."

Ms. Suu Kyi has reportedly been kept under house arrest in the capital of Naypyidaw, an isolated city that the military built during a pre-

vious dictatorship.

Hundreds of thousands of people have taken to streets regularly over the past month to oppose the coup.

The military has steadily escalated the type of force used in trying to contain the uprising, beginning with tear gas and water cannons, and this weekend's violence saw a major escalation as rubber bullets and live rounds were deployed.

Despite Sunday's bloodshed protesters were defiant – some citing a sense of duty to their children's future.

'Evil era'

"I'm here as a frontliner because I don't want my son to grow up in this evil era," a student called Eric told AFP, adding he had a 10-month-old baby.

AFP independently confirmed 11 deaths in Sunday's

violence, although there were fears the toll could be much higher.

There are no reports of deaths so far on Monday.

'30 killed so far'

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a reliable monitoring group, estimated that about 30 people have been killed by security forces since the coup on February 1.

On Monday, protests erupted again in multiple cities across the country, with demonstrators in Yangon using bamboo poles, sofas and tree branches to erect barricades across streets.

Security forces used stun grenades and tear gas, in parts of Yangon.

In one clash broadcast live on Facebook and verified by AFP, unarmed protesters fled after a volley of shots were fired.

Chinese scribe charged under new law for Galwan comments

Qiu Ziming had questioned govt. account of the clash

ANANTH KRISHNAN

A Chinese investigative journalist and blogger on Monday became the first person charged under a new criminal law banning the "defaming of martyrs", for his comments questioning the government's account of the clash with India in Galwan Valley last year.

Qiu Ziming (38), an investigative journalist formerly with *The Economic Observer*, was arrested on February 20 in Nanjing, where he lives, after raising questions a day after China's announcement declaring honours for five soldiers, including four awarded posthumously, eight months after the June 15, 2020 clash.

In messages to his 2.5 million followers on the Chi-

neese Twitter-equivalent, Si-na Weibo, Mr. Qiu suggested the fatalities would have been higher because as per the official account, some of the soldiers died coming to the aid of troops in difficulty, who, in his view, would have suffered losses as well. Mr. Qiu also asked why India had, in contrast, promptly recognised the 20 Indian soldiers who died, which, he suggested, meant that "in India's view they won and paid a lesser price". His account on Weibo was subsequently suspended.

On Monday, Mr. Qiu was charged "for violating the law on defaming martyrs' honour and reputation". According to State media, this was the first reported case of anyone being charged under the law, which calls for a

fixed-term imprisonment of not more than three years. While China had in 2018 passed a law banning people from insulting martyrs, the civil law was added as an amendment to China's criminal law which took effect on March 1.

At least 7 detained

This was among 22 new clauses added to the law, the Communist Party-run *Global Times* reported, with others relating to attacks on police officers and acts disturbing public transportation.

Mr. Qiu is among at least seven people who have been detained by police in China for "smearing" the military since the February 19 announcement honouring the five Chinese soldiers.



New appeal: Donald Trump addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando. ■ AFP

Trump hints at 2024 run for presidency

He denies plans to form a new party

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ORLANDO

Donald Trump told conservatives Sunday he was considering running for president again in 2024, as he reassured dominance over the Republican Party and warned of a "struggle" for America's very survival.

Echoing the grievance politics of his 2016 campaign and the harsh rhetoric of his one-term presidency, the 74-year-old fired up an enthusiastic crowd at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Orlando.

In a keynote speech – his first since leaving the White House on January 20 – he repeated his false claims that he won the election instead of President Joe Biden, and hammered establishment Republicans who voted against him in the latest impeachment drama.

Standing ovation
But while he teased his future plans, he left the crowd guessing about whether he will challenge Mr. Biden in a rematch. "With your help we will take back the House, we will win the Senate, and then a Republican President will make a triumphant return to the White House – and I wonder who that will be?" Mr. Trump said to a raucous cheer. "Who knows?" he boomed about his potential plans. "I may even decide to beat them for a third time, OK?"

At CPAC, he walked on stage to revel in a lengthy standing ovation by cheering loyalists, the vast majority maskless despite the co-

ronavirus pandemic.

Like he did so often during his two campaigns, he painted a pitched battle against as Democrats' "socialist" agenda to remake the nation.

"We're in a struggle for the survival of America as we know it," Mr. Trump said. "This is a terrible, terrible, painful struggle."

Mr. Trump also put to rest the rumours that he might create a new political party.

"I am not starting a new party," Mr. Trump said. "We have the Republican Party. It's going to unite and be stronger than ever before."

Mr. Trump as expected took swipes at Mr. Biden, saying the Democrat just concluded a "disastrous" first month in office.

In his 90-minute speech he attacked immigrants, slammed "cancel culture," criticized Mr. Biden policies on climate change and energy, and repeated his false claims that "illegal" actions by Democrats had cost him the election.

'Get rid of them'
But he also took aim at Republicans he feels betrayed him – a strong signal that he will seek to help oust them in upcoming elections.

He called out by name the 10 Republicans who voted to impeach him in the House of Representatives, and the seven Republicans who voted unsuccessfully to convict him in the Senate.

"Get rid of them all," he seethed, while the crowd jeered.

Netanyahu blames Iran for ship attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday accused Iran of attacking an Israeli-owned ship in the Gulf of Oman last week, a mysterious explosion that spiked security concerns in the region.

Without offering any evidence to his claim, Mr. Netanyahu told Israeli public broadcaster Kan that "it was indeed an act by Iran, that's clear."

"Iran is the greatest enemy of Israel, I am determined to halt it. We are hitting it in the entire region," Mr. Netanyahu said. Iran promptly dismissed the charges.

The blast struck the Israeli-owned MV Helios Ray, a Bahamian-flagged roll-on, roll-off vehicle cargo ship, as it was sailing out of the West Asia on its way to Singapore on Friday. The crew was unharmed, but the vessel sustained two holes on its port side and two on its starboard side just above the waterline, according to U.S. defence officials.

He was found guilty of trying to illegally influence a judge

up behind bars over this case.

He is almost certain to appeal and remains free, but he faces several other corruption investigations over campaign financing and alleged influence peddling.

The sentence for seeking to illegally influence a judge is the latest twist in the tumultuous political career of the 66-year-old who remains a favourite for many on the

U.S. to keep hard line on China trade

Document talks about using all tools available to counter 'coercive' practices

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The Biden administration's trade agenda will make pandemic recovery a top priority and focus on the American worker, according to the 2021 President's Trade Agenda and 2020 Annual Report, an annual document submitted by the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to Congress. The administration will push for labour standards in its trade agreements, negotiate environmental standards and address China's "coercive and unfair" trade practices, the document said.

Impact on workers
"The Biden Administration will review past trade policies for their impacts on, and unintended consequences for, workers," it said.

"Workers will have a seat at the table as the Biden Administration develops new trade policies that promote equitable economic growth by including strong, enforceable labor standards in trade agreements that protect workers' rights and increase



Joe Biden

economic security. The Administration will engage allies to secure commitments to fight forced labor and exploitative labor conditions, and increase transparency and accountability in global supply chains," the report said.

The Biden administration's trade priorities will also include negotiating and implementing "strong environmental standards". It will also seek to promote equitable economic growth through trade.

The impact of trade policy on racial minorities within the U.S. will also be a priority. The new administration is

also likely to follow an aggressive agricultural trade policy.

Take on China
China's "coercive and unfair trade practices harm American workers, threaten our technological edge, weaken our supply chain resiliency, and undermine our national interests", the report said.

"The ongoing comprehensive review of U.S. trade policy towards China is integral to the development of the Administration's overall China strategy," it says, committing to using all tools available to counter practices it calls unfair and harmful to the U.S.

Addressing human rights abuses against the Uighurs and others will be a top priority for the administration, as per the report. It will also collaborate with allies to

address the market distortions created by industrial overcapacity issue.

"Key sectors range from steel and aluminum to fiber optics, solar, and other sectors where the Chinese Government has been a key contributor," the report said.

Reforms at WTO

The U.S. will work with allies to "implement necessary reforms to the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) substantive rules and procedures to address the challenges facing the global trading system, including growing inequality, digital transformation, and impediments to small business trade", the report said.

"The Administration will seek to expand global market opportunities for American farmers, ranchers, food manufacturers, and fishers and will defend our producers by enforcing global agricultural trade rules," the report said.

"The ongoing comprehensive review of U.S. trade policy towards China is integral to the development of the Administration's overall China strategy," it says, committing to using all tools available to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

Addressing human rights abuses against the Uighurs and others will be a top priority for the administration, as per the report. It will also collaborate with allies to

address the market distortions created by industrial overcapacity issue.

"Key sectors range from steel and aluminum to fiber optics, solar, and other sectors where the Chinese Government has been a key contributor," the report said.

"The ongoing comprehensive review of U.S. trade policy towards China is integral to the development of the Administration's overall China strategy," it says, committing to using all tools available to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

The Administration will work with allies and like-minded trading partners to establish high-standard global rules to govern the digital economy, in line with our shared democratic values. Where gaps exist in international trade rules, the United States will work to address them, including through enhanced cooperation with our partners and allies," it added.

MARKET WATCH

	01-03-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	49,850	-1.53
US Dollar	73.55	-0.11
Gold	45,520	-0.17
Brent oil	64.93	-1.93

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	692.90	+17.00
Asian Paints	2362.30	+85.10
Axist Bank	728.55	+3.75
Bajaj Auto	3814.05	+15.35
Bajaj Finserv	9774.05	+125.45
Bajaj Finance	5266.80	+1.90
Bharti Airtel	532.20	-24.10
BPCL	455.25	+5.40
Britannia Ind	3411.80	+48.05
Cipla	789.80	+2.75
Coal India	154.35	+2.15
Divis Lab	3641.55	+98.45
Dr Reddys Lab	4453.40	+26.85
Eicher Motors	2556.15	+57.55
GAIL (India)	144.50	+2.70
Grasim Ind	1265.95	+65.15
HCL Tech.	930.35	+20.90
HDFC	2606.00	+66.60
HDFC Bank	1558.90	+24.50
HDFC Life	705.25	+4.60
Hero MotoCorp	3350.20	+126.20
Hindalco	344.10	+3.85
Hind Unilever	2143.40	+11.35
ICICI Bank	608.35	+10.60
IndusInd Bank	1067.95	+5.00
Infosys	1267.00	+13.70
Indian Oil Corp.	100.70	+2.65
ITC	206.90	+3.05
JSW Steel	405.10	+9.65
Kotak Bank	1845.40	+65.05
L&T	1472.85	+30.35
M&M	819.45	+13.05
Maruti Suzuki	7015.00	+148.85
Nestle India Ltd.	16292.45	+190.85
NTPC	108.45	+1.15
ONGC	117.05	+6.05
PowerGrid Corp	227.25	+12.95
Reliance Ind	2101.70	+15.90
SBI Life	876.40	+9.50
State Bank	394.95	+4.80
Shree Cement	27706.95	+1205.25
Sun Pharma	604.45	+9.85
Tata Motors	328.30	+5.35
Tata Steel	730.40	+15.25
TCS	2924.20	+29.90
Tech Mahindra	936.00	+17.15
Titan	1452.15	+45.25
UltraTech Cement	6365.05	+250.05
UPL	590.60	+29.05
Wipro	414.40	+4.10

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.34	73.66
Euro	88.36	88.78
British Pound	102.47	102.95
Japanese Yen (100)	68.74	69.04
Chinese Yuan	11.35	11.40
Swiss Franc	80.28	80.64
Singapore Dollar	55.07	55.32
Canadian Dollar	57.82	58.09
Malaysian Ringgit	18.06	18.17

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Power consumption grew 0.88% in February

NEW DELHI

India's power consumption grew 0.88% in February at 104.73 billion units (BU) due to a slight rise in temperature in the month, official data showed. Power consumption in February 2020 was 103.81 BU, according to data from the Power Ministry. PTI

Foresight among bidders for Shipping Corporation

NEW DELHI

London-based shipping firm Foresight Group is among the multiple bidders who have put in preliminary bids for buying the government's entire stake in Shipping Corporation of India, sources said. The government is selling its 63.75% stake along with the pre-COVID-19 level in January.

'NSE glitch cost India immensely'

Need to review interoperability norms to ensure seamless payments, says FM

VIKAS DHOOT

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday that the recent technical glitch at the National Stock Exchange (NSE), which led to trading being halted for several hours on the bourse, had cost India 'immensely'. She called for a look at the interoperability norms in payment systems to ensure seamless payments.

The NSE had halted trading on its platform just before noon on February 24, and informed market participants at 3:17 p.m. that trading would resume from 3:30 p.m. for extended hours.

"Seamlessness of payments is important... it may not be contextual, but even where complete foolproof systems are laid, you find that in the NSE a couple of



No room for laxity: Even foolproof systems can face glitches, as was seen in the case of NSE, says the Minister. ■REUTERS

days when there was a glitch. A kind of technology-driven glitch which nobody could have anticipated, but that glitch has cost us immensely and lessons are being learnt," she said.

Her comments, made at an event to mark the 45th Civil Accounts Day hosted by

the Controller General of Accounts, assume significance as the markets watchdog had said its interoperability framework allowed traders to continue transacting on other stock exchanges... allowing them to seamlessly trade/square off their existing positions'.

"SEBI has already advised NSE to... carry out a detailed root-cause analysis of the trading halt, and also to explain the reasons for trading not migrating to the disaster recovery site," it had said.

The two exchanges, but that is the kind of thing where seamless digital payments is the goal we have to aspire for," the Minister said, stressing that the NSE case was an example of the challenges that technology-driven platforms could face.

Factory activity extends growth, input costs soar'

Manufacturing PMI shows mild easing

REUTERS

India's factory activity expanded for the seventh straight month in February, driven by strong demand and increased output, according to a private sector survey that also showed input-cost inflation hitting a 32-month high.

Although the Nikkei Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by IHS Markit, eased slightly to 57.5 in February from 57.7 in January, it was well above the 50-level separating growth from contraction.

New orders Sub-indexes showed output and new orders rose sharply last month, albeit at a slower

pace than in January, indicating strong demand.

Indian goods producers reported a healthy inflow of new orders in February, a situation that underpinned a further upturn in output and quantity of purchases," noted Pollyanna DeLima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

Hyundai Motor India reported a 29% increase in domestic sales at 51,600 units as against 40,010 units in February 2020.

Tata Motors passenger vehicle sales surged more than twofold to 27,225 units in the domestic market last month. Others, including Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), Mahindra & Mahindra and Honda Cars India, also reported strong wholesale dispatches to dealers last month.

Personal mobility demand drives sales

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Leading car makers Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors reported robust sales growth in the domestic market in February as the demand for personal mobility amid the COVID-19 pandemic continued to drive the market.

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL) said domestic sales increased 11.8% to 1,52,983 units last month, from 1,36,849 units in February 2020.

Hyundai Motor India reported a 29% increase in domestic sales at 51,600 units as against 40,010 units in February 2020.

Tata Motors passenger vehicle sales surged more than twofold to 27,225 units in the domestic market last month. Others, including Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), Mahindra & Mahindra and Honda Cars India, also reported strong wholesale dispatches to dealers last month.

Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said as of 6 p.m., the winning bids had totalled ₹77,146 crore.

"We had anticipated that only three players would participate and they had to renew their spectrum. Our expectation was

Maruti, Tata Motors post double-digit growth

Personal mobility demand drives sales

MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

Networking firm Cisco said its video meeting platform Webex has seen the second-highest usage in India, after the U.S., over the last few months.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

equality has improved compared to their parents' age, India's working women still contend the strongest gender bias across Asia Pacific countries," it said.

The survey, conducted in January, saw participation from more than 10,000 respondents across the APAC region. It covered 2,285 respondents in India.

On average, Webex – which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India & SAARC.

On average, Webex –

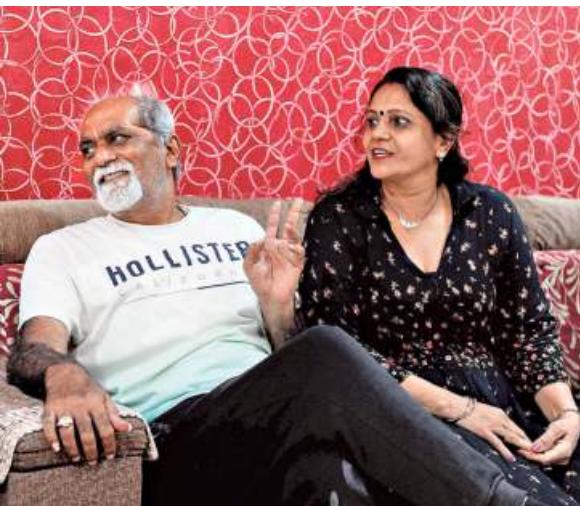
which competes with Zoom, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and which has its second-largest user base in India, after the U.S. – has had more than 11 million India-origin meetings a month and over 80 million participants. It has seen active sign-ups from financial services, ITeS and the public sector, said Sameer Garde, president, Cisco India &

The story behind Akshar turning Axar

The left-arm, England's tormentor this series, had an incident-filled beginning to both life and cricket



Man of mystery: While Axar Patel's bowling has continued to flummox the England batsmen, the intrigue surrounding the spelling of his name has been unravelled by his parents Rajesh and Priti Patel. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI & VIJAY SONEJI



ENGLAND IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR
AHMEDABAD

His variation, especially the arm-ball, has bamboozled the England batsmen in the ongoing series, but the spelling of his name has been a mystery ever since Axar Patel became an IPL sensation in 2014.

To unravel the mystery, one has to travel to his home-town Nadiad, a 90-minute drive away from Ahmedabad.

While the left-arm spinner has preferred to spell his name across social media

platforms as "Akshar", official records, including the BCCI's, reflect it as Axar.

Contrary to what has been widely reported, Axar became Axar due to a nurse's error at the clinic at the time of his birth.

"He was born in Anand (a town famous for milk products) and the nurse issued the hospital certificate for birth registration spelling it as 'Axar'. That's how it stuck to him," says mother Priti, who during Axar's teens was hesitant to let her son pursue cricket due to fears of his getting injured.

Didn't the family – which

had a convenient one-storyed bungalow in a nondescript locality of the town where Axar's and his uncle's families reside together – feel the need to get his name in the official records changed at some stage to clear the confusion?

"How did it matter back then? We didn't know he would go on to become such a big cricketer. Otherwise we would have definitely got it changed," says Sanship, an elder cousin of the southpaw.

Axar, during his exploits in the pink-ball Test, said that a freak injury had meant

he had to stop bowling left-arm pace and turn to spin. Sanship reveals it wasn't an on-field injury that caused the turnaround.

"He was playing in the fields as a schoolkid and hurt his left shin with a sickle. Since then, he could never bowl fast with a run-up," says Sanship.

But it was another injury in his first season of playing with the hard ball that forced his mother to start opposing her son's love for cricket.

Axar, during his exploits in the pink-ball Test, said that a freak injury had meant

ries playing cricket," Priti recalls.

It took Axar's father Rajesh a lot of time to change the minds of the mother and grandmother, ensuring the youngster's love for cricket didn't come to an abrupt halt.

Due to domestic reasons, the family couldn't watch Axar at the stadium last week.

Destination Motera

"But all of us will definitely travel to Motera and watch him in action [in the fourth Test]. Just can't wait for it," says an elated Rajesh.

Vote for Sportstar Aces Awards 2021 Giants of the Decade Special

The Sportstar Aces Awards 2021 celebrate consistency in performance and impact of sports stars in the decade between 2011 and 2020.

The nominees:

SPORTSMAN OF THE DECADE (TEAM SPORTS)

Sunil Chhetri (Football): Named an 'Asian Icon' by the Asian Football Confederation, he is the National team's most-capped player (115) and the second-highest goal-scorer (72) among active international footballers, behind Cristiano Ronaldo (102).

Sardar Singh (Hockey):

One of the most-capped international hockey players (314), he led the country for almost eight years after getting the chance for the first time in 2008 when he was just 22, one of the youngest to captain India.

Manpreet Singh (Hockey):

Right from his debut in 2011 at the age of 19, he has been an integral part of the country's growth (India is now ranked No. 4 in the world).

The midfielder has proved to be a worthy successor to Sardar.

SPORTSWOMAN OF THE

Savitra Punia (Hockey):

With more than 200 caps, the 30-year-old goalkeeper is one of the senior-most members in the team. She has been involved in almost every major success for India in the last decade.

Rani Rampal (Hockey):

She was only 15 when she took the field at the 2010 World Cup and has been part of every Indian side since, winning a record 241 caps so far.

She is the first woman hockey player – and only the third from the sport – to get

DECADE (TEAM SPORTS)

Bala Devi (Football):

With more than 200 caps, the 30-year-old goalkeeper is one of the senior-most members in the team. She has been involved in almost every major success for India in the last decade.

Gaurav Gill (Motorsports):

He is India's best-known face in the world of rallying. In 2019, he became the first motorsports athlete to be awarded the Arjuna for his National and APRC performances.

K. P. Aravind:

The Bengaluru rider became the second Indian after C.S. Santosh to complete the Dakar Rally when finished 39th in the 2019 edition. He has won 17 National titles.

Narain Karthikeyan:

The first Indian in Formula 1 – he drove for Jordan in the 2005 season – he returned after a six-year break and competed in nine races for Hispania Racing.

He is now competing in the Super Formula and Super GT categories in Japan.

CLUB OF THE DECADE

Mumbai Indians:

If consistency is the yardstick for success, few can match Mumbai Indians. It has won five IPL titles in eight years. In addition, MI has contributed to shaping Indian talent, including the likes of Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya.

Patna Pirates:

It has been

the Khel Ratna.

Bala Devi (Football): In 2020, she made history by becoming the first Indian woman to sign a professional contract with a foreign club when she joined Scottish side Rangers. She has tasted plenty of success in National colours.

SPORTSPERSON OF THE DECADE (MOTORSPORTS)

Gaurav Gill: He is India's best-known face in the world of rallying. In 2019, he became the first motorsports athlete to be awarded the Arjuna for his National and APRC performances.

K. P. Aravind:

The Bengaluru rider became the second Indian after C.S. Santosh to complete the Dakar Rally when finished 39th in the 2019 edition. He has won 17 National titles.

Narain Karthikeyan:

The first Indian in Formula 1 – he drove for Jordan in the 2005 season – he returned after a six-year break and competed in nine races for Hispania Racing.

He is now competing in the Super Formula and Super GT categories in Japan.

CLUB OF THE DECADE

Mumbai Indians:

If consistency is the yardstick for success, few can match Mumbai Indians. It has won five IPL titles in eight years. In addition, MI has contributed to shaping Indian talent, including the likes of Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya.

Patna Pirates:

It has been

the most successful franchise in the brief history of the Pro Kabaddi League, its three titles coming in successive seasons between 2016 and 2017.

Bengaluru FC: Ever since it came into existence in 2013, it has been Indian football's leading light. With two I-League titles, two Federation Cups, one ISL crown and one Indian Super Cup, it is the most successful Indian football club of the last decade.

SPORTSMAN OF THE DECADE (INDIVIDUAL OLYMPIC SPORTS)

Mary Kom (Boxing):

Her first Indian to claim two Olympic medals in individual sports and the only Indian boxer to win a world crown.

His hat-trick of top podium finishes at the Commonwealth Games (2010, '14 and '18) is another first in Indian sport.

Vijay Kumar (Shooting):

The pistol king of Indian shooting bagged a silver at the 2012 London Games. He was awarded the Khel Ratna in 2012.

Sushil Kumar (Wrestling):

He is the first Indian to claim two Olympic medals in individual sports and the only Indian boxer to win a world crown.

His hat-trick of top podium finishes at the Commonwealth Games (2010, '14 and '18) is another first in Indian sport.

Mirabai Chanu (Weightlifting):

She is the most decorated boxer in World Championships history with eight medals (six gold, one silver and one bronze).

Gagan Narang (Shooting):

Gagan shot a bronze in the 10m air rifle event at London 2012. He is also a recipient of the Khel Ratna.

SPORTSMAN OF THE DECADE (INDIVIDUAL OLYMPIC SPORTS)

Sakshi Malik (Wrestling):

The first Indian woman wrestler to clinch a medal at the Olympic Games (bronze, 2016 Rio), she went on to bag another bronze at the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Fans can cast their votes on sportstar.thehindu.com/aces-awards/popular-awards.

Richards slams critics of India's spin-friendly tracks

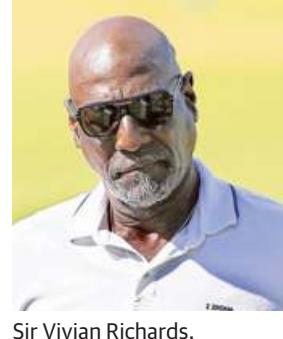
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

West Indian batting legend Sir Vivian Richards is not amused with past and present English cricketers "moaning and groaning" about the spin-friendly pitches in India, and said the visitors did not prepare well for the challenge.

The newly-laid Motera track in Ahmedabad became a subject of debate after India crushed England inside two days in the third Test to go 2-1 up in the four-match series. The severe criticism came from former England captains like Michael Vaughan and a section of the British media.

"I've been asked questions recently about the Test matches played in India, the second and third, against England. And I am a little confused about the question really because there seems to be a lot of moaning and groaning about the wicket that they were playing on," Richards said in a video posted on his Facebook page.

"I just felt that the ones who are moaning, in my opinion, should realise that there are times that you're going to get a seaming track, a ball that is basically jumping off a good length and everyone thinks that's a pro-



Sir Vivian Richards.
■ FILE PHOTO

blem for batters," he reasoned.

The 68-year-old pointed out that playing in India has mostly been about tackling quality spinners and England may not have done its homework properly ahead of the tour.

Weighing in on the debate, the batting great said, "... But now you've seen the other side, and this is why I think it was given the name Test match cricket, because of the test of the mind and will and everything else that goes with it when you're competing."

"And the complaints have been that the wicket is spinning too much and all that sorts of stuff. This is another side of the coin guys. "People seem to forget that if you're going to India, you should expect that. You are going to spin land."

Trescothick is England's batting coach

REUTERS
LONDON

Former England opening batsman Marcus Trescothick has been named batting coach of the senior men's team, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Monday.

Trescothick, who played 76 Tests for England, will step down as assistant coach of Somerset to take up his new role.

Former New Zealand off-spinner Jeetan Patel has been named spin bowling coach and youth team head coach Jon Lewis has been promoted to the role of the senior team's pace bowling coach.

Winning return for Sania

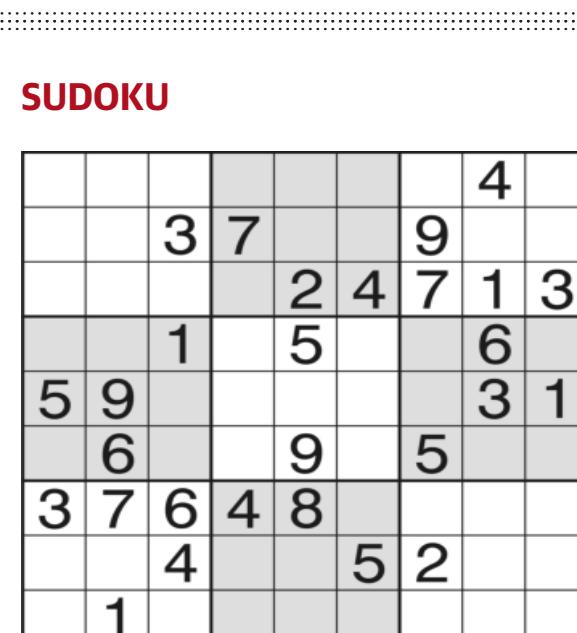
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DOHA

Sania Mirza reached the doubles quarterfinals of the Qatar Total Open with Slovenian partner Andreja Klepac here on Monday.

The pair won 6-4, 6-7(5), [10-5] against Nadiia Kichenok and Lyudmyla Kichenok of Ukraine in the opening round of the WTA 500 tournament.

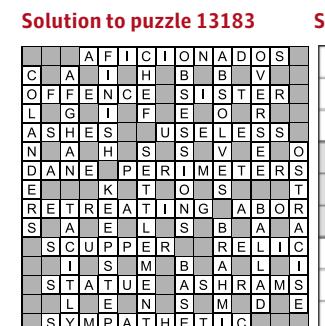
It was Sania's first match in 12 months.

SUDOKU

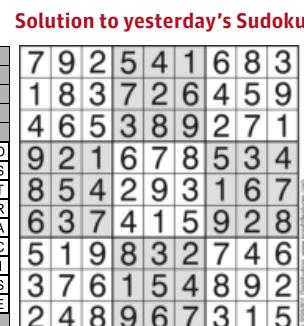


DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13184



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku



FAITH

Boundless generosity

Azhwars have been blessed to have the mystic vision of the transcendent Lord and their hymns are replete with their spontaneous and joyous experience of the Lord's unique attributes, pointed out Asuri Sri Madhavachariar in a discourse. For instance, in the hymn Periya Tiruvandadi, Namazhwar tries to enter into the Lord's mind and he is able to visualise His magnanimity and boundless generosity to all jivatmas. In many verses he adopts the conversation mode to address the Lord directly.

In one such verse, Azhwar, seeing the Lord's eyes that appear red, guesses that this is owing to His compassion to those devotees who have no desire for anything else and seek Him for His sake alone. He states that the Lord is naturally overtly partial to such devotees who seek Him with the aim of highest Purushartha, moksha. This echoes the Gita statement about the different types of seekers, such as those in distress or those desiring wealth, or some others wishing to attain the kaivalya state of atma anubhava. No doubt, He grants all these special requests. But there is yet another devotee who, being a jnani at heart, constantly yearns only for Him. The Lord says that such a devotee is very dear to Him. So Azhwar surmises that He is always thinking of what more can be done to such devotees.

Interpreters in this context draw attention to the way Krishna feels indebted to Draupadi. When she had to fight the humiliation meted out to her, she had resorted to Krishna as the sure protector and had surrendered to Him. While no one could help, including her husbands, the Lord sent timely help. But what is more astonishing is that since then, Krishna continues to feel that He has not done enough and wishes to do something more in response to her surrender.

TH CROSSWORD + 13184

(set by Incognito)

Never go off the grid.
We are digital now. Come solve online!
at <https://rgo.page.link/jjpTn>

TV PICKS

Serie A: Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 11 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Wednesday)
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Wednesday)
ATP 250: Argentina Open, Eurosport (SD & HD), 8 p.m.

IN BRIEF



Lakers blow out Warriors

LeBron James scored 19 points and had plenty of time to sit back and enjoy the Los Angeles Lakers' 117-91 NBA victory over Golden State Warriors on Sunday. James, playing in his 1,300th regular-season game, added six rebounds, four assists, two steals and two blocked shots in just 24 minutes on court. **The results:** Timberwolves 99 lost to Suns 118; Pistons 90 lost to Knicks 109; Heat 109 bt Hawks 99; Kings 126 lost to Hornets 127; Rockets 84 lost to Grizzlies 133; Celtics 111 bt Wizards 110; Lakers 117 bt Warriors 91; Bucks 105 bt Clippers 100.

Sodhi rallies to stun Ganguly

SPORTS BUREAU

Qualifier Saheb Sodhi recovered from the brink of defeat to beat seventh seed Anargha Ganguly 2-6, 7-6 (3), 6-2 in the boys' first round of the ITF grade-4 tennis tournament at the CLTA Complex on Monday. **Other results (first round):** Boys: Nishant Dabas bt Sarthak Gandhi 6-4, 6-4; Maanav Jain bt Albert Segura Onichtchenko (Esp) 6-1, 6-2; Sebastian Cauhage (Bel) bt Manish Yadav 6-2, 6-3; Sanjith Devineni (USA) bt Daksh Agarwal 6-1, 6-0; Kartik Parhar bt Navya Verma 6-2, 6-3; Deep Munim bt Aarav Samrat Hada (Nep) 7-5, 6-2; Dhruv Tangri bt Nithilan Erie 6-3, 6-4; Denim Yadav bt Sarthak Arora 6-4, 6-2; Yuvan Nandal bt Aki Zuben Rawat (Nep) 6-0, 7-5; Chirag Duhani bt Kartik Saxena 6-1, 6-2; Aayush Bhat bt Aditya Chauhan 6-1, 6-1; Agrinya Yadav bt Yashvardhan Singh 6-2, 6-4; Nyo Van Dyck (Bel) bt Rushil Kholas 2-6, 6-4, 6-1; Aman Dahiya bt Bushan Haobam 6-0, 6-2. **Girls:** Sarah Dev bt Flo Helsen (Bel) 6-4, 7-5; Sanvi Ahluwalia bt Naga Roshne 6-2, 6-0; Vaishnavi Adkar bt Saina Deshpande (USA) 6-2, 6-4; Shruti Ahlawat bt Radhika Vasudeva 6-1, 6-1; Camilia Sammel Druz (Fra) bt Diva Bhatia 6-0, 6-1; Navya Vadlamudi (USA) bt Lakshmi Prabha 6-0, 6-3; Suhitha Maruri bt Kavya Khrirwar 6-7(4), 6-2, 6-3; Rutuja Chaphalkar (USA) bt Lakshmi Vishwanath 6-1, 7-5; Anjali Rathi bt Maitree Diksha Rout 6-3, 6-4; Gargi Pawar bt Aarni Reddy Yellu 6-1, 6-1; Reshma Maruri bt Sanjana Devineni (USA) 6-1, 6-0; Riya Uboveja bt Mirthe Moens (Bel) 6-2, 6-1; Hetvee Chaudhari bt Vanya Arora 6-4, 6-1; Deepshika Sriram bt Amina Salibayeva (USA) 6-1, 6-1; Sanjana Sirimalla bt Kanika Sivaraman 3-6, 6-3, 6-1.

Police raid Barcelona's stadium

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Spanish police detained several people after raiding Barcelona's stadium on Monday in a search and seizure operation.

The operation was related to last year's "Barçagate," in which club officials were accused of launching a smear campaign against current and former players who were critical of the club and then-president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

Police said detentions were made but did not say who or how many people were taken into custody. Spanish media said Bartomeu was among those detained.

Delhi makes knockouts in style

Himmat and Nitish combine to make light of big target against Rajasthan

HAZARE TROPHY

SPORTS BUREAU

Himmat Singh lived up to his name on Monday. He showed plenty of *himmat* (courage) and skills to guide Delhi to an eight-wicket victory over Rajasthan in a crucial Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day match.

Thanks to his unbeaten 117 (96b, 13x4, 1x6) and his 183-run stand for the unbroken third wicket with Nitish Rana (88 n.o., 75b, 12x4, 1x6), Delhi not just posted its fourth win of Group-D, with 5.2 overs to spare, but clinched a place in the knockout phase as well.

A 51-ball 78 from Arifit Gupta (78, 51b, 7x4, 4x6) and opener Manendar Singh's 73 (98b, 5x4, 1x6) were the highlights of the Rajasthan innings, which ended at 294 in 48.2 overs.

Seamers Simarjeet Singh and Pradeep Sangwan took seven wickets between them.

Delhi will now play the Plate winner Uttarakhand in the playoff for the last quarterfinal spot.

Mumbai, which crushed Himachal Pradesh by 200 runs, finished on top of the group. Shreyas Iyer's men won all their five matches to qualify directly for the quarterfinals.

The skipper, for once, had



On the rampage: Himmat Singh's aggressive, unbeaten century highlighted Delhi's facile win over Rajasthan. • FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

a forgettable match with the bat though, as he made just two before becoming one of the four victims of pacer Rishi Dhawan.

Mumbai was in considerable bother at one stage, with the score reading 49 for four. But fine knocks from

Shardul Thakur (92, 57b, 6x4, 6x60), Suryakumar Yadav (91, 75b, 15x4) and wicket-keeper Aditya Tare (83, 98b, 6x4, 1x6) helped the former champion make 321 for nine.

In reply, Rajasthan was bowled out for 121, with

spinners Prashant Solanki and Shams Mulani sharing seven wickets.

In the day's other match in the group, Maharashtra, riding on hundreds from Yash Nahar and Ankit Bawane, thrashed Pondicherry by 137 runs.

MONDAY'S HAZARE TROPHY SCORES

Elite D (Jaipur): Rajasthan 294 in 48.2 overs (Manender Singh 73, Shiva Chouhan 42, Arjit Gupta 78, Simarjeet Singh 4/36) lost to Delhi 296/2 in 44.4 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 44, Himmat Singh 117 n.o., Nitish Rana 88 n.o.).

Maharashtra 333/4 in 50 overs (Yash Nahar 119, Ankit Bawne 110, Rahul Tripathi 59 n.o.) bt Pondicherry 196 in 43.2 overs (Sheldon Jackson 45, Sagar Trivedi 79 n.o., Ravardhan Hangargekar 4/45).

Mumbai 321/9 in 50 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 91, Aditya Tare 83, Shardul Thakur 92, Rishi Dhawan 4/84) bt Himachal 121 in 24.1 overs (Prashant Solanki 4/31).

Final standings: Mumbai 5-0-0-20 (+2.603); Delhi 5-4-1-0-16 (+0.507); Maharashtra 5-3-2-0-12 (+0.879); Rajasthan 5-1-4-0-4 (-0.900); Himachal 5-1-4-0-4 (-1.223); Assam 5-5-0-0-20 (+1.909); Meghalaya 5-4-1-0-6 (+1.110); Nagaland 5-4-1-0-16 (+0.431); Sikkim 5-1-4-0-4 (-1.137); Arunachal Pradesh 5-0-4-1-2 (-2.354); Mizoram 5-0-4-1-2 (-2.418); Manipur 5-0-5-0-0 (-1.754).

Quarterfinalists: Gujarat, Andhra, Karnataka, Mumbai, Saurashtra, UP, Kerala.

Note: For the sixth and seventh automatic qualification spots, the teams in the fray were Uttar Pradesh and Kerala, both from Elite C with 16 points, Baroda (Elite A, 16) and Delhi (Elite D, 16). Uttar Pradesh (+1.559) and Kerala (+1.244) sealed the last-eight berths on better NRR while Delhi (+0.507) pipped Baroda (+0.399) to make it to the pre-quarterfinal.

Pre-quarterfinals: March 7: Delhi vs. Uttarakhand (Plate group topper on NRR, edging Assam). **Finals:** Bengal 177 in 45.1 overs (Suvankar Bal 54) lost to Haryana 178/5 in 43.3 overs (Chaitanya Bishnoi 57, Shubham Rohilla 50). **Chandigarh** 241 in 48.3 overs (Manan Vohra 54, Ankit Kaushik 44) lost to Jammu & Kashmir 245/2 in 34 overs (Shubham Khajuria 120, Henan Nazir 110 n.o.). **Services** 301/7 in 50 overs (Rahul Singh 158, Devender Lochab 64, Pukit Narang 43 n.o.) bt Saurashtra 233 in 43.1 overs (Snehl Patel 43, Chirag Jani 68, Rahul Singh 4/45). **Final standings:** Saurashtra 5-4-1-0-16 (+0.632); Chandigarh 5-3-2-0-12 (-0.572); Services 5-2-3-0-8 (+0.382); J K 5-2-3-0-8 (-0.171); Haryana 5-2-3-0-8 (-0.298).

Djokovic ties Federer's record

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS
Novak Djokovic matched Roger Federer's all-time record for the most weeks as ATP World No. 1 on Monday, holding the top spot for the 310th week.

Djokovic's ninth Australian Open title last month ensured the 18-time Grand Slam champion would surpass Federer's record.

The Serb reclaimed the top ranking from Rafael Nadal in February 2020 and finished as year-end number one for the sixth time, tying the mark set by Pete Sampras. This is Djokovic's fifth different stint atop the rankings.

Top 10 (March 1): 1. Novak Djokovic (SRB) 12,030 pts; 2. Rafael Nadal (ESP) 9,850; 3. Daniil Medvedev (RUS) 9,735; 4. Dominic Thiem (AUT) 9,125; 5. Roger Federer (SUI) 6,630; 6. Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) 6,595; 7. Alexander Zverev (GER) 5,615; 8. Andrey Rublev (RUS) 4,609; 9. Diego Schwartzman (ARG) 3,480; 10. Matteo Berrettini (ITA) 3,480.



Djokovic. • GETTY IMAGES

Churchill tops the first phase

Finishes with 22 points in 10 matches

I-LEAGUE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Churchill Brothers clinched the top spot in the first phase of the I-League, downing 10-man Gokulam Kerala FC 3-2 in the final round match on Monday. For Churchill, Luka Majcen found the target twice while Kingslee Fernandes scored once.

Gokulam made a late comeback with Philip Adjah and Jithin M.S. scoring once each, but failed to pick up a point from the contest. It was reduced to 10 men in the 30th minute when Vincy Barreto was ejected after a direct red card.

Churchill remained the only unbeaten side (six wins, four draws) and finished on top with 22 points from 10 matches. Roundglass Punjab completed the top six who will play in a round-robin format



The unbeatables: Churchill deserved a salute for its consistency in the opening phase. • TWITTER/I-LEAGUEOFFICIAL

1-0 in its final outing, took the second spot with 18.

Real Kashmir FC claimed the third spot with 17 points, while there was a three-way tie between Mohammedan Sporting, Gokulam and TRAU FC who ended up with 16 points each. Sporting took the fourth spot on better head-to-head record while Gokulam and TRAU completed the top six who will play in a round-robin format

to decide the champion.

The bottom five – Aizawl FC, Sudeva Delhi FC, Chennai City FC, NEROCA and Indian Arrows – will figure in the relegation round.

The results: Gokulam Kerala FC 2 (Philip Adjah 80, Jithin M.S. 90+2) lost to Churchill Brothers 3 (Luka Majcen 26, 87-pen, Kingslee Fernandes 53).

NEROCA FC 0 lost to Roundglass Punjab FC 1 (Papa Diawara 65).

Woods touched by sartorial tribute

Fellow pro golfers sport his signature Sunday colours of red and black

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LOS ANGELES

Tiger Woods, recovering in hospital after surgery for serious leg injuries suffered in a car smash, tweeted thanks on Sunday for a show of support from fellow pro golfers.

"It is hard to explain how touching today was when I turned on the tv and saw all the red shirts," the 15-time Major champion said in a tweet. "To every golfer and every fan, you are truly helping me get through this tough time."

Several golfers at the WGC-Workday championship in Bradenton and quite a few at the LPGA event in Orlando took the course for their final rounds wearing Woods' signature Sunday colours of red and black.



In solidarity: Rory McIlroy was one of the golfers who, along with several fans, on Sunday donned Tiger Woods' iconic colour combo. • AFP

The PGA Tour tweeted a picture of the maintenance staff at its Puerto Rico Open on Sunday all turned out in red and black.

Former World No. 1 Rory McIlroy, Tommy Fleetwood and Tony Finau at the WGC and Phil Mickelson at a PGA Tour Champions event were

some of the players wearing Woods' iconic colour combo.

"I guess for us it's just a gesture to let him know that we're thinking about him and we're rooting for him," McIlroy said. "He's got a huge recovery ahead of him. But I think it's just for everyone to show their appreciation for what he means to us out here."

"If there was no Tiger Woods, I just think the Tour and the game of golf in general would be in a worse place."

"He's meant a lot to us, he still does mean a lot to us and I think that was just a little way to show that."

Collin Morikawa, who lifted the trophy, said. "I don't think we say thank you enough, so I want to say thank you to Tiger."

Manisha in fifth place

SHOTGUN WC

KAMESH SRINIVASAN

NEW DELHI

Manisha Keer shot three rounds of 23 to be in the fifth place, three points behind the leader Ekaterina Subbotina (72) of Russia on the opening day of women's trap in the shotgun World Cup in Cairo on Monday.

Rajeshwari Kumari (62) and Kirti Gupta (61), however, had one bad round each

in slipping to the 17th and 19th spots in a field of 23 shooters. They have two more rounds to salvage their position.

In men's trap, Prithviraj Tondaiman also had three identical rounds of 23. Asian Games silver medallist Lakshay Sheoran recovered after 21 in the first round with two rounds of 23. Olympian Kynan Chenai had two rounds of 22 in a strong field featuring 52 shooters.

Incredible achievement by Mumbai City'



Pep Guardiola. • FILE PHOTO: AFP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola on Monday described sister club Mumbai City FC's feat of topping the Indian Super League (ISL) points table and booking a spot in the AFC Champions League (ACL) as "an incredible achievement".

On Sunday, Mumbai City defeated ATK Mohun Bagan 2-0 in the final league encounter of the ISL to win the League Winners Shield and book a place in the ACL for

the next season. "Congratulations to everyone. Incredible achievement. Big achievement for City Football Group. Congratulations to everyone, manager Lobera. Very happy," tweeted Guardiola.

Mumbai City FC, coached by Sergio Lobera, is one of the eight clubs worldwide whose majority stakes are owned by City Football Group (CFG). Manchester City, a top side in the English Premier League, is the flagship club of the CFG.