



Parliament stalls again as Oppn. MPs protest against fuel price hike

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Mizoram govt. awaits Centre's direction on refugees from Myanmar

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Brazil SC judge annuls Lula's convictions, opens door to 2022 run

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Jhulan Goswami, Smriti Mandhana help India pull level in ODI series

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NEARBY



2 accused get protection from arrest in toolkit case

NEW DELHI A Delhi court on Tuesday extended protection from arrest till March 15 to Nikita Jacob and Shantanu Muluk, both accused in the 'toolkit' case.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Two beaten to death by mob at Azadpur Mandi

NEW DELHI Two men were beaten to death by a mob in north Delhi's Azadpur Mandi on Tuesday over suspicion of theft, the police said, adding that one body was found stuffed inside a jute bag.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 3

Uttarakhand CM Rawat resigns

BJP legislature party meeting will elect a new leader for the State today

NISTULA HEBBAR

NEW DELHI

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Tuesday tendered his resignation to Governor Baby Ra ni Maurya.

Former Chattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh and Rajya Sabha member Dushyant Gautam, sent by the BJP's national leadership as observers to Dehradun, will conduct a meeting of the legislature party on Wednesday morning to elect a new leader who will become the Chief Minister.

Complaints within party This brings to an end the crisis surrounding Mr. Rawat's continuance in the post. There were complaints from his own party MLAs and others about his style of functioning and administration. Uttarakhand has had a record of not having a single Chief Minister, except N.D. Tiwari, to have completed a full term since its formation.



Farewell speech: Trivendra Singh Rawat addressing a press meet after tendering his resignation, in Dehradun on Tuesday. ■ PTI

Mr. Rawat, in a presser held after he submitted his two-line resignation letter to Ms. Maurya, said he was "nine days short of completing four years at the helm" and that he was grateful to the BJP and the people for having got an opportunity to serve the State.

Mr. Rawat's continuance had become a question mark after the central observers

submitted a report that underlined serious concerns over his chief ministership.

From being tardy in implementing the 'Chardham yatra' projects to not being accessible to his own partymen, to facing a corruption charge wherein the Uttarakhand High Court had ordered a CBI inquiry against him (later stayed by the Supreme Court but still being

I feel really honoured that my party gave me the opportunity to serve Devbhoomi for nearly four years
TRIVENDRAGHOSH RAWAT

This is a failed attempt of the BJP to cover up the failures of its government in the State and hide the corruption taking place there
**DEVENDA YADAV,
STATE CONGRESS CHIEF**

examined), there were a multiplicity of reasons for his removal.

Mr. Rawat was summoned to New Delhi on Monday after a State core committee meeting in Dehradun on Saturday evening. He was given marching orders when he met BJP president J.P. Nadda on Monday evening.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Over 72% rise in UAPA cases registered in 2019

1,948 persons were arrested in 1,226 cases that year

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

There has been over 72% increase in the number of persons arrested under the UAPA (Unlawful Activities [Prevention] Act) in 2019 compared to year 2015, data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the Lok Sabha show.

As many as 1,948 persons were arrested under the UAPA in 1,226 cases registered across the country in 2019. From 2015 till 2018, the cases registered under the Act annually stood at 897, 922, 901 and 1,182 respectively, while the number of arrests was 1,128, 999, 1,554 and 1,421.

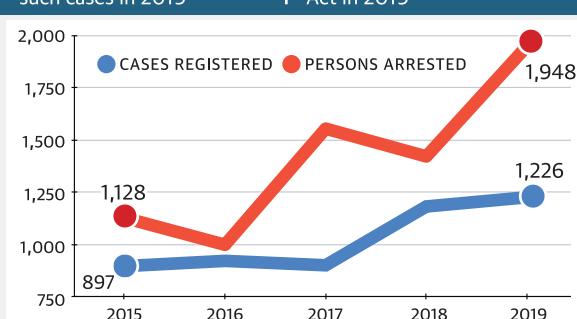
In 2019, the highest number of such cases were registered in Manipur (306), followed by Tamil Nadu (270), Jammu & Kashmir (227) and Jharkhand (202).

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy, in a written reply, said, "Cases under the UAPA are

Sharp rise | The number of arrests under the UAPA jumped by over 37% in 2019 as compared to 2018

1 With 306 cases, Manipur registered the most such cases in 2019

2 As many as 1,948 persons were arrested under the Act in 2019



ber of arrests in the same year were made in Uttar Pradesh (498), followed by Manipur (386), Tamil Nadu (308), Jammu & Kashmir (227) and Jharkhand (202). investigated by the State police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA). As far as the NIA is concerned, so far 48 special courts have been constituted across the country for the speedy trial of terror-related cases."

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

SC questions delay in setting up environment regulator

Prashant Bhushan highlights govt's lapse, despite 2011 order

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the government to explain why it had not set up an "independent environmental regulator" to oversee green clearances. A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati to find out and report to the court.

The lapse was highlighted by advocate Prashant Bhushan, who said the top court

had ordered the setting up of a national environment regulatory body to ensure independent oversight of green clearances way back in July 2011 in *Lafarge Umiam Mining Private Limited v. Union of India*, commonly known as the 'Lafarge mining case'.

"Environment impact assessment has been made into a farce," Mr. Bhushan submitted.

"Do you know we found that the Wildlife Board of In-

dia has not met in six years?" Chief Justice Bobde exclaimed.

"All government regulations have been dismantled..." Mr. Bhushan voiced his concern, in reply.

In 2011, the court had asked the Centre to appoint a national regulator for appraising projects, enforcing environmental conditions for approvals and to impose penalties on polluters.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Wear masks properly or get off plane: Delhi HC

Violations prompt High Court judge to issue guidelines

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

Flight passengers who exhibit stubborn reluctance to wear their masks properly, could now get offloaded immediately or be placed in the "no-fly" list, as per a fresh guidelines issued by the Delhi High Court.

"It is made clear that masks should be worn as directed by governmental instructions, covering the nose and mouth, and not worn merely covering the mouth or below the chin," Justice C.



Hari Shankar ordered.

Alarming situation Justice Shankar said he was constrained to pass the order because of an alarming situation, which he witnessed

Aircrew allowed to fly 48 hours after vaccine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Pilots and cabin crew will not be permitted to fly until 48 hours after their COVID-19 vaccination, the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) ordered on

during the Air India flight from Kolkata to New Delhi on March 5, 2021.

"It was noticed that, though all the passengers had worn masks, many passengers had worn the masks

Tuesday. "Aircrew will be 'medically unfit for flying' for 48 hours after vaccination. If there are no symptoms after 48 hours, the aircrew is fit to resume unrestricted flying duties," the regulator said.

below their chin and were exhibiting a stubborn reluctance to wear their masks properly," the judge said.

He said that this behaviour was seen not only in the bus transporting the passengers

from the airport to the flight, but also within the flight itself. It was only on repeated entreaties made by Justice Shankar himself to the offending passengers that they condescended to wear their masks properly.

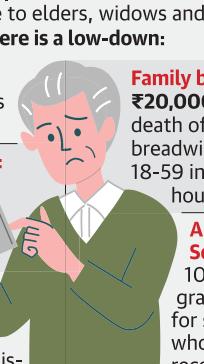
When the cabin crew was questioned in this regard, they said they had directed all the passengers to wear masks, but were helpless when they did not comply.

"To the perception of the court, such a situation, in the present scenario, when the country is seeing a resurgence of COVID-19 cases, after they had shown signs of ebbing, is completely unconscionable," the court said.

Panel flags Centre's meagre pensions

It slams laxity in raising amounts

Little support | The National Social Assistance Programme is applicable to elders, widows and the physically challenged. Here is a low-down:



Family benefit: ₹20,000 upon the death of a breadwinner aged 18-59 in BPL households
Annapurna Scheme: 10 kg of food grains per month for senior citizens who are not receiving any pension

₹69K crore 'Deshbhakti Budget' for Delhi

JATIN ANAND
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday presented a ₹69,000 crore 'Deshbhakti Budget' for the 2021-22 fiscal, replete with provisions seeking to inspire patriotism in

the run-up to the 75th Independence Day, free COVID-19 vaccination, and a vision for "India at 2047".

He also announced that the Delhi government aims to bid for hosting the 2048 Olympic Games. It is a dream project and part of the AAP government's vision for the country, he said.

The education sector got the lion's share of funds – ₹16,377 crore – in the budget.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 3

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Man killed following quarrel with neighbours in west Delhi; 5 held

Manhunt on for four accused, say police; four hurt in fight

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A 32-year-old man was killed following a quarrel with his neighbours in west Delhi's Rajouri Garden on Monday night, the police said on Tuesday.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Prashant Gautam said the victim has been identified as Rupesh, a resident of Raghubir Nagar. The accused have been identified as 23-year-old Tarun, his 21-year-old wife Priyanka, father Ravinder (48), mother Anita (45), cousin Deepa (30), brother Puneet and friends Kaju, Summi and Gaurav. Five of the accused have been arrested, an officer said.

On the night of the incident, Tarun was fighting

with Priyanka on the road, subsequently the matter escalated when Deepa and her friends also joined in and all started abusing each other.

On hearing the commotion outside, Rupesh's mother Indravati came out of her house and asked the group not to shout.

The group allegedly started arguing with her.

Next, Rupesh's younger brother Mukesh intervened in the matter. "Puneet then slapped Mukesh," Mr. Gautam said.

Subsequently, Rupesh, his father Raj Bahadur, and uncle Rajbir entered the scene to pacify the crowd but Puneet and Deepa called their friends Nitin, Kaju, Summi, Gaurav. The police are looking for Anita, Summi, Kaju and Puneet.

Rupesh, Mukesh and the others with sticks. "In the meantime, the police was called following which the accused fled the spot. Rupesh was taken to Guru Gobind Singh Hospital where he was declared brought dead. Mukesh, his father, mother, uncle and sister-in-law also suffered injuries during the incident," Mr. Gautam said.

The incident was captured on CCTV camera.

A case under Sections 302 (punishment for murder), 307 (punishment for attempt to murder), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 147 (rioting), 149 (unlawful assembly) and 34 (common intention) of the IPC has been registered. The

police are looking for Anita, Summi, Kaju and Puneet. The group members then hit Ru-

Government of Maharashtra
PUBLIC WORKS DIVISION, AHMEDNAGAR,
Phone No. 0214/2325334 & 0241 /2325086
e-TENDER NOTICE No. 24 for 2020-21 (Online)

Online e-Tender in B-1 Form for the following works invited by Executive Engineer, Public Works Division, Ahmednagar. Phone No. 0241-2325334/ 2325086. From the competent and interested contractors (Not necessary registered with P.W.D.). If Global Company having its Branch/ Sub Company in Indian, they can participate in Tender. Superintending Engineer, Public Works Circle, Ahmednagar who reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason therefore.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Amount
1.	Improvements to Walwad Reheku Nandaon Durgaon Pimpalwadi Baradgaon Dagdi to Baradgaon Sudrik MDR 67 Km 11/80 to 21/500, Tal. Karjat	Rs. 367.45 Lakhs
2.	Construction of Major Bridge with approach road on MSH-8 Vadganga Gupta approach road to SH-58 to Pimpalgaon Malvi MDR-35 to Gwarewasti to MSH-5 Jeu to Pimpalgaon Ujanji road MDR-190 at Km 1/780, Tal. Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 335.11 Lakhs
3.	Improvements to Rahata Lohare Mandve Parner Shrigonda road SH-67 Km 100/00 to 113/500, Tal. Parner, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 321.37 Lakhs
4.	Improvements to Rahata Lohare Mandve Parner Shrigonda road SH-67 Km 55/00 to 61/00, Tal. Parner, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 280.73 Lakhs
5.	STBT and Construction of minor bridge on Karmala Nannaj Jamkhed Sakal SH-56 Km 40/000 to 43/000 and 50/000 to 52/00, Tal. Jamkhed, Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 374.96 Lakhs
6.	STBT SH-55 to Anandwadi Naygaon Daodaihan Sakal Kolwehadi to Dist. Border MDR-76 Km 0/00 to 1/800 to 11/00 to 14/00 & 15/200 to 18/200, Tai. Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 485.08 Lakhs
7.	STBT to Jawali Chobhewadi Barhanpur Jawale Wagh Road MDR-124 Km 6/400 to 13/400, Tal. Jamkhed, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 412.29 Lakhs
8.	STBT to SH-66 to Ghodegaon More Chinchore Katrad to SH-52 to Dhargarwadi to MSH-5, MDR-35 Km 24/800 to 30/800, Tal. Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 218.06 Lakhs
9.	Improvements to MDR-53 Dhaldwadi to Talwadi Hingangaon Bhambora SH-68 Road MDR-120 Km.7/00 to 10/500 Tal. Karjat Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs.161.66 Lakhs
10.	Improvements to MDR-53 Dhaldwadi to Talwadi Hingangaon Bhambora SH-68 Road MDR-120 Km.11/300 to 13/900Tal. Karjat Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 162.01 Lakhs
11.	Improvements to Raxaswadi Bk. Talwadi Baradgaon Dagadi to MDR-53 Road MDR-113 Km.0/00 to 3/00 Tal. Karjat Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 163.14 Lakhs
12.	Improvements to SH-54 Rashin Parwati Karjadi Mohitewasti to Dist. Border Road MDR-110 Km. 6/200 to 10/500 Tal. Karjat Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 198.80 Lakhs
13.	STBT to Arangaon Walki Ralegan Mandavgan road MDR-53 Km.23/500 to 44/200 Tal., Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 221.72 Lakhs
14.	Improvements to SH-52 to Gunjale to Dongargan MDR-35 to Manjarsumba Gorakshnath Road(MDR.179) Km.11/300 to 14/600 Tal. Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 167.17 Lakhs
15.	Improvements to SH-58 to Kharje Karjune Hingangaon Nlmgao Wagh Road (MDR.170) Km. 0/0 to 5/500 Tal. Nagar, Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 234.92 Lakhs
16.	Improvements to Koregaon Deulgaon Siddhi Gundegaon Mandavgan Road MDR-82 Km 17/800 to 19/500, Tal. Nagar, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 164.10 Lakhs
17.	Widening and BT to Shrigonda Deulgaon Mandavgan Road (MDR 63) Km 33/00 to 37/00, Tal. Shrigonda, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 199.58 Lakhs
18.	Improvement to Manjarsumba Pimpalgaon Malvi Vilad Islak Road (MDR-172) Km 18/00 to 21/900 Tal. Nagar, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 153.55 Lakhs
19.	STBT NH 222 to Morewadi to Jitewasti (MDR-176) Km 0/00 to 1/500 and 3/800 to 4/850, Tal. Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 197.89 Lakhs
20.	Construction of Bridge and approach road on Ahmednagar Agadgaon Miri road (MDR-49) Km 0/100, 0/880 & 9/070, Tal. Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 242.74 Lakhs
21.	Construction of Minor Bridge and Approaches on SH-58 to Kharekarjune Hingangaon Nimgoa Wagheda Baorudgaon Wakodi Walunj to SH-58 Road (MDR-170) at Ch. 15/200, Tal. Nagar, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 163.75 Lakhs
22.	STBT to Nimbodi Daredwadi Narayandoh Ukkadgaon Mandave to District Border Road (MDR-167) Km 12/500 to 18/00, Tal. Nagar, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 237.11 Lakhs
23.	Improvement to Manjarsumba Pimpalgaon Malvi Vilad Islak to SH 58 Nlmblak Hlmgangaon to Jakhangaon to NH 222 Road (MDR. 172) Km 5/00 to 11/600 Tal. Nagar.	Rs. 241.18 Lakhs
24.	Improvements to Bhalwani Goregaon Kirin Kanhur Wagdaon Daraya Darodl' Randhe Alkti Chombhot road MDR 50 Km.12/00 to 13/500 and 17/300 to 20/300 Tal. Parner Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 200.50 Lakhs
25.	Improvements to Devibhoire phata Supa Sarola Road SH.69/km.31/700 to 32/200 and 33/800 to 40/100 Tal. Parner Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs.161.70 Lakhs
26.	Improvements to Mandva Deswade Pokhari Pimpalgaon Rotha Akkalwadi road MDR.29 Km.25/00 to 29/00 Tal. Parner Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 177.41 Lakhs
27.	Improvements to parner Baburdi Visapur road MDR55 km17/500 to 24/400 Tal. Parner Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 163.87 Lakhs
28.	Improvements to Wedagavan Kalmarwadi padali Kadus road MDR.56 Km.0/00 to 1/400 and 3/600 to 8/00 Tal. Parner Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 175.89 Lakhs
29.	(A) Improvements to Daitthane Gunjal to Pimpalgaon Kawda road ODR-286 Km.0/600 to 1/580 Tal. Parner (B) Improvements to Hangan Shahnjapur Sura road MDR.194 Km.17/00 to 18/680 (Part Hangan Shahnjapur) (C) Improvements to SH.67 Parner Kanhu road to Hattalkhond road ODR.288 Km. 0/00 to 1/00 Tal. Parner (D) Improvements to Punewadi to SH.67 Kanhu Parner road ODR.327 Km.0/00 to 2/00 Tal. Parner Dist. Ahmednagar under DPDC.	Rs. 212.99 Lakhs
30.	STBT Vadgaon Chakan Shikrapur Nahrava Immgao Shrigonda Jamkhed Beed Road SH -55 Km 114/000 to 122/000 Tal. Shrigonda Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 205.20 Lakhs
31.	STBT Takali Kazi Kada Jamkhed Khardha Bhoom SH 57 Km 83/000 to 87/065 Tal. Jamkhed, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 246.08 Lakhs
32.	STBT Khardha Jategaon Chousala Road SH 64 Km. 10/000 to 13/800 Tal. Jamkhed Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 173.69 Lakhs
33.	STBT Satefai Loni Anandwadi Bandhkhadak Telangshi MDR 107 Km 0/000 to 2/500 and 9/000 to 10/000 Tal. Jamkhed Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 162.49 Lakhs
34.	STBT to Jamkhed Jamadarwadi Sarola Khardhaithan Dhondhpargaon road MDR 106 Km. 9/200 to 12/00 Tal. Jamkhed, Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 165.32 Lakhs
35.	STBT to Karmala Nannaj Sakal road SH.56 Km.29/00 to 32/00 Tal. Jamkhed Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 150.65 Lakhs
36.	S.R. to Jawala Chobhewadi Jawale Wagh Road (MDR124) Km.1/00 to 4/00 Tal. Jamkhed I Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 150.51 Lakhs
37.	STBT Satefai Waki Loni Anandwadi Bandhkhadak Telangshi Rd. MDR.1 07 Km.No. 10/000 to 14/000 Tal. Jamkhed Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 159.72 Lakhs
38.	S.R. to Construction of Minor Bridge on MSH-8 Mungaon Daku Patewadi Handalwadi Kaparewadi Karjat SH-54 Bargewadi Nandgaon to ODR 349 Road MDR-115 Ch. 17/500, Tal. Karjat, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 154.49 Lakhs
39.	Construction of Bridge on MDR-66 to Walwad Chande Khurd ODR-349 Gurav Pimpali Vetalwasti to ODR-334 Ravalgaon Road MDR-114 Km 8/100 on Dukari River, Tal. Karjat, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 152.84 Lakhs
40.	S.R. to Kaparewadi Rajputwadi Koregaon Bajrangwadi Lonimasadpur to Dist. Boarder MDR 110@ Km 119 Part Koregaon to Lonimasadpur Km 7/00 to 13/00, Karjat, Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 154.20 Lakhs
41.	S.R. to Banpimpri Taluka Border Nlmgao Gangarda Ghumari Belgaon Kokangona Raavalgaon Kombali Kaudhane Bitakewadi SH.55 Rd MDR-100 Km 16/900 to 21/900 Tal. Karjat	Rs. 194.37 Lakhs
42.	S.R. to Bridge on SH-54 Rash in Karjat Mohite Wasti to District Border Road MDR 110@ Km 4/500 Tal. Karjat Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 174.33 Lakhs
43.	SR to walwad Reheku Durgaon Pimpalwadi Baradgaon Dagdi to Baradgaon Sudrik MDR 67 Km 21/00 to 26/200 Tal. Karjat	Rs.191.29 Lakhs
44.	S.R. to Bridge on MDR-53 Dhaldwadi Talwadi Hingangaon Bhambora SH-68 to Korewasti Road MDR-120@ Km. 12/900 Tal. Karjat Dist. Ahmednagar	Rs. 170.02 Lakhs
45.	Improvements to Manjarsumba Pimpalgaon Malvi road (VR.172) Km.0/00 to 5/00 Tal. Dist. Ahmednagar.	Rs. 158.80 Lakhs
	Tender Document sale start & End Date : Sale Date- 08/03/2021 to Dt. 22/03/2021 Bid opening Dt. 24/03/2021, Works No.1 to 7 = Pre bid Meeting Dt.15/03/2021, at 12.30 pm.in the Place of meeting Chief Engineer, PW.Rigion, Office, Nashik, and Sr.No.8 to 45 = Prebid Meeting Dt.16/03/2021, at 12.30 Pm. in the Place of meeting Superintendent Engineer, P.W.Circle, Office, Ahmednagar	
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	EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, Public Work Division Ahmednagar	

Two beaten to death by mob in Azadpur Mandi

In bid to destroy evidence, one body was stuffed in bag: DCP

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Two men were beaten to death by a mob in north Delhi's Azadpur Sabzi Mandi on Tuesday over suspicion of theft, the police said, adding that one of the victims was found stuffed inside a jute bag. Two people have been arrested in connection with the incident at 7.30 a.m.

"A police team rushed to the mandi where two persons: Lokesh, 24, and Bhaiya, 24, were found injured. Both of them lived in nearby areas. One of them was found stuffed inside a jute bag," said the DCP.

The police received information regarding the incident at 7.30 a.m. The victims were declared brought dead at BJRM hospital. The bodies have been sent for autopsy,

Lokesh is survived by his wife and one-year-old child. He was killed for no reason and the police is not telling us anything about his murder

RELATIVE OF LOKESH

the police said. The DCP added that after scanning footage of CCTV cameras in the area, and with the help of local intelligence, they arrested Rakesh and Sunil Pandey. Both work on the Azadpur Mandi premises.

A relative of Lokesh said they rushed to the mandi after getting a call from an unknown person about the incident. His family alleged that a man was about to dump a jute bag, with Lokesh's body stuffed inside, claiming it was garbage.

"We nabbed one of the

suspects and handed him over to the police. Lokesh is survived by his wife and one-year-old child. He was killed for no reason and the police is not telling us anything about his murder

An FIR under IPC Section 302 (murder) has been registered at Mahindra Park police station and a detailed probe has been ordered. Lokesh was put inside the bag to destroy evidence, the DCP added.

FIR against victims

"We are finding out if there were any FIRs registered against the victims or if they hold any criminal records. We have also registered two separate FIRs under the IPC section of theft against the victims on the complaint of the arrested persons," the senior police officer added.

Police postpone search at Pracha's office again

Advocate says he was at Patiala House

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The police on Tuesday said they visited advocate Mehmmad Pracha's office in Nizamuddin but had to postpone the search as he wasn't available. They claimed that they were in possession of a court order for the search.

Mr. Pracha, the defense counsel for multiple accused in the north-east riots cases, said that "hundreds of policemen" came to raid his office at 12.30 p.m. and remained there for several hours.

"They could not raid as my office was locked, and my staff was busy in various matters. My support staff was also on leave. I don't know if they broke open," he said, while claiming to be still at Patiala House Court on Tuesday evening.

Mr. Pracha added that he has moved an application against the search before the same judge who gave the order, and "the court has summoned the con-

cerned DCP on Wednesday". The court, however, wrote on the application:

"Let notice of the application be sent to IO for a reply on Wednesday. The IO in this case is a Sub Inspector".

Delhi Police sources said the court had ordered another search as the one ordered previously could not be executed due to obstructions by Mr. Pracha".

"Since Mr. Pracha wasn't available in his office today, it has been

Timings
DELHI

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 10	
RISE 06:37	SET 18:27
RISE 04:50	SET 15:34
THURSDAY, MAR. 11	
RISE 06:36	SET 18:27
RISE 05:33	SET 16:33
FRIDAY, MAR. 12	
RISE 06:34	SET 18:28
RISE 06:10	SET 17:32

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Palam 33 21

Delhi Palam Today 32°C Short spell of rain or thunder clouds development may be a chance. A warm day with partly cloudy sky and light winds.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 32°C A spell of thunderstorm or light rain likely towards evening and night. Warm afternoon likely with light winds.

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Correction

In the report headlined '4% increase in number of vehicles on road' that appeared on March 9, the accompanying graphic stated that the average daily passenger journeys on the Delhi Metro before COVID-19 lockdown was 27 lakh. The figure should have been 57 lakh. The error is regretted.

Delhi Cong. calls budget visionless

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Tuesday called the budget "visionless, directionless and hollow".

It is a pointless exercise to sell a distant dream, as far away as 2047 when Delhi's quality of living will be supposedly turned into the likes of Singapore, instead of addressing the existing issues. The Delhi Congress said that the government presents lofty budgets with this year's pegged at ₹69,000 crore, which was a ₹4,000 crore jump from last year's ₹65,000 crore estimates but the ground reality was that ₹6,000 crore from last year's budget had remained unspent.

Quarter of total budget set aside for education

Sisodia proposes to set up first-ever virtual school, establish Delhi Law University, launch new syllabus

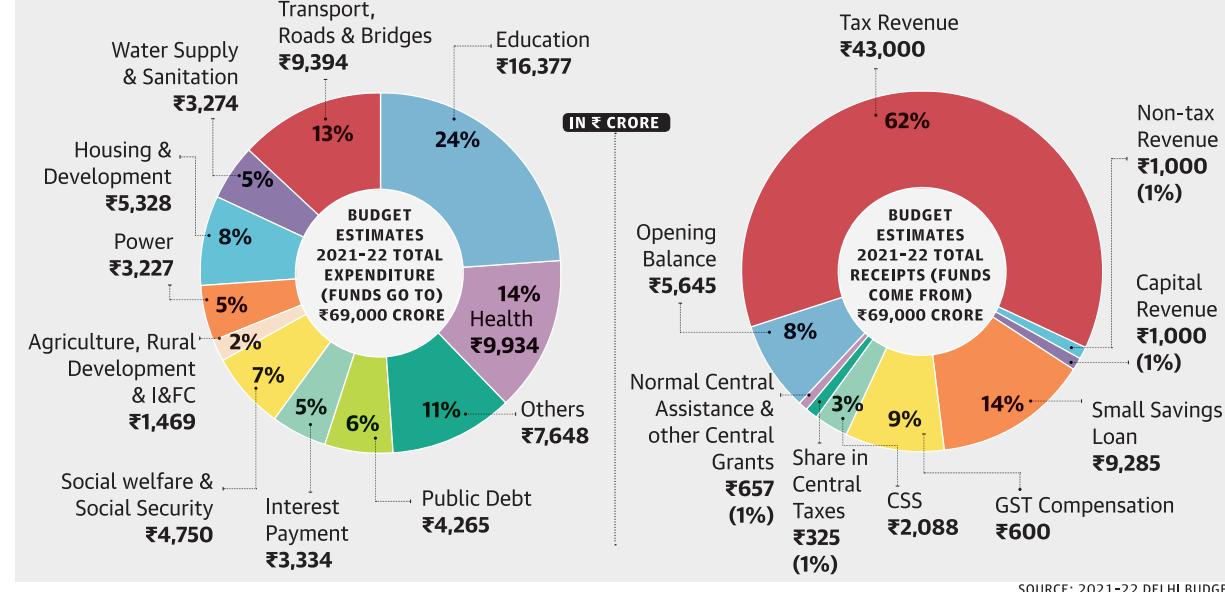
JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday proposed to introduce a slew of new measures in Delhi's budget 2021-22 that included setting up of a virtual model school, establishing Delhi Law University, introducing a new syllabus for classes Nursery to 8, setting up 100 schools of excellence and establishing Delhi's own Education Examination Board.

'Deshbhakti' curriculum
Keeping with the theme of 'deshbhakti' budget, Mr. Sisodia announced the setting up of the Capital's first Sainik school as well as an Armed Forces Preparatory Academy.

He said that the 'desh-

CAPITAL SPENDING



SOURCE: 2021-22 DELHI BUDGET



Finance Minister Manish Sisodia (right) and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal arrive at the Delhi Assembly to present the 2021-22 budget on Tuesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

June 2015. Last year's budget was ₹65,000 crore.

"As part of a series of patriotic events that will begin in Delhi from March 12 for the next 75 weeks, programs will be organised to highlight Delhi's role in the freedom movement, its journey in the last 75 years and the vision of Delhi in 2047," he said.

A separate budget of ₹10 crore each has been allocated to conduct programmes to honour Shaheed Bhagat Singh and Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar. Another ₹45 crore has been set aside for

installing the Tricolor at 500 locations across the Capital.

In addition to setting up the city's first Sainik School and a Delhi Armed Forces Preparatory Academy, ₹25 crore has been allocated towards providing yoga and meditation services to the public, through teachers trained by the government.

In the allocations for the health sector, ₹50 crore has been pledged towards providing free COVID-19 vaccination at government hospitals through the Aam Aadmi Free Covid Vaccine scheme.

plus

the government to revise the provisions of the Delhi University Act and have also started working on the New Delhi School Education Act for Delhi," Mr. Sisodia said.

Elucidating on the proposed virtual model school, Mr. Sisodia said that the school will be based on the principle of "anywhere living, anytime learning, anytime testing" and that it will not have four walls or a building but there will be children, teachers, regular teaching-learning, examinations and assessments.

"It will be a unique experiment in itself, and will probably be the first virtual school in the world. Work has already begun on the design of this school. This will benefit students in Delhi as well as all those children who live in any part of the country but want to benefit from the Delhi education model," Mr. Sisodia said.

New policy
The Minister said that to fully implement the National Education Policy, certain changes needed to be made to the Delhi School Education Act, 1973, and the "100-year-old" Delhi University Act 1922.

"Both these laws are not aligned to the ethos of the new education policy. We have requested the Central

A 100 Mahila Mohalla Clinics, meant exclusively for women patients, has also proposed in the budget.

"I am happy to report that last year's budget was ₹65,000 crore while this year's budget is ₹69,000 crore – an increase of almost 6%. Despite tough times, the increase in budget is commendable," said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"Our aim for 2047 should be that the per capita income of Delhi is equal to that of Singapore. For that, we will have to increase the per capita income 16-fold, and we will do whatever it takes to achieve that," he added.

Jugglery of figures: BJP
Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP called the budget a "jugglery of figures and numbers" and accused Mr. Kejriwal of seeking credit for projects launched by previous governments. "The most unfortunate part of the whole budget is that there is hardly any allocation for developmental projects that can be taken up during the next one year," said Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri.

Tax collection may decrease by 33.56% mainly due to COVID-19

AAP govt. plans to double small savings loan from Centre

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Tax revenue collection of the Delhi government is expected to fall by 33.56% in 2020-21 mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to budget documents.

Despite this, the Delhi government has increased the 2021-22 budget to ₹69,000 crore – an increase of over 6% from the ₹65,000 crore earmarked in 2020-21.

Tax collection was estimated to be ₹44,100 crore in 2020-21, but a revised estimate shows it will be ₹29,300 crore.

The pandemic and the lockdowns affected businesses and that in turn reduced the different taxes paid to the government.

Increase spending'
"At this point, it is a good move by the government to increase spending, as it will create employment and also increase purchasing power of the people and this will in turn help in reviving the economy," said Arun Kumar, former Professor at Economics Department, JNU.

During his budget speech, Mr. Sisodia said the government's goal is to increase per capita income of Delhi by 2047 so it is on par with Singapore. "To make this possible, we have to increase the income of our citizens 16-fold, and we will do whatever it takes to achieve that," he added.

Free vaccine for all at govt. hospitals'
Our aim for 2047 should be that the per capita income of Delhi is equal to that of Singapore. For that, we will have to increase the per capita income 16-fold, and we will do whatever it takes to achieve that," he added.

**STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI**
Finance Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday announced mohalla clinics for women, free COVID-19 vaccine for all at government hospitals, and ₹1,293 crore for various projects for expansion of health-related infrastructure.

But the percentage of the budget allocated for schemes and programmes of the health sector has shown only a slight increase to 14% this year from 13.39% in the last budget.

He also said that the government will increase the capacity to administer COVID-19 vaccines to 60,000 persons per day in the next few days from the current level of 45,000 persons daily.

"In Delhi, our government has decided that COVID-19 vaccine will be made available to the people of Delhi free of cost in government hospitals. For this new scheme 'Aam Aadmi Free Covid Vaccine', I am proposing an amount of ₹50 crore," the Minister said. The number of hospital beds will increase by more than 14,000, Mr. Sisodia said.

Mahila Mohalla Clinics
The Finance Minister said that 100 'Mahila Mohalla Clinics' are proposed to be established in different parts of Delhi and it will be increased to at least one clinic in each ward.

He also said that the Delhi government is headed to another important beginning in health sector and a health card will be issued to every Delhite.

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planned to take in 2020-21.

Mr. Kumar said the decrease in tax revenue expected in the coming year shows that the Delhi government does not expect the economy to recover to 2019-level any time soon.

From April to July 2020, during which time a lockdown was in force, tax revenue was down by 44.3% compared to the same period in 2019.

But it slowly picked up as curbs were lifted.

"Tax revenue, which fell during the initial phase of the pandemic, has picked up now. In February 2021, tax revenue was ₹3,300 crore, which is more than the ₹2,844 crore collected in February last year. It is too early to say whether it will continue, but we hope we will be able to raise ₹69,000 crore this year," a Delhi government official said.

Budget reduced
Though the Budget Estimates for 2020-21 was ₹65,000 crore, the Revised Estimates for 2020-21 is ₹59,000 crore.

"The Capital Budget decreased from ₹16,930 crore approved in Budget Estimates 2020-21 to ₹12,785 crore in Revised Estimates 2020-21, which is mainly due to the slow pace of Capital works following the lockdown in view of the COVID-19 pandemic," the budget document said.

1,000 buses to be added to city's fleet this fiscal

Tenders in place for 300 DTC e-buses

Speeding up

₹9,394 crore

Allocation for transport, roads and bridges for 2021-22

₹5,941 crore

Allocation for transport in 2020-21

₹193 crore

Allocation for road infrastructure in 2020-21

1,600

Number of buses added to the city's fleet last fiscal

1,300

(including 300 e-buses): Number of buses to be added to the city's fleet in current fiscal

first time, a fleet of 1,600 buses have been added within a year to boost the public transport and by September this year, 1,000 more buses will be added," he also said.

Meanwhile, in addition to allocating ₹200 crore for the installation of CCTV cameras in the city, ₹35 crore was allocated for the construction of an underpass at Ashram Chowk scheduled to be completed by June 2021.

"Over 1,000 new e-buses will be on the roads by the middle of next year under the cluster scheme. For the

2 schemes to boost tourism

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

To promote tourism, art and culture, the budget 2021-22 proposed two schemes titled the 'Delhi Heritage Promotion' and 'Delhi Tourism Circuit' to boost tourism and ensure safety of tourists.

Finance Minister Manish Sisodia said that measures such as the installation of CCTV cameras at entry points of all tourist spots, lighting up of dark spots with LEDs, and posting of uniform-clad guards at all DTTDC spots will be implemented.

He said that ₹521 crore has been allocated for the implementation of schemes and programmes in the sectors of tourism, art and culture.

No road map for govt.'s lofty green goals

We aim to convert Delhi's transport system to electric in 25 years, says Sisodia

NIKHIL M BABU
NEW DELHI

Delhi Finance Minister Manish Sisodia during the presentation of the budget said that in the next 25 years, the city has to be made free of "environment pollution" and the government plans to convert the entire transport system into an electric vehicle system.

But there were no detailed road maps in the budget speech about how to achieve the targets. No new scheme was announced separately.

"Environment section has set the ambition for pollution-free Delhi and a target for a fleet of electric vehicles but without stating the scope, targets and specific budgetary support for full range of action," said Anumita

Roychowdhury, executive director of Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a research and advocacy organisation in Delhi. "However, we appreciate the focus on electrification of fleet and target for buses and overall public transport," she added.

Also, there were no major

new major projects or schemes related to the environment announced in the budget apart from progress and completion of multiple ongoing projects.

Cleaning the Yamuna
The Minister said that the Yamuna can be cleaned in the next three years.

"Interceptor sewer project work is also nearly 99%

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LEGAL NOTICE

Proclamation under order 5, Rule 20 CPC.

In the Court of Jaswant Singh, Additional District Judge, Sirmour District at Nahan, HP.

Petition No.: 642-N/6 of 2018.

Instituted on : 22.10.2018.

Atma Ram S/o Sh. Kali Ram, R/o Village Kumbli, Sub-Tehsil Kamrau, (Now Tehsil Kamrau), District Sirmour, HP.

....Applicant Versus.

Madan Singh S/o Sh. Zalam Singh, R/o Village Kumbli, Tehsil Kamrau.

....Respondent.

Notice to the respondents:

R-20/Rattan Singh S/o Sh. Chetu,

R-21Guman Singh S/o Sh. Chetu,

R-22 Jagat Singh S/o Sh. Chetu,

All R/o Village Kumbli, Tehsil Kamrau, District Sirmour, HP.

R-25Meeno Devi W/o Sh. Layak Ram,

R-26 Suresh S/o Sh. Layak Ram,

R-27 Asha D/o Sh. Layak Ram,

R-28Sharmila D/o Sh. Layak Ram,

R-29 Rabina D/o Sh. Layak Ram,

R-30 Lalita D/o Sh. Layak Ram,

All R/o Village Haja, P.O. Haza Dasoi, Tehsil Chakrata, District Dehradun, U.K.

Application Under Order 5 Rule 20 CPC for the Service of Respondent.

Whereas in the above noted case, it has been proved to the satisfaction of this Court that the above named respondents No. 20 to 22 and 25 to 30 are avoiding the service of summons and cannot be served in the ordinary way. Hence, this proclamation under order 5 Rule 20 CPC is hereby, issued against respondent to appear in this Court on 13.05.2021, at 10:00 AM to defend the case personally or through an authorized agent or pleader, failing which ex parte proceedings shall be initiated against them.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Court on this 03rd day of March, 2021.

Seal Sd/-

Additional District Judge, Sirmour Distt. at Nahan, HP.

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The successful applicant will be a dynamic and experienced individual who is fluent in English and Hindi, and has well-developed policy research and social media promotional skills. For further information, see our website: www.irishembassy.in

PUBLIC NOTICE**NOTICE**

No.DUBA/Cons/434/MR/2021-(52)

DATED: 08/03/2021

Mr. Amit Kumar (late) Onirv Singh, R/o. H.NO. 1465, Sector 1, Vasai Chhabildas, Uttar Pradesh, 201010, Present Address 226, Laya Residences, JVC, Dubai, UAE and Miss Mallika Sharma Daughter of Mukesh Sharma, Residence of Flat No. BH 5C, DDA Flats Munirka, New Delhi - 110067, Present Address 702, Golden Sands, 11, Dubai UAE. Above mentioned Indian Nationals are presently residing in the UAE have given notice of intended marriage between them under the foreign marriages act, 1969. If any one has objection to the proposed marriage he/she should file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the act/rules within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice

Sd/-

(Jitender Singh Negi)

(Manager of Project)

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LEGAL NOTICE**Riots: court accepts closure report of SIT against Som**

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MUZAFFARNAGAR

A special court has accepted the closure report filed by a U.P. Police Special Investigation Team (SIT) against BJP MLA Sangeet Som in a case of uploading an inflammatory video on social media

ahead of the riots in 2013.

In his order issued on Monday, Special Judge Ram Sudh Singh said the complainant in the case, inspector Subhodh Kumar, has died and no objection has not been filed against the closure report.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY HEAVY WATER PLANT, TUTICORIN**NIT No. HWPT/MECH/803**

Name of work: "Supply and application of thermal insulation at HWPT". Estimated cost Rs. 1,42,69,000/- (Including GST @ 18%). Date of download of Tender document from 15.03.2021 to 07.04.2021. For more information and tendering, please visit www.tenderwizard.com/DAE or contact mm@ut.hwb.gov.in / subramaniam.r@gov.in. Tel: (0461)-2244503.

Director (Operation)

For & on behalf of the President of India

BRUHAT BANGALORE MAHANAGARA PALIKE

Office of the Executive Engineer, Hebbal Division, Bengaluru.

No: EE/HBL/TEND/PR/22/2020-21 Date:08.03.2021

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDERS (IFT)

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

The Executive Engineer, Hebbal Division invites Item Rate tenders on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP from eligible tenderers for the works detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Estimate Cost (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	Improvements to culverts rain water harvesting, drain improvement works in HMT Layout, Papanna Layout, 5th Main Road, and surrounding areas in Ward No. 20, Ganganagara.	95.00
2	Development of Kuvempu Botanical Garden, 5th Main Road, 11th Cross, 2nd Block, RT Nagar in Ward No. 46, JC Nagar (Annexure 6, SI. No.6)	100.00
3	Providing Renovation and other Improvements works to BBMP Maternity Hospital at Munirreddy Palya Main Road, in Ward No. 46, JC Nagar.	300.00

EMD Declaration : As per Commissioner order :

Commissioner/PR/E-9251/2020-21 dated : 30.01.2021.

1) Tender Documents may be downloaded from the e-procurement portal of GOK from 12.03.2021 onwards.

Pre bid meeting will be held on 15.03.2021 at 3.00 PM.

Last Date for uploading the Filled Tender Document is 24.03.2021 upto 16.00 Hrs.

4) Technical Bids will be opened on: 25.03.2021 at 4.30 PM (if possible).

5) Date of Opening of Financial bid is on 26.03.2021 @ 11.00 A.M. (if possible).

Further details, visit e-Procurement website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> or contact e-Procurement Helpdesk at 080-22485867 / 22485927.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Hebbal Division

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**ENTERPRISE CONNECT**

Enchanting Ladakh - A handloom & handicraft expo held at Dilli Haat in New Delhi

Enchanting Ladakh, a handloom and handicraft expo, at Dilli Haat in New Delhi was inaugurated by LG of Ladakh. Handloom and handicraft products from Ladakh are on display at the exhibition-cum-sale event. Enchanting Ladakh is an initiative of the Department of Industries, Ladakh to develop and promote handicrafts and handloom products of the region. As many as 76 artisans from different parts of Ladakh will display their products over the next two weeks at Dilli Haat. Pashmina, locally known as Lena, is sourced from the Changthang region of Ladakh, and a wide range of pashmina products such as shawls and jackets would be the highlight of the event. Potters from Likir village of Ladakh have put their clay pottery products on display, whereas artisans from Chilling village are showcasing metal crafts. Organic Lad

ASSEMBLY POLLS

DELI THE HINDU | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2021

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Wednesday: Thunderstorms with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	1.	31.0	23.2	Kozhikode	..	34.9	26.2
Ahmedabad	..	37.4	20.7	Kurnool	..	36.9	21.3
Aizawl	2.5	25.7	11.7	Lucknow	..	34.0	20.7
Allahabad	..	35.6	18.0	Madurai	..	35.8	24.2
Bengaluru	..	33.6	18.7	Mangaluru	..	35.7	21.8
Bhopal	..	36.9	16.4	Mumbai	..	35.0	22.0
Bhubaneshwar	..	36.4	21.4	Mysuru	..	34.0	15.0
Chandigarh	..	32.7	18.5	New Delhi	..	34.2	18.8
Chennai	..	33.5	25.0	Patna	..	32.8	18.8
Coimbatore	..	35.2	22.2	Port Blair	..	32.3	25.5
Dehradoon	..	31.8	13.8	Puducherry	..	33.0	23.4
Gangtok	1.6	17.2	9.3	Pune	..	36.6	18.7
Goa	..	33.3	24.2	Raipur	..	37.6	20.4
Guwahati	..	30.7	16.6	Ranchi	..	35.4	19.4
Hubballi	..	34.0	19.0	Shillong	..	21.3	11.5
Hyderabad	..	35.6	20.6	Shimla	..	24.8	12.3
Imphal	6	27.9	13.5	Srinagar	..	8.1	4.7
Jaipur	..	36.0	20.4	Tiruchirappalliy	1.2	33.9	26.1
Kochi	..	32.8	26.2	Vijayawada	..	35.8	24.0
Kohima	..	21.2	—	Visakhapatnam	..	35.0	22.8
Kolkata	..	34.1	23.6	(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)			

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	41	88	24	154	154	■■■■■
Bengaluru	..	41	20	55	67	■■■■■
Chennai	91	14	40	24	32	■■■■■
Delhi	33	40	45	341	351	■■■■■
Hyderabad	5	84	47	125	120	■■■■■
Kolkata	14	21	42	141	114	■■■■■
Lucknow	13	34	63	317	190	■■■■■
Mumbai	9	32	27	254	142	■■■■■
Pune	6	82	90	123	104	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	..	37	—	—	—	—

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■■ Moderate ■■■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.
NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.
PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 339 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 25

INC

BJP

AITC

CPI(M)

CPI

AIFB

SP

BSP

AAP

CPI(ML)(L)

IND

Others

Grand total

6,163

1,121

18%

833

14%

1,081

310

29%

238

22%

1,16 crore

1,04 crore

89.86 lakh

88.95 lakh

SOURCE: ADR and WBWE

ASHOK KUMAR

GURUGRAM

Farmers, khap leaders, social activists and members of various employees' and traders' unions on Tuesday held demonstrations outside the residences of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janayak Janta Party MLAs and the Independents across Haryana and handed over memorandums demanding to support the no-confidence motion against the government on March 10.

Senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, meanwhile, hit out at JJP, accusing it of selling farmer's interests for power. Mr. Surjewala said the whip issued by JJP, which directs its MLAs to oppose the 'no-confidence motion' clearly shows that JJP has betrayed the farmers.

The Congress in its whip said, "Members of CLP, Haryana, are informed that no-confidence motion had come because the BJP-JJP government had lost public confidence in the backdrop of controversial farm laws.

The Congress in its whip said, "All the members of the Bharatiya Janata Legislature Party are requested to remain present in the House throughout the 10th of March during the current budget session of Haryana Vidhan Sabha and should not leave the chamber without prior permission of the leader."

The whip, issued by par-

be brought in the Assembly on Wednesday, March 10. All members of JJP in the Assembly are therefore requested to be present positively in the House throughout the day on March 10 and support the stand of the government against the no-confidence motion."

Senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, meanwhile, hit out at JJP, accusing it of selling farmer's interests for power. Mr. Surjewala said the whip issued by JJP, which directs its MLAs to oppose the 'no-confidence motion' clearly shows that JJP has betrayed the farmers.

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The whip, issued by par-

ty is chief whip Kanwar Pal, added "Many important legislative matters are likely to come up for discussion. The members are requested to be present at the time of division voting."

Whips issued

The Janayak Janta Party also issued a whip. Its chief whip Amarjeet Dhandha said, "All JJP members of the Assembly are hereby informed that no-confidence against the Council of Ministers proposed by the Opposition will

Defections from TMC mar poll landscape

Moral victory, says Bharatiya Janata Party, while the Trinamool Congress terms it 'good riddance'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

The defection of 88-year-old four-time Trinamool Congress MLA from Singur Rabindranath Bhattacharya to the BJP could not have come at a worse time. Mr. Bhattacharya known as "master moshai (teacher)" is not only respected for his integrity, but he was also the face of the protests against forcible land acquisition at Singur for the Tata Nano small car project.

Mr. Bhattacharya said the TMC had "abandoned" him and he refused to buy the argument that he was denied



TMC leaders Sonali Guha (4th from right) and Sarala Murmu (2nd from right) joining BJP in Kolkatta on Monday. ■ FILE PHOTO

ticket because of his age. He was also upset that his political rival in the party, Becharam Manma, got a ticket from Singur and his wife Karabi Manma from nearby Haripal constituency.

Among the five MLAs who defected to the BJP was Sonali Guha, a close associate of Ms. Banerjee and four

time MLA from Satgachia Assembly seat.

The other defectors include former footballer Dikey Biswasa (Basirhat Dakshin), Jatu Lahiri (Shibpur) and Sital Sardar (Sankrail). These MLAs were denied tickets and they joined the BJP after the TMC list was announced.

For the BJP, defection has become a political tool, and any TMC leader joining the party is welcome. But the question is whether it will have any impact on the polls. Other than these five defections what stood out was the case of Sarala Murmu, who was given ticket from Habibpur in Malda but decided to switch to the BJP. An embarrassed TMC had to nominate a new candidate hours before Ms. Murmu joined BJP.

'Not much clout'

As far as the five MLAs are concerned, a section of political observers feels that these leaders do not wield much political clout. "Most of these five MLAs are a spent force and do not matter much. However as far as

the matter of perception goes, the BJP is trying to project that the TMC is disintegrating," political commentator Biswanath Chakraborty said. Prof. Chakraborty, who teaches political science at Rabindra Bharati University, said the 14 zilla parishad members from Malda who joined the BJP can influence the polls.

The TMC has also put a lot of emphasis on selection of candidates for the election and the only criteria considered was winnability. In that process, scores of sitting MLAs were denied tickets. While the BJP leadership is describing the development as a "moral victory" for the party, the TMC has described these defections as "good riddance".

Sonowal files nomination from Majuli

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP's key candidate, filed his nomination papers from the Majuli Assembly seat on Tuesday. He is seeking election from the 'island' constituency for the second time.

Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, party's chief poll strategist, ally AGP president Atul Bora and Union Minister Jitender Singh accompanied him to the office of Majuli's Deputy Commissioner Bikram Kairi.

His main opponent will be former Congress Minister Rajib Lochan Pegu, who represented Majuli for three consecutive terms from 2001 until 2016.

Money, muscle and mandate

An analysis of criminal and financial background of candidates and MPs/MLAs since 2004 in West Bengal undertaken by Association for Democratic Reforms and West Bengal Election Watch

CANDIDATES ANALYSED: 6,163	MPS/MLAS ANALYSED: 1,081	AVERAGE ASSETS OF CANDIDATES: ₹1.16 crore	AVERAGE ASSETS OF MPS/MLAS: ₹1.04 crore
CANDIDATES WITH CRIMINAL CASES: 1,121 (18%)	SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES: 833 (14%)	MPS/MLAS WITH CRIMINAL CASES: 310 (29%)	SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES: 238 (22%)

Party	No. of candidates analysed	No. of candidates with criminal cases	% of candidates with criminal cases	No. of candidates with serious criminal cases	% of candidates with serious criminal cases	No. of MPs/MLAs analysed	No. of MPs/MLAs with criminal cases	% MPs/MLAs with criminal cases	No. of MPs/MLAs with serious criminal cases	% MPs/MLAs with serious criminal cases	Average assets of candidates (₹)	Average assets of MPS/MLAs (₹)	Average assets of MPS/MLAs with criminal cases (₹)	Average assets of MPS/MLAs with serious criminal cases (₹)

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Fire wise

Safety training and technological fixes can cut the massive death toll from fires each year

Nearly all major Indian cities have a brush with destructive but often preventable accidental fires each year, leaving in their wake lost lives and destroyed property. The blaze in the Eastern Railway headquarters in Kolkata on the evening of March 8, which killed at least nine people, is particularly egregious because it took place in a modern multi-storeyed special building. What the preliminary account of the fire and its aftermath suggests is a textbook case of poor attention to fire safety basics and, possibly, the absence of robust fire mitigation technologies. Whatever the sequence of events, the unfortunate incident in the central part of a vibrant city has taken the lives of a group of first responders, including four firefighters, a police officer and some railway staff. Apparently anxious to intervene, a group of personnel lost sight of their own safety and tried to speed up to the top floor of the building in a lift, perishing in the fire and smoke. The computerised booking system of the railway was paralysed. It has been a difficult start to the new year for Kolkata, with an inferno in the Baghbazar area destroying a vast slum, triggering violent protests. A return to normality will obviously take a lot of remedial work, although prioritising fire safety will have to wait for the frenetic election campaign there to end.

Every instance of fire brings to the fore the problem of adopting an incremental approach to safety. The building blocks of safety rely as much on modern technologies, as on preparedness, although Indian cities give short shrift to both. Official certifications that are not worth the paper they are printed on substitute for actual enforcement. Using the Kolkata railway building as a test case, the Centre should report on whether it met the fire safety norms prescribed in the National Building Codes. For instance, smoke alarms and sprinkler systems are an inexpensive early warning and intervention measure, but are not universally adopted. The recent tragedy also presents an occasion to review the progress of the Model Bill of 2019 to Provide for the Maintenance of Fire and Emergency Services of a State, which aimed at modernisation. Considering that the death toll from accidental fires, as per NCRB data for 2019, stands at a staggering 10,915, there is every reason to make a fire safety upgrade for public buildings a mission mode plan. Bringing such structures under the purview of public liability insurance, paid for by the respective departments, will provide enough incentive for their occupants to incorporate safety in all planning, and involve third party audits. Equally, drills for offices and multi-storeyed residential buildings will eliminate uncertainty and confusion among people on what must be done when disaster actually strikes. Safety favours only those who are prepared.

Enduring greatness

Djokovic seems ready to chase down records in men's tennis held by Federer and Nadal

Among the Big Three in men's tennis, Novak Djokovic has been the least appreciated by fans and followers. If Roger Federer's wizardry has elevated the sport to unseen levels aesthetically, Rafael Nadal's rugged artistry has stretched it to athletic extremes. Djokovic's elastic genius has straddled the space in between and has at times been offset by his on-court demeanour and grinding style of play. But on Monday, when the 33-year-old embarked upon a record 31st week at the top of the ATP singles rankings, going past Federer, Djokovic served yet another reminder of his enduring greatness. The run is not as much about his longevity as it is about his utter domination of the decade gone by. Federer first reached the top in 2004 and Nadal in 2008. But since the time the Serb first scaled the peak – on July 4, 2011 – the celebrated duo has occupied pole position for just 132 weeks (Nadal 107, Federer 25). All but one of Djokovic's 18 Grand Slam titles have come in the 10-year span starting with the 2011 Australian Open. Federer accumulated four during the same period, and Nadal 11, of which eight were at the French Open. Remarkably, Djokovic has overcome Federer or Nadal in 13 of the 18 Slams he has won and it will come as no surprise if Djokovic emerges with the most Majors, going past Federer's and Nadal's all-time record tally of 20.

Beyond statistics, a case can be made for Djokovic to be the most complete player of this era. His game, built on fleet-footed movement, a flat stroke, depth off both wings and a solid serve, is just about perfect for modern-day all-court tennis. Over the years, this combination has been chiselled to perfection, making him the pre-eminent force not just on the hard courts at Melbourne and New York, where he has a combined 12 crowns, but even on the hallowed grass at Wimbledon, where he has triumphed in five of the last nine editions, Federer's grass-court majesty notwithstanding. Djokovic may not have replicated the same level of success against Nadal on clay – as the 2020 Roland Garros defeat showed – but he has been the Spaniard's greatest challenger. "At a technical level, when Djokovic has been at the top of his game, I've been up against an invincible player," Nadal once acknowledged. There have been blips; between his first two Majors (2008-2011) Djokovic's game stagnated, and for two years after winning the 2016 French Open, he was in wilderness. But both times he returned to vintage form: ruthless and untouchable. Recently, Djokovic had seemed slightly tetchy and nervous against the 'Next Gen' players Dominic Thiem and Daniil Medvedev. But as the comprehensive victory over the latter in the 2021 Australian Open final showed, Djokovic's mask of invincibility is far from cracking.

Target judicial patriarchy, not the judge

The controversy over the CJ's recent remarks should lead to greater gender sensitivity in observations and judgments



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

A survey by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2018 had rated India as the most dangerous country for women. According to a National Crime Records Bureau report (2019) as many as 32,032 rapes were reported in 2019 – or 88 incidents of rape a day. Every hour, 39 instances of crime against women including four instances of rape are committed in India. Reported rape cases have increased by 88% over a decade. Four lakh cases of crimes against women were reported in 2019 (<https://reut.rs/2OD76xi>).

Gender insensitivity

The recent observations by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), S.A. Bobde, while granting bail to a government servant who is accused of repeated rape and torture of a 16-year-old child have been widely criticised though the Chief Justice of India has now denied having suggested marriage to the rape accused. To be fair to the head of India's judiciary, not only was the question possibly raised due to the record before him in accordance with the powers of judges under Section 165 of Indian Evidence Act, 1872 to ask any question but he also did promptly realise the sensitivity involved and quickly corrected himself by saying, 'we are not forcing you to marry the victim'. The worrisome issue is that legally speaking, rape is not even a compoundable offence and parties are not allowed to enter into compromise. Seeking an apology from the Chief Justice of India is not appropriate; however, South African Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng was recently directed by the Judicial Conduct Committee to apologise unconditionally for making pro-Israeli comments in a webinar.

The real problem is that such avoidable utterances reflect the patriarchal mindset of our judges and the larger society. These statements demonstrate our gender insensitivity. While today the Chief Justice of India is being criticised from all over, let us remember that there have been several orders and judgments by Indian judges in the past which have done huge disservice to gender justice. Accordingly, the innocent question by the Chief Justice of India ("When two people are living as husband and wife, however brutal the husband is, can the act of intercourse between them be called rape?") is neither the first nor the last instance.

Here, in this instance, the man had married the victim at a temple and subsequently refused to recognise her as wife and married another woman. The accused had allegedly caused injuries to the private parts of the woman, yet was granted bail. Here again, what the Chief Justice of India said was similar to the Modi government's affidavit, in 2017, in the Delhi High Court. The RSS too had opposed marital rape being made a crime. Interestingly, the Justice J.S. Verma Committee (2013), which was constituted after the Delhi gang rape (2012) had said that rape should be viewed not as an infringement of a woman's chastity or virginity but a violation of her bodily integrity and sexual autonomy. This autonomy cannot be permanently lost by entering into marriage. Rape remains rape irrespective of the relationship.

In the higher judiciary

Let us look at similar observations by other judges to understand the patriarchal attitude of judges. A few years ago, the top court orally asked a convict who had molested a girl 10 years ago to fall at her feet and that if she forgave him, the Court too would limit his sentence of imprisonment to the period already undergone. In its June 22, 2020 order while granting advance bail to the rape accused, Justice Krishna S. Dixit of the Karnataka



High Court asked why 'the victim had gone to her office at night'; why had she 'not objected to consuming drinks with him'. He further observed that 'the explanation offered by the complainant that after the perpetration of the act, she was tired and fell asleep is unbecoming of Indian women; that is not the way our women react when they are ravished'. After a hue and cry, the judge expunged this controversial statement on July 2, 2020. The Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court, in a strange ruling, had ordered that the sentence of the 'rape convict can be cut if he agrees to pay ₹1 lakh to the victim'. Of course, the poor victim accepted the offer. In another case, the Bombay High Court had ordered that breaking a promise of marriage is neither cheating nor rape. Here, the victim had filed for divorce from her husband to marry the accused. Justice Mridul Bharkar granted bail to the accused observing that 'it is an unfortunate case of frustrated love affair'. The Madras High Court had granted bail to a rape accused so that he could mediate with the victim. The Supreme Court had to quickly intervene to get the bail cancelled.

The Bhanwari Devi case

Who can forget the shocking decision in *Bhanwari Devi* (1995); she was gang-raped in 1992. The acquittal order by the Rajasthan court gave absurd reasons such as a higher caste man cannot rape a lower caste woman for reasons of purity; her husband could not have watched his wife being raped; men who are 60-70 years old cannot commit rape and one relative cannot commit rape in front of another relative. It has

been 25 years but the appeal against such a bizarre judgment has not been disposed of.

Even in other matters about women, a few of our judges at times demonstrate our society's attitude toward women. A 2020 judgment from the Guwahati High Court treated refusal of applying sindoor (vermillion) and wearing conch shell bangles (*shaka*) as sufficient basis to grant divorce to the husband. A few years ago, the Madras High Court gave an absurd order by directing that 'divorcees too should maintain sexual purity to claim alimony'. Even a progressive judge like Justice M. Katju in *D. Velusamy vs D. Patchaiammal* (2010) had termed a second Hindu wife as a 'mistress' and 'keep', and thus not entitled to maintenance.

In *Narendra vs K. Meena* (2016), the top court held that under Hindu traditions, a wife on marriage is supposed to fully integrate herself with her husband's family and that if she refuses to live with her in-laws, it would amount to cruelty and the husband would be entitled to divorce her under the Hindu Marriage Act. The High Court had ruled in favour of the wife.

But the Supreme Court reversed the High Court's order, observing that 'in India, generally people do not subscribe to the western thought, where, upon getting married or attaining majority, the son gets separated from the family. In normal circumstances, a wife is expected to be with the family of the husband after the marriage. She becomes integral to and forms part of the family of the husband'. Interestingly, though, the wife is an integral part of her husband's family, yet she is not a coparcener under the Hindu Succession Act. The Court also used Indian and Hindu ethos interchangeably without realising that under Muslim Personal Law, a wife has an absolute right to demand separate residence for herself.

In *Rajesh Sharma vs The State Of Uttar Pradesh* (2017), a two-judge Bench of Justices Adarsh Kumar Goel and Uday Umesh Lalit in yet another controversial order ob-

served that there should be no automatic arrests on charges of cruelty. In this case, a demand of dowry was made for ₹3 lakh and a car, which the wife's family was not able to meet. The pregnant wife was sent to her house, where she experienced trauma and her pregnancy was terminated. She was allegedly tortured, as noted by the lower court. An offence under Section 498A is non-bailable and non-compoundable so that the victim is not pressured into a compromise. And it is cognisable in that a police officer can make an arrest without a warrant from the court. The court did not hesitate in issuing a number of directions in favour of the accused – no arrest should normally be effected till the newly constituted Family Welfare Committee submitted its report; personal appearance of accused and out-station family members need not be insisted upon; bail application should be decided the same day. In 2017, the court decided to review this judgment.

And in 'Hadiya'

In the infamous Hadiya (2017) case too, some of the observations of the Kerala High Court about Hadiya's independent agency and powers of her father over her were equally shocking and patriarchal. Even though the Supreme Court in 2018 upheld the validity of her marriage and overruled the High Court's strange judgment, the fact is that the top court's order of investigation by the National Investigation Agency into the matter of marriage of two adults was absolutely erroneous.

One hopes the controversy now will lead to greater gender sensitivity by our judges, at least in their oral observations and questions, if not the final judgments. It would be better to target patriarchy rather than the Chief Justice of India. Of course the power to ask questions too must reflect gender sensitivity.

Faizan Mustafa is Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. The views expressed are personal

Ploughing a new furrow in the agri-regulatory system

Change is needed as Indian farmers face constraints, and as world agriculture will now rely on middle-income countries



STHANU R NAIR

The intense debates around the recently enacted farm laws have brought to light the issue of developing a sound regulatory framework to promote India's agricultural growth – and in keeping pace with the changing times. While the country is divided on the need for the three new farm laws, the fact remains that farmers, mainly smallholders, across India continue to face various constraints in carrying out farming activities. They include constraints in accessing agricultural inputs, markets, finance, human resources, and information, which are critical for increasing farmers' competitiveness.

Role for the government

The existing institutional set up that controls farm production often fails to ease these constraints. A way out of this problem is to develop a suitable regulatory system that would enable farmers to overcome their constraints. Governments can play a critical role in this regard by enacting laws and regulations that influence farmers' access to agricultural inputs, cost of production, farmers' participa-

tion in agricultural markets and value chains, the competitiveness of farmers, and private investment in the farming sector.

Where does India stand on this front in comparison to other countries? A recent publication by the World Bank titled Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) 2019 provides some interesting insights on this question (<https://bit.ly/3ab98FO>). Based on eight indicators, the EBA measures the extent to which government regulatory systems in 101 countries worldwide make it easier for their farmers to operate agricultural activities. The indicators are supplying seed, registering fertilizer, securing water, registering machinery, sustaining livestock, protecting plant health, trading food, and accessing finance. These indicators measure the strength of a country's agricultural regulatory environment pertaining to market integration and entrepreneurship in agriculture. The EBA is akin to the Doing Business project of the World Bank, which ranks the ease of doing business in countries.

India's poor standing

Among 101 countries covered, India ranked 49 on the EBA aggregate score. France, Croatia, and the Czech Republic are the three top-ranking countries. Among emerging groups of 20 (EG 20) countries, India has the second least favourable regulatory environment for farming activities af-



ter South Africa. Turkey is the top-performing country among EG 20 countries, followed by Argentina, Brazil, the Russian Federation, Mexico and China.

Notably, India lags behind its close competitors in world agriculture, namely China, Brazil, and the Russian Federation (<https://bit.ly/3aj3wJl>). Compared to these three countries, India has the weakest performance on five out of eight indicators. They are registering fertilizer and machinery, securing water, sustaining livestock, and protecting plant health indicators. Registering fertilizer and machinery indicators measure domestic laws and regulations that provide farmers access to fertilizer and agricultural machinery. The regulatory processes that help farmers make appropriate decisions regarding the level of investment in irrigation are measured by securing water indicator. Sustaining livestock indicator captures the quality of regulations affecting farmers' access to livestock farming inputs. The quality of legislation on phytosanitary standards (SPS) is captured through the pro-

tecting plant health indicator.

Inadequate access to quality agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, water, and mechanical power can cause productivity loss, higher cost of food production and uncertainty, and lower capacity of farmers to produce surpluses, adopt new plant varieties and accept new opportunities to improve their income.

The regulatory system that governs irrigation management is essential for reducing the variability of farm output, prices, and incomes, minimising vulnerability to natural shocks, and incentivising the production of riskier and high returns crops. Gaining access to the global agricultural value chain requires a sound regulatory framework on SPS. For instance, thanks to active involvement by the SPS authority, namely National Agricultural Health Service (SENASA-Peru), Peru had become one of the world's leading exporters of asparagus.

Seed supply

The comparative score of India on supplying seed, trading food, and accessing finance indicators is high. Supplying seed indicator evaluates laws and regulations that ensure timely release of seed to farmers. A robust seed supply system is required for improving yield and adopting new crop varieties. The trading food indicator assesses laws and regulations that facilitate exporting of farm products

by farmers. The regulatory framework on the use of warehouse receipts is assessed using accessing finance indicator. A robust warehouse receipts system enables the farmers to obtain the credit needed to invest in agriculture. Warehouse receipt operators accept deposits of crops and provide warehouse receipts to farmers as evidence of deposited crops. By using warehouse receipts as collateral, farmers can receive credit.

The EBA project results reveal that, compared to its close competitors, the strength of India's agricultural regulatory environment is weak on the whole and with respect to key performance indicators.

The future of world agriculture and food production is expected to increasingly depend on middle-income countries such as China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia, just like the high-income countries dictating the fortunes of global agriculture in the past five decades (<https://bit.ly/3ryDOcL>).

To make the best use of this great opportunity, India needs to put in place an agricultural regulatory system that would make it easier for its farmers to conduct agricultural activities, thereby improving their productivity, competitiveness, and income.

Sthanu R Nair is Professor of Economics, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Vaccination drive

Many readers have mentioned in their letters their smooth experience in the COVID-19 vaccination process, especially in Chennai and Kerala. However, our attempt to get vaccinated in Bengaluru has still to materialise. We booked a slot in the afternoon, at a health centre near my house in Basavangudi. When we went there, we found 20 people waiting and a small queue at the registration table. A staff member came over and asked us what we wanted. When we showed him the SMS we had received, his reply was that

they would finish all offline registrations first and then move to online. So, why have online registrations at all? We then went to a private nursing home. There were about 10 to 12 persons there, standing around the registration table. There was no distancing in either place.

G. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

I am 85 and my wife 75. We walked into a corporate hospital (Annanagar) without prior registration for our vaccination on March 6. At the desk they asked for my Aadhaar card and mobile number, ₹250 for each and

asked us to go up to the first floor with our token numbers. Since we could not climb the stairs, a nurse came down and vaccinated us with Covishield behind a mobile screen. We were told to wait for 30 minutes, and during this time, the hospital officials gave us the necessary certificates. No forms were filled, no medical examination was carried out and all procedures were over in 20 minutes. We have had no adverse reaction so far.

RAM GULRAJANI,
Chennai

I am a senior citizen and went to a hospital (Mudichur road, Old Perungalathur),

where the staff asked senior citizens whether they were under medication for any disease. If the answer was in the affirmative, we were charged ₹200 as the doctor's consultation fees. But no consultation or check up was carried out by any doctor. Thus, the cost of going to the hospital rose to ₹450. I was vaccinated on March 6. The Health Department needs to stop some hospitals from profiteering.

G. RAJAVEE,
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where the staff asked senior citizens whether they were under medication for any disease. If the answer was in the affirmative, we were charged ₹200 as the doctor's consultation fees. But no consultation or check up was carried out by any doctor. Thus, the cost of going to the hospital rose to ₹450. I was vaccinated on March 6. The Health Department needs to stop some hospitals from profiteering.

G. RAJAVEE,
Chennai

I am a senior citizen and went to a hospital (Mudichur road, Old Perungalathur),

political battle for power (Editorial, March 9). But the fact is that elections in this State have always been violent. If, in the past, it was the Left Front and the Congress and later the Trinamool Congress that unleashed violence on each other, this time around, the hostility between the TMC and the BJP has been framed in terms of 'Bengali regionalism' and 'Hindu nationalism', respectively. To put it straight, it is a fierce fight between 'B

Quad: strategic opportunity or quagmire?

The grouping neither shares a strategic vision nor is it animated by a shared agenda



TALMIZ AHMAD

On March 5, the Indian media carried news reports, based on remarks by Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, that the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, known briefly as Quad, would soon meet at summit level, thus signalling the importance attached to this grouping by the Biden administration. The Quad, which comprises the U.S., Japan, Australia and India, had in February been described by the U.S. State Department as having "essential momentum and important potential".

India's engagement with the Quad goes back to China's expanding footprint in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region over the last few years. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, proposing logistical connectivity across Eurasia and the Indian Ocean, rang alarm bells in India as the projects were viewed as encroachments into India's strategic space. India responded with an upgradation of its naval capabilities and enhancement of ties with the Indian Ocean Region littoral states and other major powers in the region.

Separately, largely as a result of their shared concerns relating to the rise of China, India has been deepening its security ties with the U.S. Building on the initiatives of earlier administrations, the Obama and Trump presidencies focused on interoperability of defence equipment and training based on defence purchases, frequent land and sea exercises, and agreements harmonising the two countries' military doctrines and operations.

India in the Quad

The U.S.'s focus on the west Pacific due to aggressive Chinese maritime activity gradually pulled India into the ambit of the Indo-Pacific that views the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean as an integrated geopolitical space. Besides the U.S. navy, India expanded its maritime ties with other regional states, the most high-profile of the interactions being the Quad. Since November 2017, the joint naval exercises of Quad mem-



Indian Army fighter jets on the deck of an aircraft carrier during the second phase of the Malabar naval exercise in the Arabian Sea on November 18, 2020. India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. started the second phase of a strategic navy drill on November 17. *AFP

bers are being supplemented by extensive consultations on security issues.

However, India's involvement with the Quad was initially cautious due to its reluctance to join an overt anti-China coalition. For instance, at the Shangri La Dialogue in June 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the Indo-Pacific as a "geographical definition" and firmly denied it was a "strategy" or a "club of limited members ... directed against any country". Despite this, in September 2019, India agreed to elevate the Quad platform to ministerial level.

This had dire consequences. By affiliating with the U.S.-led maritime coalition, India ignored the principal areas of its security concerns; as former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon noted, "New Delhi and Washington see eye to eye on maritime strategy, but not on what to do on the Asian mainland". India is the only Quad member that is not in the west Pacific and the only one that shares an undemarcated 3,500-km land border with China. From April 2020, Indian and Chinese forces had their latest border face-off in Ladakh, abruptly ending a long period of productive relations.

Ties with China

In retrospect, this confrontation ap-

pears to be China's sharp response to the steady shift in India's regional posture in favour of an alignment with the U.S. and its allies against China, particularly the increasing interoperability between the respective forces. China has given India a rude reminder that India's security concerns lie in its northern borders, not the west Pacific.

The U.S. views China's rise as a threat to the world order it has led since the Second World War and is anxious to pull in allies to retard China's ambitions and maintain its global hegemony. Despite rhetoric relating to the promotion of a 'rules-based' world order (the rules being most frequently violated by the U.S. itself), the Quad neither shares a strategic vision nor is it animated by a shared agenda. This is obvious not only from its inability to deter China in the west Pacific, but also by its members' anxiety to maintain close ties with China.

Thus, in 2020 China became India's number one trade partner, with two-way trade at \$77 billion. Again, China-U.S. trade continues to favour China – American investors hold \$1 trillion of Chinese equity, and 75% of U.S. companies in China say they will continue to invest there.

The Quad has a core structural problem as well in that it pivots around the U.S. The U.S. is a super-

power with global interests, but it is also self-centred in defining and pursuing its interests, even as its policies experience major shifts due to government change or domestic lobbies. Clearly, the Quad riles China as a hostile grouping, but hardly serves the security interests of its members.

Resetting alignments, policies

Not surprisingly, the stand-off at Ladakh has been a bitter experience for India: it has affirmed the limits of India-U.S. security ties, the folly of Indian involvement in the Quad, and the need to focus national attention and resources in areas of abiding interest for India – the border, the neighbours and the Indian Ocean.

Ladakh also offers some valuable lessons for India. One, the rebuilding of ties with China will have to be a priority concern. Though it will take time for trust to be restored, what will help will be for India to dilute its focus on the Indo-Pacific and the Quad and accept that the borders and the Indian Ocean are where its crucial interests lie.

Two, the Ladakh experience has highlighted certain deficiencies at home: the government appears to be largely focused on reshaping the national ethos on the basis of a narrow and exclusive political ideology that has raised doubts about India's continued commitment to democratic pluralism. It hardly needs reiteration that India's capacities can only be built by a united people committed to the national cause.

Finally, foreign policy cannot be a part-time concern of the national leadership; in terms of priority and attention, it should be on a par with domestic affairs. While this approach is being corrected, it should also be noted that India's foreign policy has often been ad hoc, reactive and short term, reflecting the absence of a broad strategic culture. As the global scenario gets more complex and India's ambitions increase, a cohesive strategic vision would give substance and drive to India's pursuit of its interests over the long term.

Ladakh offers a clear blueprint for the content and direction of national policy. Implementing it will ensure that the martyrdom of our soldiers in the northern snows would not have been in vain.

Talmiz Ahmad served as Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE

Karunanidhi's defiance

How the DMK stalwart confronted Emergency excesses



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

The political career of Muthuvel Karunanidhi (1924-2018) lasted for eight decades. He took over the reins of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in 1969 and remained its leader until his death in 2018. Through the retelling of the life of the DMK stalwart in Karunanidhi: A Life, the author also gives an insight into the workings of the modern Indian state". An excerpt:

Realising the way the Union government was zeroing in on the DMK [after Indira Gandhi declared the Emergency in 1975], M. Karunanidhi instructed his party cadres not to slacken their political work and to conduct both ward-level as well as district-level party meetings without fail. K. Ambazhagan, who became the treasurer of the party after MGR's exit, ensured that at least one political event was held in every district of the State. The theme of these political meetings was the restoration of democracy.

Ladakh also offers some valuable lessons for India. One, the rebuilding of ties with China will have to be a priority concern. Though it will take time for trust to be restored, what will help will be for India to dilute its focus on the Indo-Pacific and the Quad and accept that the borders and the Indian Ocean are where its crucial interests lie.

Two, the Ladakh experience has highlighted certain deficiencies at home: the government appears to be largely focused on reshaping the national ethos on the basis of a narrow and exclusive political ideology that has raised doubts about India's continued commitment to democratic pluralism. It hardly needs reiteration that India's capacities can only be built by a united people committed to the national cause.

Finally, foreign policy cannot be a part-time concern of the national leadership; in terms of priority and attention, it should be on a par with domestic affairs. While this approach is being corrected, it should also be noted that India's foreign policy has often been ad hoc, reactive and short term, reflecting the absence of a broad strategic culture. As the global scenario gets more complex and India's ambitions increase, a cohesive strategic vision would give substance and drive to India's pursuit of its interests over the long term.

Ladakh offers a clear blueprint for the content and direction of national policy. Implementing it will ensure that the martyrdom of our soldiers in the northern snows would not have been in vain.

Novel protest
For some strange reason, Indira Gandhi ordered the arrest of people close to Karunanidhi but not his arrest. The Central government cut off the telephone lines at Karunanidhi's home, and at the offices of the DMK and Murasoli. The Army was called to carry out flag marches to instil fear and to curb protests. Within three hours of the dismissal, a posse of policemen landed at Karu-

nanidhi's place and wanted to arrest his son M.K. Stalin. This news sent shock waves through Karunanidhi's family because Stalin had got married recently and his wife was expecting. Stalin, who was travelling, returned to Madras the next day and was arrested and lodged in Madras Central Jail. Within three days, the police arrested Murasoli Maran.

The police were refusing to release the names of the cadres arrested and the party was desperate to have a list of those picked up by the police. The excesses committed by the police in north India added not only an element of fear but also a sense of helplessness. Since 1969, Karunanidhi had led a special homage meeting for Anna on February 3 at the Anna Memorial, which he continued. The meeting was usually attended by all the

DMK leaders and volunteers. As the new press censor rules did not permit the media to release the names of those who were arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), Karunanidhi found a novel way to do this. He made a note of all those partymen who did not come to the Anna Memorial to pay homage, as they most probably had been arrested, and published the list.

By May 1976, censorship had become more stringent, and even the mention of Anna's name was not permitted by the authorities. Karunanidhi wrote a series critically assessing the Emergency and got it printed as a pamphlet in a friend's press. He also got another notice printed that he would launch an 'Arappor' (A peaceful struggle) on June 2, which would start with a procession from Anna Salai and end with a fast in front of the censor's office. On the appointed day, he started marching from near the U.S. Consul General's office towards the Anna statue, distributing the 'Arappor' pamphlet. This walk of less than 3 kilometres, not only attracted the attention of the people but also galvanised the party cadres who had not been arrested, to assemble in the heart of the city. According to Selvam, though the police arrested the participants and the struggle came to an end in four hours, that defiance remains the lone public protest against the Emergency in India.

But Karunanidhi's biggest journalistic defiance was the publication of a cartoon panel. Chellappan, one of the finest cartoonists of Tamil Nadu, created a panel called 'Metamorphosis', featuring Indira Gandhi slowly being transformed into Hitler. While this cartoon was republished in the magazine *NewswEEK*, the government did not permit any of Chellappan's cartoons to appear till the revocation of the Emergency.

Excerpted with permission from Penguin Random House

In need of full-time heads

Many Central forces are functioning without regular chiefs, which could impact their efficiency

M.P. NATHANAL

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), with a strength of 3.5 lakh, is headless following the previous incumbent Dr. A.P. Maheshwari's superannuation on February 28, 2021. The Special Director General, Kuldeep Singh, is holding charge until a regular officer is appointed.

Saddled with additional duties

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been without a head since February 3 when R.K. Shukla retired on completion of his two-year term. Until a Director is selected after due procedure and clearance by a committee headed by the Prime Minister, the Additional Director, Praveen Sinha, will hold the fort. Common Cause, an NGO, has since filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court seeking the appointment of a regular CBI Director through the high-powered selection committee of the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition.

Consequent to his taking over as Director General of the Border Security Force (BSF) in August last year, Rakesh Asthana should have been relieved of his charge of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) that he had been heading prior to his appointment to the BSF. But for reasons best known to the powers that be, the Gujarat cadre officer continues to hold additional charge of the NCB. The BSF is the second largest force in the country after the CRPF. It is unfair to saddle him with additional charge of another organisation when the force he is heading is constantly at loggerheads with the Pakistani Army and militants along the borders and is even combating militants in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast.

The elite National Security Guard too is without a regular Director General for nearly six months. After the retirement of the previous incumbent, the Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Surjeet Singh Deswal, took over the reins of this specialised outfit. This force comprising personnel from the Army and the Central Armed Police Forces comes into action in times of crisis such as during the Mumbai attacks of

2008. It is also entrusted with the responsibility of providing security to certain high-risk personalities.

The lone research and training organisation for the police forces of the country, the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), too, is functioning without a regular Director General. The former incumbent, V.S.K. Kaumudi, has been the Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Ministry of Home Affairs since August last year. He continues to hold the additional charge of the BPR&D.

What can be done

The fact that so many Central forces are without regular heads speaks of the kind of importance attached to these organisations. Though they play a pivotal role in maintaining internal security, there doesn't seem to be much seriousness in posting the right kind of officers with not only the required skill and experience but also the time. This has an adverse impact on the efficiency of these forces. Officers holding provisional charge shy away from taking major policy decisions and prefer to leave such matters to the next person in charge.

There must be several aspirants to these top posts. But they have to wait for the final orders for months on end. Since most appointees to the top posts are at the fag end of their service, they are left with just a few months or a year or so to head these organisations. There is little they can do within their short tenures.

The government of the day could consider announcing the next chief of these organisations at least three months in advance with a minimum tenure of two years or till superannuation, whichever is later. Preferably, those considered for these posts should be from among the officers who have served in these organisations earlier. A panel of officers cleared by the Union Public Service Commission could always be kept ready and the officers for the top posts could be chosen from this panel. This will go a long way in speeding up decisions and enhancing the efficiency of these forces.

M.P. Nathanael is Inspector General of Police (Retd), CRPF



DATA POINT

Vaccine progress report

After a relatively slow vaccination rate during the first phase of India's COVID-19 inoculation campaign, the pace has picked up during the second phase. However, despite the improved rate, India will achieve only 45% of the target of 400 million doses by July 31, as announced by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan. Also, the pace of vaccination is not uniform across States. Some States such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh have performed poorly in both phases compared to the national average. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Naresh Singaravelu and Sumanth Sen

1. TARGET VS. ACTUAL | From over 3.3 lakh doses per day in phase 1, the vaccination rate has tripled to 10.9 lakh doses per day in phase 2. At the phase 1 rate, India would have achieved only 16.5% of the target of 400 million doses by July 31, as envisaged. At the phase 2 rate, India would achieve 45% of the target. The rate has to be increased to 25.9 lakh doses per day in the remaining days to reach the target.

2. STATE OF PLAY | The vaccination rates in States such as Punjab, Bihar, Jharkhand, U.P., M.P., and Telangana have remained lower than the Indian average in both phases. In States such as T.N. and Uttarakhand, the rates were lower than the Indian average in phase 1, but improved in phase 2. Rates in States such as Karnataka and Haryana were better in phase 1, but worsened in the phase 2. The table shows doses administered per 1 lakh people during two comparable periods across the two phases: P1 (Feb. 20 to Feb. 27) and P2 (Mar. 1 to Mar. 8). For instance T.N. administered 123 doses per lakh people in phase 1 and 663 per lakh people in phase 2.

Phases	Doses/day	Target achieved
Phase 1 pace (Jan 16-Feb 27)	3,32,588	6,58,52,341
Phase 2 pace (Mar 1-Mar 8)	10,88,433	18,08,31,572
Ideal pace (Mar 9-July 31)	25,99,940	40,00,00,000

3. PACE PICKS UP | The table shows the doses administered per 100 people among select nations at the end of 10 days (T1), 20 days (T2), and so on, from the first day of vaccination. India administered 1.7 doses per 100 people by the end of T5 (50 days). While India's pace has picked up well in the latest period, it is still slow compared to many other high-burden nations.

4. INDIA'S POSITION | India's vaccination rate is currently 10.9 lakh doses per day, which is lower than the global average of 12.5 lakh doses per day.

P1: Lower than avg.	P2: Higher than Indian average
Assam: 188; Bihar: 73; Gujarat: 223; H.P.: 209; Jharkhand: 136; M.P.: 221; Punjab: 205; T.N.: 123; Telangana: 137; U.P.: 141; Uttarakhand: 236	A.P.: 373; Arunachal: 553; Chhattisgarh: 287; Delhi: 674; Goa: 369; Haryana: 241; J&K: 460; Karnataka: 283; Kerala: 458; Maharashtra: 280; Manipur: 490; Meghalaya: 280; Mizoram: 902; Nagaland: 508; Odisha: 255; Rajasthan: 281; Sikkim: 957; Tripura: 457; W.B.: 461
P1: Lower than avg.	P2: Higher than Indian average
A.P.: 400; Bihar: 376; Jharkhand: 320; Karnataka: 291; M.P.: 435; Meghalaya: 467; Nagaland: 458; Punjab: 326; Telangana: 352; U.P.: 187	Arunachal: 1,056; Assam: 622; Chhattisgarh: 877; Delhi: 1,005; Goa: 1,662; Gujarat: 1,469; H.P.: 769; J&K: 800; Kerala: 1,529; Maharashtra: 605; Manipur: 717; Mizoram: 1,345; Odisha: 631; Rajasthan: 1,638; Sikkim: 2,083; T.N.: 663; Tripura: 819; Uttarakhand: 938; W.B.: 6

FROM PAGE ONE

Uttarakhand CM Rawat resigns

Several names are making the rounds as his likely successor, including Education Minister Dhan Singh Rawat, Satpal Maharaj, and MPs Anil Baluni and Ajay Bhat. Of these, Mr. Dhan Singh Rawat's name has the support of the outgoing Chief Minister as well, according to those in the know.

Sources in the BJP said that Mr. Trivendra Singh Rawat's successor was likely to be another Rajput leader, rather than a Brahmin, as the Congress was being led by former Chief Minister Harish Rawat and political

and caste equations were delicate at this point, barely months away from the Assembly polls. Rajputs constitute around 27% of the electorate and Brahmins around 11%.

While changing a Chief Minister so late in his term is not usually the norm in the BJP, the party's experience in Jharkhand, where refusal to change Raghubar Das, another unpopular Chief Minister, before the polls, had led to a rebellion in the party ranks and the BJP's subsequent defeat in the Assembly polls.

Over 72% rise in UAPA cases registered in 2019

Under the UAPA, getting bail is rare and the investigating agency has up to 180 days to file a charge sheet.

In a separate reply, the Minister said: "After abrogation of Article 370, the number of terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir have reduced significantly."

The data provided shows that in J&K, 244 terrorist incidents were reported and 221 terrorists killed in 2020, while in 2019, the numbers were 594 and 157 respectively. Till February 28 this year,

there were 15 incidents and eight terrorists killed.

The government had declared 42 organisations as terrorist organisations and listed their names in the First Schedule of the UAPA, the Minister said and added that "terrorism in India has largely been sponsored from across the border."

Earlier, a reply by the government in the Lok Sabha shows that only 2.2% of cases registered under the UAPA between 2016-2019 ended in convictions by court.

SC questions delay in setting up regulator

In that order, the court had explained the need for an independent regulatory mechanism, saying the "identification of an area as forest area is solely based on the declaration to be filed by the user agency [project proponent]. The project proponent under the existing dispensation is required to undertake EIA by an expert body/institution".

The court had made it clear that till such mechanism was put in place, the Environment Ministry (MoEF) "should prepare a panel of accredited institutions from which alone the project proponent should obtain the Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and, that too, on the Terms of Reference to be formulated by the MoEF".

Panel flags Centre's meagre pensions



A wait for pensions in Bhubaneswar. ■ BISWARANJAN ROUT

The panel also pulled up the DoRD for delays and disparities in the payment of wages and unemployment allowances under the flagship MGNREGA scheme.

"At the time of economic distress caused due to COVID-19 pandemic in particular, there was an increase in the demand of work under MGNREGA. However, inordinate delay in the release of [the 40% component of] funds for skilled/semi-skilled workers under MGNREGA is a huge discouraging aspect and does not go in consonance with the underlying spirit of the scheme," said the report.

The panel noted "the callous approach of the State Governments in the proper

implementation of the provision of unemployment allowance", finding that the provision is not implemented in letter and spirit at the grass root level.

Another issue with MGNREGA is the disparity in wages in different States. "It is still beyond comprehension as to how it is possible that a single scheme having the provision of hundred days of guaranteed work to willing person from the rural settings can have different yardstick when it comes to the payment modalities across the length and breadth of the country," said the report, noting that the Constitution provides for equal pay for equal work.

the Mallannasagar reservoir. P. Venkatrami Reddy, who served as Siddipet Collector till August 31, 2018, and is continuing in the post from June 10, 2019, was awarded the jail term.

The judge also imposed a fine of ₹2,000 while instructing him to pay ₹25,000 to the petitioners towards costs

Internet curbs continue in violence-hit Bhainsa

2 municipal councillors, 12 others held in connection with communal clashes

ABHINAY DESHPANDE
HYDERABAD

Bhainsa, a small town in Telangana's Nirmal district, remained by and large peaceful on Tuesday with no untoward incidents, post-Sunday's communal clashes in which at least 10 persons, including a journalist and three police personnel, were injured.

Prohibitory orders and suspension of Internet services continued to be in force.

The clashes broke out on Sunday evening after a heated argument between a motorcyclist belonging to one community and people from another community. Within a short time, two groups had

gathered. They threw stones at each other and set houses, vehicles and small business establishments on fire.

Review today

Internet services were suspended to stop locals from sharing photos and videos of the incident on social media.

The services could be restored later in the night on Tuesday, a police official said. Prohibitory orders, enforced under Section 144 of the CrPC, were also likely to be reviewed, he said.

There was no problem in supply of essentials, including water and milk.

"Normality returned to Bhainsa on Monday itself,



Round-the-clock vigil: Security personnel patrolling the lanes of Bhainsa town in Nirmal district of Telangana on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

but we are yet to take a call on restoring Internet services," said the district's in-charge Superintendent of Police, Vishnu S. Warrier. He

said they had registered 15 cases against several people for rioting, arson and bodily offences. Fourteen persons, including two municipal

councillors – one from AIMIM and an Independent – were arrested and remanded in judicial custody.

"At least 20 more suspects

involved in the violence are absconding and six special teams, comprising 60 personnel, have been formed to nab them," the officer said.

28 suspects questioned
Another 28 suspects who took part in Sunday's violence were taken into custody and were being questioned, another officer said.

"Based on available evidence and eye-witness accounts, the role of eight persons in custody has already been proved and they will soon be remanded," he said on condition of anonymity.

Heavy contingents of police were deployed to maintain law and order in the town. According to Mr. Warrier, over 600 police personnel from the neighbouring districts had been deployed from Sunday evening.

(With PTI inputs)

ACB searches premises of nine Karnataka officials

It is probing a disproportionate assets case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Union government informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that an inter-ministerial consultation for the Andhra Pradesh Disha (Special Courts for Specified Offences against Women and Children) Bill, 2020, had been initiated.

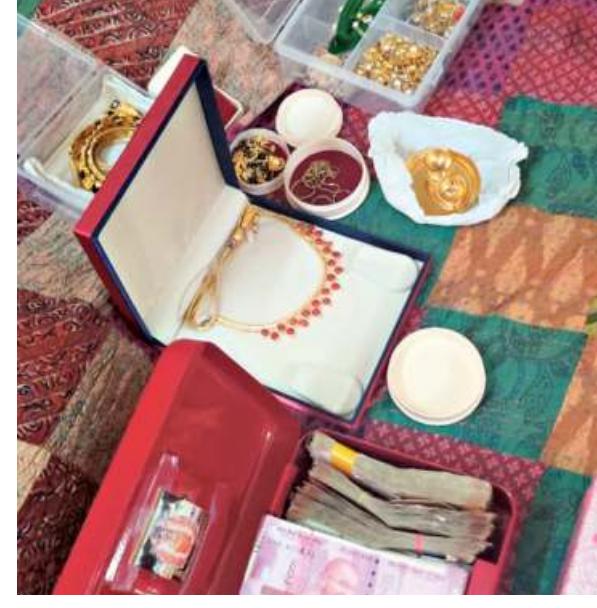
The Bill paves the way for awarding the death penalty for rape and gang rape, and expediting the verdicts in trials of such cases to 21 days.

Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy informed the House that the Bill reserved by the Governor had been received in January 2021 for assent of the President. "Bills received from States for assent of President are processed in consultation with the nodal ministries/departments. Accordingly, the consultation process with various ministries/departments concerned with Andhra Pradesh Disha Bill, 2020 has been initiated," the Minister said in a written reply.

Fifty-two teams, headed by jurisdictional SPs and DCPS, carried out the searches at 28 locations, said officials.

After several hours of search, the officials reportedly unearthed huge disproportionate assets from the residences and offices of nine government officials across 11 districts in Karnataka, including Bengaluru, Bellagavi, Chickballapur, Mysuru, and Yadgir.

In all, over 3.6 kg of gold jewellery and 35 kg of silver articles, several lakhs in cash, household items, in some cases valued at crores of rupees, vehicles and doc-



Massive search: Part of the gold and currency seized during the operation across Karnataka on Monday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

uments were seized.

Imported liquor valued at ₹7.5 lakh was seized from one official's house.

Another official had ₹2.4 lakh in cash stuffed inside over 50 files related to office.

Bank accounts have also been frozen and investiga-

tions are under way, said ACB officials. The seized movable and immovable properties are subject to further verification to ascertain their known source.

Scrutiny of bank and other documents is on, the release said.

Four leaders behind fake CD: Jarkiholi

Ex-Minister refuses to name anyone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Former Karnataka Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, who resigned over an alleged "sex-for-job scandal" last week, claimed on Tuesday that "four leaders" were behind the conspiracy to defame him, but refused to disclose their names.

Mr. Jarkiholi, who came out in the public for the first time after activist Dinesh Kallahalli withdrew his complaint over the issue, claimed that the CD allegedly showing him in a compromising position with a woman was "fake".

The conspiracy to create this CD was hatched on the fifth floor of a building next to Orion mall in Bengaluru and on the fourth floor of another building near the Yeshwantpur police station, the BJP MLA alleged, adding that the woman in the CD was paid ₹5 crore and given two flats abroad.

Mr. Jarkiholi said the former Chief Minister H.D.



Ramesh Jarkiholi at a press meet in Bengaluru on Tuesday. ■ SUDHAKAR JAIN

Kumaraswamy was one of the first to call him after the CD was leaked. "The Chief Minister and even the high command of the BJP have supported me. I have no enemies in the Congress as well. But a day after I took charge as Minister, a big leader challenged me publicly that I will not last in the department. That leader is behind the conspiracy."

He said his "family's respect" was at stake and he would fight to preserve that.

Mullaperiyar case hearing on March 16

Won't consider plea for adjournments

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to a request made by the Centre to postpone the hearing of a case concerning the safety of the 126-year-old Mullaperiyar Dam.

A Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar scheduled the hearing for March 16, but made it clear that no further adjournment requests would be entertained by the court.

'Kerala posing hurdles'
Recently, Tamil Nadu had filed an affidavit affirming that the dam was safe hydrologically and protected from earthquakes. Countering Kerala's allegations of non-cooperation and lack of concern, Tamil Nadu accused its neighbour State of adopting an "obstructionist attitude".

Tamil Nadu, in fact, said the installation of instruments to protect the dam structure and warn of dangers to the Earth Dam and the Baby Dam had been



The case concerns the safety of the 126-year-old dam.

hanging in a limbo since 2015. This was solely because the Kerala's forest department had refused permission to cut 23 trees.

In January, Kerala had accused Tamil Nadu of adopting an "obsolete" gate operation schedule, dating back to 1939, at the dam.

In its affidavit, Kerala had in turn informed the court of a Central Water Commission (CWC) inspection report which said that 70% of the installed instruments for monitoring the safety and health of the dam were not working properly.

It said Tamil Nadu was yet to install the two seismographs recommended to monitor tremors.

Murders for insurance gang busted

STAFF REPORTER
NAGALANDA

In a plot riddling cinematic blockbusters, a seasoned agent in the life insurance business and his associates committed five murders and forged documents across Telangana to claim ₹1,59,40,000 in benefits over the past nine years.

The elaborate network of prime accused Dheeravath Raju, and his accomplices, including staff from the insurance agencies, hospitals, village leaders and even the relatives of the victims, came to light after the suspicious death of the fifth victim on February 24, following which the police arrested him and five others on charges of murder, cheating and forgery.

Moreover, Mr. Ramachandran's candidature would have opened the door for another round of intra-party bickering for the KPCC chief's post. Party workers had suggested K. Sudhakaran and K. Muralidharan, both MPs, as reported.

Mr. Ramachandran, Leader of the Opposition

Congress Kerala unit chief opts out of fray

AICC to release candidates' list soon

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president Mullappally Ramachandran on Wednesday hinted in New Delhi that he might not contest the Assembly elections in Kerala.

A party insider said the KPCC had considered fielding him from Kannur but he had reportedly demurred. The party also felt Mr. Ramachandran would be hard-pressed to campaign amidst his duties as KPCC president. Mr. Ramachandran's decision not to contest reportedly has the Congress high command's backing.

The hunt is on for 32 others who colluded with Raju, Nalgonda Superintendent of Police A.V. Ranaganath said on Tuesday.



Mullappally Ramachandran

Ramesh Chennithala and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy were in the national capital to finalise the candidates' list.

Both Mr. Chennithala and Mr. Chandy are in the fray. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) will take a final call on the list submitted by the leaders.

The AICC had directed the KPCC to eschew seat-sharing based on group equations and said it would only assign seats based on a candidate's winning chances.



Jagan may meet PM on Vizag steel plant issue

GUNTUR
Amid protests against the move to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, A.P. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has sought a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss the options to revive the plant.

ISRO develops radar for joint mission with NASA
BENGALURU
ISRO has completed development of a Synthetic Aperture Radar capable of producing high-resolution images for a joint earth observation satellite mission with the U.S. space agency NASA. The mission is targeted to be launched in 2022. PTI

Seven students complain of giddiness, hospitalised
VIJAYAWADA
Seven Class I students from the RCM Missionary School at Gudiyada in Andhra Pradesh's Krishna district were hospitalised on Tuesday after they complained of giddiness. Blood tests were conducted. Food and water samples have been sent for testing.

Telangana HC awards jail term to Siddipet Collector, RDO

MARRI RAMU
HYDERABAD

Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao of the Telangana High Court has sentenced two top revenue officials to simple imprisonment ranging from three to four months after holding them guilty of contempt of court in a case relating to acquisition of land for

the Mallannasagar reservoir. P. Venkatrami Reddy, who served as Siddipet Collector till August 31, 2018, and is continuing in the post from June 10, 2019, was awarded the jail term.

The judge also imposed a fine of ₹2,000 while instructing him to pay ₹25,000 to the petitioners towards costs

within four weeks.

The judge awarded simple imprisonment of four months to Jayachandra Reddy, serving as Special Deputy Collector Land Acquisition Kaleshwaram project Unit III cum-RDO of Siddipet. He was fined ₹2,000 and also directed to pay ₹50,000 to the petitioners towards costs.

Mr.

'Model Nandigram' is Mamata's poll promise

I chose the constituency as it is a symbol of struggle, she says

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday started her campaign in Nandigram with a promise of delivering a "model Nandigram".

Raising the slogan "Bhul paari nijer naam, Bhulbo na Nandigram" [Can't forget my name but won't forget Nandigram], she said she chose to contest from here because the constituency was a symbol of struggle.

"Tomorrow, I will file nomination from Haldia... if you don't want me to contest then I will leave," she said.

At the workers' convention, Ms. Banerjee said she had decided to contest from Nandigram when the sitting MLAs had resigned. "I could have easily contested from Bhawanipore, which is my home, but I chose Nandigram which is a symbol of protest," she said.

April fool taunt

The Chief Minister said the voting in Nandigram was on April 1 and they should make "April fool" of those offering money. "Take money from them but do not vote for them," she said referring to her political opponents.

She said she would build a home in Nandigram.

"I have rented a two-room house and will come to live



Tea diplomacy: Mamata Banerjee serving tea at a shop during her campaign in Nandigram on Tuesday. ■ ANI

EC transfers Bengal DGP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday transferred West Bengal DGP Virendra and appointed P. Nirajnay as the new DGP. Mr. Nirajnay is an IPS officer of 1987 batch and has

served in the CBI. In its order, the ECI said Mr. Virendra should not be given any post which directly or indirectly relates to the conduct of the poll.

Trinamool Congress MP Saugata Roy expressed reservations over the EC decision.

here every two months."

While Ms. Banerjee refrained from any mention of her opponent Suvenu Adhikari, she accused him of creating "communal divide".

"Those creating the 70% and 30% divide should keep in mind that we are 100% together. In Nandigram, when the violence

erupted, some people had given call of Azan and some had blown conch shells," she said.

She referred to Mr. Adhikari's recent remarks referring to her as an "outsider" (bahiragata) and said the person accusing her was a resident of Medinipur while she hailed from Birbhum.

Like it did for the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, the

Ministers, MPs trade charges amid furore

Farmers' protest among issues raised

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha's early adjournment on Tuesday after frequent disruptions over the issue of rising fuel prices did not prevent Ministers and Opposition MPs from clashing on issues to do with poll battles in other States and the farmers protests during a very short run Question Hour.

Former Union Minister and Akali leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal protested the new norms by Food Corporation of India (FCI) that make it necessary for farmers to present their land records details before any direct transfer of e-payments, pointing out that 40% of Punjab farmers were small land holders and tenant farmers.

"The new norms are an attack on the federal structure and the state's powers," she said.

Responding to Ms. Badal, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said while the new norms were being accepted in the rest of the country, only Punjab was objecting to them.

BJP MP Sunita Duggal's question on fishery policy and programmes was used by Fisheries Minister Giriraj Singh to launch a few broadsides at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who had demanded a Ministry for fisheries during a recent campaign trip to Puducherry. Mr. Singh said Mr. Gandhi should be educated on how many and what kind of government departments and Ministries existed.

For the second consecutive day, both Houses of Parliament failed to function on Tuesday, with relentless protests from Opposition members after their demand for a debate on the frequent hike in fuel prices was rejected.

Rajya Sabha saw two adjournments before the House was closed for the day at 2.10 p.m. Tuesday was the first sitting of both Houses of Parliament as per the pre-COVID timings and seating arrangements, with members sitting in their respective chambers instead of being spread out in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha chambers.

The first adjournment in the Upper House came within 20 minutes of its convening as Opposition members began protests when Deputy Chairman Harivansh once again refused to concede to their demand for suspending the business of the day to debate the rising fuel prices.

"You all are well aware of the ruling given by the Chairman on the issue; he has already said that there are many opportunities to discuss the fuel hike in the course of the session and separate

Plea against 8-phase Bengal poll dismissed

Petition also asked for a probe into the use of 'Jai Shri Ram' as a rallying slogan

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed a plea to "prohibit" the conduct of West Bengal Assembly election in an "unequal manner" in eight phases and direct a CBI probe into the use of 'Jai Shri Ram' as a rallying slogan in the run-up to the poll.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, initially asked the petitioner, advocate M.L. Sharma, to approach the High Court or the Election Commission of India (EC).

The court, at one point, said, "In a given case, it is a corrupt practice in appealing for votes using religion"

and the petitioner would be better advised to approach the EC.

The court finally and categorically told Mr. Sharma that it was dismissing his case.

Mr. Sharma had arraigned Union Home Minister Amit Shah and West Bengal BJP leader Suvenu Adhikari as respondents. His petition said the CBI should launch a probe under the Indian Penal Code and the Representation of the People Act.

They raised the religious slogan of 'Jai Shri Ram', creating disharmony and it was "an attack upon the citizen of India for provoking, effecting their mind to fight among



Initially, the SC asked the petitioner to approach the poll panel. ■ FILE PHOTO

themselves and to give vote in their favour for electoral benefits", he said.

The plea said the eight-phase poll was declared "without disclosing valid reasons, respondent cannot declare voting in different style/phase/manner to facilitate political demand for a specific party, that is, BJP".

SC stays arrest warrant against Bharati Ghosh

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the arrest warrant issued against BJP candidate Bharati Ghosh till the conclusion of the West Bengal Assembly election.

The non-bailable arrest warrant was issued against the former IPS officer in connection with the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

A three-judge Bench, comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan, S. Abdul Nazeer and Hemant Gupta, ordered the authorities to not take any coercive action against Ms. Ghosh.

The court listed the matter for further hearing after two months.

Ms. Ghosh, who has been fielded by the BJP from the Debra constituency of West Midnapore district, had moved the court for a stay of the arrest warrant and quashing of the FIR lodged against her in connection with the Lok Sabha poll violence case.

She said that despite the Supreme Court's protection earlier in 2019, the State government had continued to frame her in cases propelled by "ulterior political motives".

Former CM Mahanta will not contest Assam Assembly poll

Announcement comes after AGP denies him ticket

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Former Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta will not contest the upcoming Assam Assembly election, his wife and former MP Jayashree Goswami Mahanta said on Monday.

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), of which Mr. Mahanta was the founder-president in 1985, had denied ticket to

him. The two-time former Chief Minister has been representing the Barhampur constituency in central Assam's Nagaon district since 1991.

His pet seat went to AGP's ally BJP following a seat-sharing agreement in New Delhi on March 5. The BJP has fielded Jitu Goswami, a loyalist of Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.



Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

MP gets notice for remarks against ex-CJI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra was served notice on a privilege motion moved against her by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey for her comments against a former Chief Justice of India during a debate on motion of thanks to the President's address last month. Ms. Moitra has been asked to file response by March 25. Mr. Dubey had filed a privilege motion notice against her on February 10.

Ms. Moitra's remarks were later expunged. She tweeted, "What better way to end Women's Day than to learn I have apparently been served notice for speaking truth in parliament about ex CJI accused of sexual harassment being rewarded by misogynistic patriarchy with seat in RS! Thank you God, for this badge of honour!"

Mr. Dubey said, "Members believe that using the parliamentary protection, they can say anything against anyone and get away. I want this perception to change."

"I am grateful to the Speaker for admitting the motion," he added.

Cyber volunteer programme rolled out, MHA informs LS

It will focus on hygiene promotion, flag 'unlawful content'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday that a "cyber volunteer" programme has been rolled out for "cyber hygiene promotion" and the services of volunteers would be utilised by the State police as per requirement.

The MHA, through its cyber crime grievance portal - cybercrime.gov.in, aims to raise a group of "cyber crime volunteers" to flag "unlawful content" on the Internet.

Various groups, including the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), have expressed concern that the programme enables a culture of surveillance and could create potential social distrust by encouraging civilians to report the online activities of other citizens.

Privacy matters

Biju Janta Dal Member of Parliament Pinaki Misra asked whether "concerns of infringement of privacy due to surreptitious and malafide intrusion into an individual's online activities are



ISTOCK/GETTYIMAGES

addressed in this programme and its operating protocol."

Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said in a written reply, "The challenges of cyber space are many which flow from its vastness and borderless character. ... Cyber Crime Volunteer Framework has been rolled out as an initiative as part of cyber hygiene promotion to bring together citizens to contribute in the fight against cyber-crime in the country and assist State/UT LEAs (law enforcement agencies) in their endeavour to curb cyber crimes. The volunteers will be enrolled and their services utilized by the respective State/UT Police Authorities, as per their requirement."

"As per published information, the conviction rate for the POCSO cases in 2019 was 34.9%," the reply stated.

Parliament stalls again over fuel price hike

Opposition MPs protest against govt's refusal to allow a separate debate on issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Tuesday issued an order allotting national parties and recognised State parties in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry double the usual broadcast time on All-India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD) due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Started in 1998, the practice involves free use of state-owned media by national parties and recognised State parties in an equitable manner.

Like it did for the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, the

Election Commission said the pandemic had increased the importance of non-contact based campaigning, so it doubled the amount of airtime the parties are allotted on AIR and DD for the ongoing elections to the five Assemblies.

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad tried unsuccessfully to convince the Opposition to clear the Statutory Resolution and the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to replace an ordinance in this regard, saying its passage is essential. The Bill has already been passed by the Lok Sabha.

However, senior Congress MP Anand Sharma said according to the tradition in the House, no government bill is taken up when the Opposition is demanding a discussion over an important issue. "Opposition has a right to take up the issue," he said as several opposition members kept raising slogans demanding a discussion on the rising fuel prices.

Similar scenes were witnessed in Lok Sabha.

time cannot be set aside for it," Mr. Harivansh said.

Leader of the Opposition Malikarjun Kharge said the fuel hikes have had a cascading impact on the prices of essential commodities and there should be a separate discussion on the consequent scarcity. He said, at least, the government should assure the House that the prices will be scaled back

to the 2013-14 levels.

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Time and Date & Time for on-line submission of E-Tender is 15:00 hrs of 31.03.2021

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Last Date & Time for on-line submission of E-Tender is 15:00 hrs of 31.03.2021

Tender document download & participation can be done on Website: www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC

In case of any corrigendum/ addendum issued on the above advertisement, it will be published only on website www.irctc.com and www.tenderwizard.com/IRCTC. No newspaper press advertisement shall be issued for the same.

Farm laws discussion in U.K. is 'gross interference'

India summons British envoy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Discussion on the farm laws by the British Parliament amounts to "gross interference" in the domestic affairs of India, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla told British High Commissioner Alex Ellis on Tuesday.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the envoy was summoned and a diplomatic note of protest was handed over to him.

"Foreign Secretary made clear that this represented a gross interference in the

politics of another democratic country. He advised that British MPs should refrain from practising vote bank politics by misrepresenting events, especially in relation to another fellow democracy," the MEA said.

The demarche came a day after the U.K. Parliament discussed the laws. The High Commission in the U.K. in a statement had said the discussion was aimed to 'mislead' the British Indian community about the laws and the status of the minority communities in India.

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'Covaxin enhanced immune response'

Interim results of phase 2 trials published in *Lancet Infectious Diseases* show positive outcome

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Covaxin, India's indigenous COVID-19 vaccine, showed enhanced immune response as well as better reactogenicity (reaction symptoms) and safety outcomes in the phase 2 trial, interim results that have now been published in the journal *Lancet Infectious Diseases* said.

The publication comes days after Covaxin maker Bharat Biotech said the vaccine demonstrated an interim clinical efficacy of 81% in its later phase 3 clinical trial.

Developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), it is a two dose vaccine, given 28 days apart.

Tracing the vaccine's per-

formance, the research article said in the phase 1 trial, Covaxin (BBV152) "induced high neutralising antibody responses that remained elevated in all participants at three months after the second vaccination."

In the phase 2 trial, BBV152 showed better reactogenicity and safety outcomes, and enhanced humoral and cell-mediated immune responses compared with the phase 1 trial," the study said.

However, the results from the Phase 2 study do not permit efficacy assessments, the authors said.

"The evaluation of safety outcomes requires extensive phase 3 clinical trials. We were unable to assess other

Vaccine's progress

A timeline of the Covaxin development and trials in India

July 15, 2020: Phase-I clinical trial commences with 375 participants

Sept. 7, 2020: Phase-II clinical trial commences with 380 participants

Nov. 16, 2020: Phase-III trial commences with more than 26,000 volunteers

Jan 3, 2021: Granted approval for emergency restricted use in India

March 3, 2021: First interim analysis of phase-III trials show efficacy of 80.6%

March 9, 2021: Lancet publishes interim results of phase-II trials, which show vaccine is safe and generates immune response without any serious side effects

immune responses (that is, binding antibody and cell-mediated responses) in convalescent serum samples due to the low quantity," they said.

Besides interim results of the double-blind, randomised, multi-centre, phase 2 trial, the publication also covered a 3-month follow-up of the phase 1 trial.

Jyotiraditya's comeback to Rahul's comment

'I wish concern was expressed when I was in the Congress'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday came out with a repartee to former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's comment that Mr. Scindia would be never made a chief minister by the BJP and would now be a backbencher.

"I wish the kind of concern that Rahul ji is expressing now was expressed when I was in the Congress. I won't say anything more than this," Mr. Scindia told reporters outside the Parliament House.

Mr. Gandhi had made the comment while addressing

Odisha govt. to enforce road safety laws strictly

41% deaths due to no helmets: official

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

With Odisha losing young lives on account of road accidents, the State government has decided to enforce Motor Vehicles Act strictly. Of the total persons who died in road accidents in Odisha in 2019, 76% victims belonged to the age group of 18-45, while 41% of deaths took place as two-wheeler riders did not have helmets.

A high-level meeting, chaired by Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mohapatra, reviewed reasons leading to road accident deaths. The meeting was attended by District Collectors and Superintendent of Police from all districts. "In 2019, 2,397 two-wheeler riders had died in road accidents as they had

not worn helmet. A total of 5,333 persons lost their lives in road accidents in 2019. They constitute 41% of total deaths that occurred on road," said Madhusudan Padhi, State Commerce and Transport Secretary.

The number of deaths fell by 11% in 2020 compared to 2019. Experts believe the drop was due to the lockdown. There was less movement of vehicles for a considerable period in 2020. Mr. Mohapatra asked the DCs and SPs to come up with a strategy for bringing down the road accident deaths.

"Rumbles should be fixed at places where major roads connect national highways. Safety instructions must be put up at rumbles," he instructed.

States told to ramp up vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Principal Secretary to Prime Minister P.K. Misra on Tuesday chaired a high-level meeting by review the status and progress of vaccination against COVID-19 across the States and UTs.

He directed the States/UTs to expand their capacity by operationalising as many health facilities as possible as vaccination centres, across the public and private sectors.

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered crossed 2.4 crore on Tuesday, according to the Health Ministry.

Mr. Misra also noted that administrations should ensure equitable and easy access to all.

Delhi HC seeks response on petition against new IT Rules

Plea filed by Foundation for Independent Journalism

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought a response from the Centre on a petition challenging the new IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, claiming

...the loose-ranging Code of Ethics contains wide and vague terms as 'half-truths', 'good taste', 'decency'

PLEA FILED IN HC

case include M.K. Venu, Director and Founding Editor, *The Wire*, and Dhanya Rajendran, founder & Editor-In-Chief, *The News Minute*.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh issued notices to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) and Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on the plea filed by Foundation for Independent Journalism, a trust that owns digital news portal *The Wire*.

The petition argued that the new IT Rules issued on February 25, 2021, were "palpably illegal" in seeking to control and regulate digital news media when the parent statute nowhere provided for such a remit.

It said the new IT Rules had "profound and serious harms for digital news media" and was destructive of their rights.

Other petitioners in the

their content to any set of special regulations," said the plea filed through advocates Prasanna S., Vinootha Vinjam and Bharat Gupta.

"The content to be regulated by the parent Act, as offences, was limited to sexually explicit material, child pornography, showing private parts of individuals, cyber terrorism, etc. to be prosecuted and tried by normal courts," it added.

The IT Rules, 2021, expand the scope of the Act even further by providing for a Code of Ethics and a three-tier regulatory system to administer a loose-ranging Code of Ethics, that contains wide and vague terms as 'half-truths', 'good taste', 'decency'.

"The IT Rules, 2021, provide for an oversight mechanism, including the setting up of an Inter-Departmental Committee which has the power to hear grievances regarding compliance with the said Code of Ethics, as well as the power to recommend to the Ministry of I&B, draconian measures such as ordering the deletion, modification of content or blocking the same," the plea contended.

Cong.: dismiss Uttarakhand government

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Congress on Tuesday said the President should immediately dismiss the BJP government in Uttarakhand as the resignation of Trivendra Singh Rawat was a feeble attempt to "cover up the misdeeds and corruption of the past four years".

All India Congress Committee in charge of Uttarakhand Devendra Yadav said that the BJP should seek a fresh mandate in Uttarakhand.

It alleged that Mr. Rawat's resignation was an admission by the BJP that "nothing happened in the State except corruption".

Speaking to reporters at the party headquarters, Mr. Yadav claimed that not only the Nainital High Court had ordered a CBI inquiry against the Rawat government over allegations of corruption, several scams too had emerged in the past four years.

Irregularities in hosting the 'Kumbh' in Haridwar, alleged corruption in mid-day meal scheme in government schools and recruitment of forest guards were cited as "scams" by Mr. Yadav.

Army to showcase counter-terror skills

Joint exercise to be held with Uzbekistan on using technology and intelligence

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

At Exercise Dustlik-II between India and Uzbekistan from March 10-19, the Army will showcase its Counter Insurgency (CI) and Counter Terrorism (CT) skills. The focus will be on people-centric intelligence based surgical operations, incorporating technological advancements to minimise collateral damage, a defence source said.

The broad aim of the exercise is CI/CT operations in mountainous, rural and urban scenarios under United Nations (UN) mandate and the Army will share the experiences and lessons it has gained in Kashmir, an Army source said.

A lot of technology has

been incorporated in CI, CT operations and efficiency has considerably gone up in operations which also helps in minimizing collateral damage which would also be showcased, the source stated.

India has a series of joint exercises scheduled in the next financial year beginning April 2021 including with Central Asian Republics – Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan – in addition to Mongolia and Russia as part of its

growing engagement with the region.

"Uzbekistan is important to India for security and connectivity to Central Asian region and also Iran," a defence source said, underscoring the importance and adding that it is also one alternative India has with respect to Afghanistan.

The Army's I3 Kumaon regiment, also called the Rezang La battalion for its heroic action in the 1962 war with China, has been nominated from the Indian side for the company level CI, CT exercise being held at Chauhatia, near Ranikhet in Uttarakhand. The validation exercise is scheduled on March 17 and 18 and the closing ceremony on March 19.

It represents the Champai South Assembly constituency that has borne the brunt of the refugee crisis.

Mizoram's Home Minister Lalchamliana declined to quantify the refugees who have trickled into the border districts of Champai, Hnahthial, Serchhip and

officials in State capital Aizawl said there have been no "fresh influx" since Monday evening. Tighter vigil along the border by the Assam Rifles personnel was one of the reasons, an official said.

Activist gets bail in case linked to CAA protests

Nitin Raj was booked in January 2020

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The presence and the movement of a left-linked student activist in Uttar Pradesh could be controlled by imposing suitable conditions, the Allahabad High Court has noted, as it granted him bail in a case linked to the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act here last year.

Nitin Raj, U.P. vice-president of the All India Students Association (AISA), was booked in January last year by the Thakurganj police on charges of participating in a dharna against the CAA-NRC at the Hussainabad Clocktower here. The accused including Mr. Raj were also charged with obstructing the smooth flow of traffic, while also getting into altercations with the local police.

The presence and the movement of the applicant could be controlled by imposing suitable conditions. The applicant is also not having any previous criminal history and is stated to be student and charged offences are punishable with less than 7 years imprisonment," the court said.

Mr. Raj was booked under Sections 145, 147, 149, 188, 353, 283, 427 and 505 (B) of the IPC, Section 7 of

Editors Guild flags media strategy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Editors Guild of India on Tuesday said the recent revelations about a Group of Ministers (GoM) report on the government's media strategy was an example of its "increasingly draconian attitude" towards any criticism. The guild said in a statement it was shocked at the manner in which the GoM prepared its report "with an embedded toolkit to control the narrative about the government in the media".

The report, which was prepared at the end of 2020 and has recently emerged in media, further illustrates the government's increasingly draconian attitude against any critique and inquiry by the press. The suggestions from the GoM report hint at increased surveillance and targeting of writers and journalists who depart from the government's narrative," the guild said.

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

The inclusion of India in the United States' latest strategy of regional talks on Afghanistan was welcome but it did not remove several misgivings New Delhi had about Washington's policy over the conflict that was revealed over the weekend during U.S. Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad's talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and a letter written by U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani, sources said.

Mr. Khalilzad is understood to have apprised Mr. Jaishankar of Mr. Blinken's missive, after which he travelled to Islamabad for meetings with Pakistan's Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa. He thanked Pakistani counterparts for their assistance and asked for Pakistan's continued commitment to the peace process," U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.

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A royal ride The new A-class no longer feels like an 'entry level' offering ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Now, luxurious comfort comes on wheels

Mercedes has switched things up for the new A-class by amplifying traits such as space, comfort, quality, restrained style and tech

GAVIN D'SOUZA

The new A-class Limousine is Mercedes' push back into the luxury sedan segment in India and essentially replaces the first-gen CLA. Compared to the old CLA, the new A-class Limousine looks far more grown up and in line with the rest of the Mercedes sedan family.

The car looks attractive in profile, with a single, confident shoulder line and a smart-looking set of 17-inch alloy wheels. The rear features a simpler iteration of the CLS' angular LED tail lamps and strangely sited reflector strips in the bumper, but it all ties together well as a cohesive design.

The cabin is a mix of high-quality plastics, soft-touch materials, open-pore wood inserts, neatly executed bright work and cream coloured upholstery.

The dashboard design is in line with other new-gen Mercedes on sale in India with twin 10.25-inch free-standing displays taking pride of place atop the dashboard.

It is packed with features, including 64-colour ambient lighting, an AI-based digital assistant and connected-car tech with Alexa integration. You even get a choice of layout for the digital dials.

The front seats are a touch smaller than in a C-class but they are still comfortable. This is important because this is more likely than any other Mercedes sedan to be self-driven.

Spacious and punchy

It is at the back where the shift from four-door-coupe to sedan has really paid off. Space is really generous for the car's size, particularly knee room (thanks to the long, 2,729mm wheelbase) and the headroom, thanks to the taller roof.

The A-class will be available in A 200 petrol, A 200d diesel and AMG A35 spec, though here we focus only on the former two.

While in the C-class '200' denotes a 2.0-litre petrol, in the A 200, it is a 1.3-litre

turbo petrol that makes a pretty healthy 163hp and 250Nm of torque paired with a 7-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox.

The engine is reasonably refined at start-up and at low revs. However, get it above 3,500rpm and the unit becomes audible. In the Comfort mode, the easy-going gearbox does not quite mask the turbo-lag. Sport mode rectifies this a great deal, but then you are constantly aware of the engine working harder. Still, once it is on the boil, responses are good. However, the DCT, while quick to shift, can feel a little chunky under duress.

The A 200d packs in the familiar

MERCEDES A-CLASS LIMOUSINE SPECIFICATIONS

LENGTH 4549mm

WIDTH 1796mm

HEIGHT 1446mm

WHEELBASE 2729mm

BOOT CAPACITY 405 litres (petrol)/ 395 litres (diesel)

ENGINE 1332cc, 4 cyls, turbo-petrol 1950cc, 4 cyls, turbo-diesel

POWER 163hp 150hp

TORQUE 250Nm at 1620-4000rpm 320Nm at 1400-3200rpm

GEARBOX 7-speed dual-clutch auto 8-speed dual-clutch auto

OM654 2.0-litre diesel, but here it puts out 150hp and 320Nm, and is paired with a new 8-speed dual-clutch auto gearbox. First impressions are rather good, and it actually feels the more refined of the two for everyday use. The unit makes all its torque from really

low down. Push the engine hard and you are rewarded with a solid burst of power though you also get quite a bit of torque steer, and the diesel clatter becomes quite audible.

This certainly feels the stronger of the two engines, and if the price gap isn't too big between the two, it would be our pick.

Lessons learnt

The raised suspension for India doesn't hinder ride quality which is even better than some of its larger sedan siblings.

The petrol's softer setup takes the edge off sharp bumps superbly and even high-speed stability is quite good. The diesel's firmer set up lets more road imperfections filter into the cabin, though that is not to say it's uncomfortable.

On the handling front, the A-class sedan is not exactly a corner carver. There is quite a bit of body roll, the ESC cuts in even when turned off, and the steering is quite light. But then comfort is the name of the game with this sedan, and at that, it excels.

It is clear that Mercedes has learnt from its first generation of MFA cars and switched things up for the new A-class. It no longer feels 'entry level' in any way, and it amplifies the traits buyers look for in their Benz such as space, comfort, quality, restrained style and tech. There will be only one fully loaded variant of each, and we expect them to cost about ₹ 40-42 lakh (ex-showroom). So, is it a worthy starting point to the Mercedes-Benz family? This time around, it sure feels like it.

AUTO SNIPS



Kawasaki launches BS6 Ninja 300

The BS6 Kawasaki Ninja 300 has been launched at ₹ 3.18 lakh (ex-showroom, India). It features updated graphics along with revisions made to meet the stricter emission norms.

The Ninja 300 continues to be powered by a 296cc, parallel-twin liquid-cooled engine with peak output figures of 39hp at 11,000rpm and 26.1Nm at 10,000rpm. This engine is paired to a 6-speed transmission and gets a slipper clutch as standard. The chassis and hardware elements remain unchanged, with a tubular steel frame suspended on a conventional telescopic fork and a pre-load adjustable monoshock.



Tata Tiago XTA launched

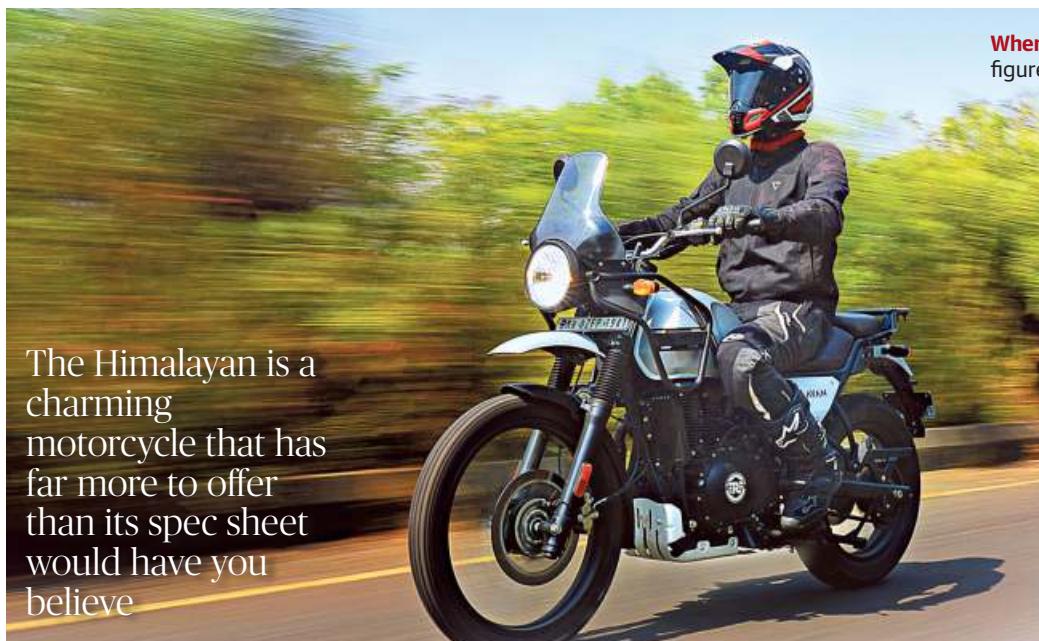
Tata has launched the new Tiago XTA priced at ₹ 5.99 lakh (ex-showroom, Delhi). The new AMT variant costs about ₹ 50,000 more than its manual counterpart, the XT.

Compared to its manual counterpart, the XTA gets all the same equipment including dual airbags, ABS, day-night rear-view mirror, rear parking sensors with a display, Harman-sourced audio system with bluetooth and USB connectivity, steering-mounted controls, manual AC, LED digital instrument readout and front and rear power windows amongst others. The only point of difference between the two variants is the gearbox – the 86hp, 1.2-litre petrol unit is paired with a 5-speed AMT unit in the XTA.



Bajaj launches new Platina 110, Platina 100 electric start

Bajaj has launched two new Platina models – the electric start-equipped version of the Platina 100 at ₹ 53,920, and the new Platina 110 that features a single-channel ABS, at ₹ 65,926. The Platina 100 is powered by a 102cc, single-cylinder engine that makes 7.9hp and 8.3Nm of torque. This engine comes paired to a 4-speed (all-down) gearbox. The Platina 110 is powered by a 115.45cc, single-cylinder, fuel-injected engine that produces peak output figures of 8.6hp and 9.81Nm of torque paired with a 5-speed gearbox.



When wanderlust beckons The Himalayan could figure in a lot travel getaways ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Heed the call of wide open spaces

RISHAAD MODY

Royal Enfield's affordable adventure bike, the Himalayan, gets an update for 2021 with the changes largely based around comfort, practicality and convenience.

The overall design is the same but there are a couple of details that have changed. First, Royal Enfield has added its 'Tripper' navigation screen onto the Himalayan's quirky digital-analogue instrument console. The Tripper screen is a small, circular colour display that reads out navigation directions – its display works via Bluetooth and requires your phone to be connected to the Royal Enfield app.

With the addition of the Tripper screen, Royal Enfield had to change the earlier windscreens to fit around the new display.

2021 ROYAL ENFIELD HIMALAYAN SPECIFICATIONS

ENGINE 411cc, single-cylinder, air/oil cooled

POWER 24.3hp at 6500rpm

TORQUE 32Nm at 4000-4500rpm

GEARBOX 5-speed

WEIGHT 199kg

WHEEL BASE 1465mm

GROUND CLEARANCE 220mm

SEAT HEIGHT 800mm

FUEL TANK CAPACITY 15 litres

FRONT BRAKE 300mm disc

REAR BRAKE 240mm Disc

three new colours, which in-

cludes the

Mirage Silver shown here, a very nice shade of green

that Royal Enfield calls Pine

Green, and a Granite Black op-

tion. Nothing has changed me-

chanically from the BS6 Him-

ayan that we rode a year ago,

and that includes the 411cc, two-

valve air-cooled motor that

makes 24hp and 32Nm.

The Himalayan continues to

be very smooth and refined at

most points, and it is only near

the 7,500-odd RPM redline that

you will feel some vibrations.

The motor cruises beautifully at

80kph, and 100kph is quite re-

laxed as well. The bike will

surge up to 120kph if you keep it

pinned, but anything above that

is a struggle. In the city, the en-

gine won't mind you holding

higher gears at low speeds, but

the motor feels flat below 2,000rpm.

The chassis is the same as well, with a very absorptive ride comfort that shakes off even the worst potholes. As before, the brakes are a clear improvement over the BS4 version, but still feel dull and the front lever needs a strong pull for quick braking. There is dual-channel ABS and the rear can be deactivated by long-pressing a small button on the dash, but this button was quite fiddly and sometimes it just wouldn't work.

On the road, the Himalayan is an encouraging bike that you will find quite easy, thanks to its low seat and gentle engine responses.

However, with long travel suspension and 220mm of ground clearance, you will eventually wish the bike had more power and weighed less than its current 199kg.

At ₹ 2.01 lakh (ex-showroom) it appears that Royal Enfield is using the opportunity to make a price correction. Nevertheless, the Himalayan is a likeable and charming motorcycle, that has far more to offer than its spec sheet would have you believe. At this price, there is nothing else like it.

Q&A WITH HOMRAZD



All rounder

I am looking for an SUV that is spacious enough to fit five people comfortably, has a high safety rating, is really good for road trips, and isn't too high on maintenance. I am willing to shell out up to ₹ 15 lakh (ex-showroom) and have shortlisted the Mahindra XUV300, Tata Nexon, Ford EcoSport, and lower models of Hyundai Creta and Tata Harrier. Which one would you suggest?

Gaurab Sinha, Durgapur

• The Harrier is the best for long road trips, as it is safe, is the most spacious and, hence, can accommodate five people comfortably. It is strong and safe, feels the most planted and solid on the highway and, overall, makes a better long-distance car than the others. The cost of maintenance is not its strongest point but it's not a deal breaker in our view. The only issue is that you miss out on many good features, so if your priority is features and all the gizmos you get in cars these days, the Creta is the next best option.

Daily drive

I wish to purchase a new car within my budget of ₹ 15 lakh. My daily travel from Mussoorie to Dehradun is under 30km. I want the car to be spacious, loaded with features and accommodate five adults comfortably.

Rohit Bhandari, Mussoorie

• If you are looking at a car (instead of an SUV) then the best choice within your budget is the Honda City, which meets all your criteria. It is very spacious, has a very wide and comfortable back seat which is good for three adults and a decent sized boot. It is also loaded with features, some of which are first in its class.

Hormazd Sorabjee is the editor of Autocar India. Mail your feedback and queries to roadshow@thehindu.co.in

CM
YK

U.S. asks Afghan leaders to consider 'an inclusive govt.'

In letter to Ghani, Secretary Blinken proposes multilateral peace talks in Turkey

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is testing whether he can bring sweeping changes in Afghanistan, including a potential government involving the Taliban, in a high-risk strategy as he weighs whether to honour a May deadline to end America's longest war.

In a letter leaked to the Afghan media over the weekend, Secretary of State Antony Blinken encouraged Afghan leaders to consider a "new, inclusive government" and proposed that talks take place within weeks in Turkey to seal a peace deal with the Taliban.

The behind-the-scenes but dramatic diplomacy comes as Mr. Biden completes a review on one of his first major foreign policy questions – whether to abide by an agreement with the Islamist insurgents negotiated by former President Donald Trump to pull the final U.S. troops out by May.

"I think the objective here seems to be, let's see if there's some other option that we have other than simply leaving on May 1 or overstaying. Is there some short-cut to a peace process?" said Laurel Miller, the former U.S. envoy on Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"I see this as just trying stuff and looking to see if something sticks," said Ms. Miller, Asia director at the International Crisis Group.

In the letter to President Ashraf Ghani, reprinted by Afghanistan's TOLONews, Mr. Blinken said with uncharacteristic bluntness that the U.S. feared the "security situation will worsen and the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains" if the U.S.



Longest war: U.S. troops boarding a helicopter to head out on a mission in Afghanistan, in this file photo. ■REUTERS

Biden imposes curbs on drone strikes

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden has suspended drone strikes outside of war zones where U.S. forces are operating, reversing the policy of his predecessor Donald Trump, who had given the military free rein in countries such as Somalia.

Any drone strikes planned against jihadist groups outside of Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq will have to be approved by the White House, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said on Monday.

ends its two-decade military involvement.

While saying the U.S. did not want to dictate terms, Mr. Blinken encouraged Mr. Ghani to "move urgently" on ideas from Zalmay Khalilzad, the veteran U.S. negotiator kept on from the Trump

administration.

Mr. Blinken proposed a 90-day reduction in violence that would avoid the Taliban's bloody annual spring offensive.

In addition to the meeting in Turkey, Mr. Blinken said the U.S. was asking the Unit-

ed Nations to convene a meeting of Foreign Ministers from Afghanistan's neighbours on ensuring future stability that would notably include Iran – in what could turn out to be a first diplomatic encounter with the Biden administration.

Saleh rejects ideas

Afghan Vice-President Amrullah Saleh denounced the ideas in the letter, saying that the Taliban could enter elections but that the country's fate would not be decided by "20 people in a room".

"We thank the U.S. for their support. They have the right to decide on their 2,500 troops," he told an event in Kabul. "We also have the right to decide on the fate of our 35 million people." "We will never compromise our dignity. Our dependency on the outside world does not mean we obey illegitimate demands," Mr. Saleh said.

The State Department did not confirm or deny the letter, saying it would not discuss Mr. Blinken's correspondence. But spokesman Ned Price said the administration was pursuing diplomacy aimed at permanently ending the fighting and bringing a political solution.

"We have continued to encourage all sides to take part constructively, and with a degree of alacrity, knowing that this is a moment in time where progress is possible," Mr. Price told reporters.

First Lady Jill Biden also promised on Monday that the President will factor in women, who face extreme restrictions under Taliban rule, telling an event: "The United States will stand with you."

The NCP was formed in 2018 following a merger between Mr. Oli's communist party CPN-UML and the

A room-by-room search for anti-coup protesters

Security forces intensify crackdown on Myanmar activists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

People barricaded in a Yangon neighbourhood overnight said on Tuesday that Myanmar security forces searched their homes room by room for anti-coup protesters, targeting apartments flying the flag of Aung San Suu Kyi's party.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted and detained Ms. Suu Kyi last month, triggering daily protests around the country to demand the junta restore democracy.

The police and the Army have responded with an increasingly brutal crackdown and parts of Yangon have emerged as flashpoints for violence as protesters continue to defy authorities and take to the streets.

Crowds once again flocked to central San Chaung township in the commercial hub to call for



Call for restraint: A nun pleading with the police not to harm protesters in Myitkyina in Myanmar's Kachin State. ■AFP

Ms. Suu Kyi's release in a Monday protest coinciding with International Women's Day. By nightfall, security forces had sealed off a block of streets with around 200 protesters still inside, according to the UN rights office, prompting alarm from diplomatic missions and calls for their safe release.

"They searched every building on Kyun Daw road – they destroyed the locks of apartment buildings if they were locked," said a resident, adding that she heard dozens were arrested.

Since the coup, more than 60 people have been killed by security forces, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

Queen vows to address Harry and Meghan's racism claims

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II on Tuesday responded to explosive racism claims from her grandson Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, voicing deep concern and sympathising with their troubles with royal life.

"The whole family is saddened to learn the full extent of how challenging the last few years have been for Harry and Meghan," she said in a statement. "The issues raised, particularly that of race, are concerning. While some recollections may vary, they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately... Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much-loved family members."

'Over the top'

Ms. Meghan's estranged father on Tuesday played down her comments that an unnamed royal family member had asked how dark her baby's skin would be. In an interview with Piers Morgan on ITV, Thomas Markle said: "This whole thing about colour and how dark the baby is, is bullshit."

Mr. Markle is white, while Ms. Meghan's mother is black. "I'm guessing and hoping that it's just a dumb question from somebody. I don't think the British royal family are racist."

Reports have emerged that Mr. Morgan is to leave ITV's 'Good Morning Britain', following furore over his interview with Mr. Markle, during which he targeted Ms. Meghan over her comments about the royal family.

Nepal's ruling party splits

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KATHMANDU

Nepal's ruling party of ex-Maoist rebels and fellow communists split on Tuesday after the top election body ruled its name was unlawful, pushing the country into further political uncertainty.

The Himalayan nation has been roiled by months of turmoil after Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli dissolved Parliament in December and accused members of his Nepal Communist Party (NCP) of being uncooperative.

On Tuesday, the Election Commission concurred, and said it had "dismissed" Mr. Oli's NCP – which had held a rare two-thirds parliamentary majority – from the electoral register.

CPN (Maoist Centre) member Girirajmani Pokharel said the dissolution had sparked discussions in his

faction of the party about "whether to withdraw support from the government".

No decision has been made, he added.

But the party had no right to the NCP name, the Supreme Court ruled on Sunday because another, separate communist faction was already using it.

On Tuesday, the Election Commission concurred, and said it had "dismissed" Mr. Oli's NCP – which had held a rare two-thirds parliamentary majority – from the electoral register.

Brittle alliances have been struck between Nepal's three dominant parties since 2008, and there was hope a majority government would bring stability and much-needed development to the nation.

Brazil SC judge annuls convictions against Lula

He can now run for President in 2022

REUTERS

BRASILIA

A Brazilian Supreme Court judge on Monday annulled the criminal convictions against former leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a move that could allow the popular politician to run in next year's presidential election.

The decision roiled financial markets and scrambled forecasts for the 2022 race, with many investors betting it would polarise voters between President Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right populist, and Mr. Lula, his greatest opponent on the left.

In a surprise decision, Justice Edson Fachin said that a court in the city of Curitiba did not have the authority to try Mr. Lula on corruption charges and that he must be retried in federal courts in the capital Brasilia.

The office of Brazil's Prosecutor-General said it will

appeal the decision, which will also be reviewed by the full Supreme Court.

Financial analysts said the prospect of Lula candidacy would likely drive Mr. Bolsonaro to abandon economic reforms he ran on in 2018 and further embrace populist measures. "With Lula eligible, the chance of this government going totally towards populism increases even more," said Alfonso Menezes, managing partner at Armor Capital.

Mr. Lula governed Latin America's largest economy between 2003 and 2011, overseeing a commodities boom that turbocharged economic growth. In 2018, he was convicted of taking bribes from firms in return for contracts and spent a year and a half behind bars, until the Supreme Court ruled he and others could appeal their cases without serving time.

ELSEWHERE



U.S. offers temporary refuge to Venezuelans

WASHINGTON

The U.S. will allow tens of thousands of Venezuelans to seek refuge, in a significant policy shift from the Trump era, officials said on Monday. Temporary Protected Status is being offered to people who fled political repression and economic chaos in the South American country. A senior official in President Joe Biden's administration said "over 300,000 individuals are estimated to be eligible". The Venezuelans being considered are all already in the U.S. but will now be able to escape possible deportation, with stays granted through September 2022. "The living conditions in Venezuela reveal a country in turmoil, unable to protect its own citizens," Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas said. AFP

In a first, China launches 'virus passport'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING

China has launched a health certificate programme for Chinese international travellers, leading the world in plans for so-called virus passports.

The digital certificate, which shows a user's vaccination status and virus test results, is available for Chinese citizens via a programme on Chinese social media platform WeChat.

The certificate is being rolled out "to help promote world economic recovery and facilitate cross-border travel", a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

Although the certificate is meant for travel in and out of China, it is currently only available for use by Chinese citizens, and it is not yet mandatory. There is also no indication authorities in other countries will use it when Chinese travellers go abroad.

HK patriotism includes party loyalty: official

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HONG KONG

Loyalty to China's Communist Party will be key to deciding if a Hong Konger is a "patriot", a Chinese official said on Tuesday, as Beijing draws up laws to vet the finance hub's politicians.

"When we talk about patriotism, we are not talking about the abstraction of loving a cultural or historical China, but rather loving the currently existing People's Republic of China under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party," Song Ru'an, Deputy Commissioner of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong, said.

"Patriots should respect the Chinese Communist Party," he added.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Although both ECT and WCT are located in the same port, there are crucial differences in their proposed development.

The ECT is partially functional with a 600-metre quay wall, backyard, and gate complex. It awaits further development to augment operations and cargo transfers, at an estimated cost of \$700-800 million. The WCT, on the other hand, exists only as an idea with no physical infrastructure, such that its development would require greater investment and take more time to be profitable.

In the ECT deal, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority (SLPA) was to hold a majority stake of 51%, while Indian and Japanese investors were to hold 49% together. The more recent WCT deal that the Group was the nominee for the WCT project too, as it was "the very same investment",

and Japanese investors, for 35 years, while the SLPA would hold the rest. The arrangement is similar to the CICT, where China Merchants Port Holdings Company holds an 85% stake.

According to Cabinet spokesman Mr. Gammanpila, the "nationalist forces" as well trade unions "strongly" view the ECT as "a strategically important terminal" and it should not be developed by a company with a conflict of interest. "But WCT is not considered as important as the ECT, therefore, their [Adani Group's] experience in the port sector would be considered as a positive factor, not a negative factor."

Questions about the deal In terms of foreign relations, the government's abrupt exit from an existing international agreement surprised, and even shocked, many. Domestically, too, the government faces several questions.

While the government claims that a "majority" of trade unions are on board with the new proposal, a section of unions see the WCT offer to India, as being as problematic as the former ECT deal. Their opposition was principally to foreign involvement in national assets.

The government's political rivals, including the main opposition party Samagi Ja-



Transhipment hub: The Colombo Port has five terminals at present, including the Chinese-run CICT Terminal.

and only a "change in investment location".

Two projects

The Colombo Port has five terminals at present – South Asia Gateway Terminal (SAGT), Jaya International Terminal (JCT), Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), Unity Container Terminal, and the ECT. The proposed WCT is to come up at the port's western end.

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KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road
Bengaluru – 560 001. Phone No. 080-22265383
website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-45/13618/2020-21 Date:09.03.2021

CORRIGENDUM-I

In furtherance to this office reference cited above, calendar of events is extended for the work. (1) Formation of Industrial Layout including formation of 18M & 15M Wide Roads, including asphalting, Construction of RCC Drains, Culverts, and providing water supply to Naval Allied Industrial Park at Mudageri Village, Karwar Taluk, Uttara Kannada District. (

MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	51,025	1.16
US Dollar	72.93	0.44
Gold	43,996	-0.27
Brent oil	68.10	-0.79

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	750.75	2.35
Asian Paints	2422.70	40.00
Axist Bank	745.45	2.15
Bajaj Auto	3798.75	0.00
Bajaj Finserv	9969.15	130.05
Bajaj Finance	5415.05	94.40
Bharti Airtel	521.75	-3.95
BPCL	445.90	-20.80
Britannia Ind	3426.75	-36.45
Cipla	797.00	-12.25
Coal India	151.70	-1.45
Divis Lab	3503.20	-4.50
Dr Reddys Lab	4448.30	-43.95
Eicher Motors	2592.70	9.45
GAIL (India)	149.05	-5.10
Grasim Ind	1366.35	22.10
HCL Tech.	973.15	11.25
HDFC	2577.30	67.05
HDFC Bank	1562.50	43.00
HDFC Life	740.20	17.25
Hero MotoCorp	3448.85	-15.10
Hindalco	333.25	-3.35
Hind Unilever	2198.50	23.95
ICICI Bank	625.10	17.05
IndusInd Bank	1024.80	6.55
Infosys	1345.55	9.80
Indian Oil Corp	100.55	-3.05
ITC	207.80	-0.20
JSW Steel	401.60	-6.25
Kotak Bank	1978.95	63.10
L&T	1508.30	-6.90
M&M	852.00	1.00
Maruti Suzuki	7301.55	42.05
Nestle India Ltd.	16910.80	58.35
NTPC	109.50	-1.05
ONGC	116.75	-1.50
PowerGrid Corp	216.00	-4.15
Reliance Ind	2191.00	-0.05
SBI Life	971.30	47.45
State Bank	387.60	-2.00
Shree Cement	27313.15	128.10
Sun Pharma	612.60	-2.20
Tata Motors	315.20	-6.05
Tata Steel	706.75	-30.50
TCS	3050.95	44.00
Tech Mahindra	988.15	19.65
Titan	1456.90	0.15
UltraTech Cement	6697.40	29.25
UPL	624.90	-5.05
Wipro	419.20	-2.30

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.73	73.05
Euro	86.60	86.98
British Pound	100.97	101.41
Japanese Yen (100)	66.90	67.20
Chinese Yuan	11.17	11.22
Swiss Franc	78.10	78.46
Singapore Dollar	54.09	54.34
Canadian Dollar	57.72	57.97
Malaysian Ringgit	17.65	17.75

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Indian Bank to raise up to ₹4,000 cr. via QIP

CHENNAI Indian Bank has decided to raise equity capital up to ₹4,000 crore through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP). In a filing, the bank said the Committee of Directors had accorded approval for raising up to ₹4,000 crore (including premium) through QIP in one or more tranches.

'E-invoice must for units with over ₹50-cr. sales'

NEW DELHI The government has made it mandatory for businesses with more than ₹50 crore turnover to generate e-invoices for B2B transactions from April 1. E-invoicing will be extended to firms with a turnover over ₹50 crore from April 1, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs said in a notification. PTI

SPORT

Pant and the brave new world where old orthodoxies are cast aside

A young man had pushed the boundaries of the possible in a manner that saw the game transition from the old to the new



BETWEEN WICKETS

SURESH MENON

For a moment the world stood still. Then the visual began to unspool itself in the mind. Did he really do it? Was that actually possible? Could he have reverse-swept one of the world's best fast bowlers to the boundary over the head of slips? And that too off the new ball?

What was that – the shot of the decade, maybe even the shot of the century? Are batsmen smiling assassins too? For having stunned the bowler, fielders and onlookers, the batsman then broke into a smile.

Outrageous, audacious, impudent, cheeky, sassy, mischievous, insolent, feisty, brazen, impertinent... descriptions were dredged up and then dismissed as inadequate.

Had we arrived at a brave new world where the old orthodoxies had been cast aside and the shocking and dangerous were commonplace? Perhaps this was how the world reacted when W.G. Grace first showed that back-foot play could be productive. Or when Ranji invented the leg-glance.

Rishabh Rajendra Pant didn't invent the reverse sweep, not even the variation he played that day in Ahmedabad against James Anderson in the final Test. He didn't need to bend low as he might have against a spinner, he had to make allowance for the bounce. He didn't need to slap the ball either, merely guide it with the gentlest of persuasions.

There was no tension or straining for effect. It was as if he saw the ball come to him in slow motion and had the luxury of time. His legs were bent, the bat held loosely. Had he got any single element otherwise, there might have been disaster – physical or in terms of a wicket lost.

Precision was called for – the bat had to meet the ball at precisely that moment with precisely that touch and at precisely

that angle. And suddenly the ugliest stroke in the book was converted into something poetic.

One crowded moment of glorious life is worth an age without a name. For one instant, the state of the match didn't matter, it wasn't important who was winning or losing. It was enough to know that a young man had pushed the boundaries of the possible in a manner that saw the game transition from the old to the new.

There have been great shots before. I recall my favourites. Gundappa Viswanath on his toes square cutting the world's fastest bowler then, Andy Roberts. Sachin Tendulkar beaten in the flight but still going through with the shot for a six against Abdul Qadir. V.V.S. Laxman reading a Shane Warne googly and driving him inside out against the turn. Rahul Dravid pulling Allan Donald. Sourav Ganguly stepping out to the left-arm spinner and depositing him into the crowd. Sunil Gavaskar standing up to his full height and dropping a rising delivery from Imran Khan dead at his feet. Virender Sehwag making it all look so easy, cut-

ting or driving between fielders.

But these were strokes wrapped in orthodoxy. Driving with bat and pad close together, rolling the wrist over while cutting, getting behind the line of the ball in defence. For years our coaches insisted there was only one way to bat if you had to take them seriously.

Technique was everything. You ignored that at your peril. When Rahul Dravid was bowled reverse sweeping at 270 in a Test match, it was seen as divine punishment for a batsman so wedded to orthodoxy. It was as if there had been a momentary glitch in the cosmos.

The altar of orthodoxy
When Sunil Gavaskar hit a six in the pre-lunch session on the opening day of the Golden Jubilee Test against England in 1980, jaws dropped, and there was much tut-tutting. Such behaviour was not expected of one of the great technicians of the game.

I liked Gavaskar's response then. He said it was a tribute to opener Mushtaq Ali, the first Indian to make a century

abroad and whose batting was described as "swashbuckling." He was in the audience.

Some years later, when Gavaskar mentioned casually that he would like to enjoy his cricket and play more strokes, something close to a national outrage erupted. How dare he! He had to carry the Indian baton on his shoulders, not enjoy himself.

Indians – players, fans, media – worshipped at the altar of orthodoxy. Any deviation from the straight-and-narrow was looked down upon.

Perhaps I exaggerate. After all, Mushtaq Ali apart, there were players like Salim Durrani, Farokh Engineer, Budhi Kunwar, and later K. Srikanth who bent orthodoxy into different shapes. But you get the idea.

Had Pant done then what he did now, he might have been ostracised, or at least sent to bed without supper. Disrespecting an elder like Anderson would have earned him a stern talking-to.

How times have changed! And how grateful we are for it!

Rider stripped of title

SPORTS REPORTER
CHENNAI

Bengaluru rider Abhishek Vasudevanurthy, winner of the TVS One-Make Championship 2020 (RR310 category), has been stripped of his title in addition to the penalties imposed by Race Direction for his "unsportsmanlike act" in the season finale last December.

The Indian Motor Sport Appellate Court (IMSCA) hearing and subsequent ruling was a consequence of an incident in the eighth and final race at the MMRT on December 20.

On the start-finish straight, Abhishek grabbed and depressed the brake lever of fellow-competitor Anup Kumar (Chennai). Incidentally, Abhishek had already sealed the championship going into the final race.

Govt. asks refiners to diversify oil imports after OPEC+ move

PSUs looking at buying crude from Guyana, IOC renews deal with Russia: sources

REUTERS

NEW DELHI

India has asked state refiners to speed up diversification of oil imports to gradually cut their dependence on West Asian suppliers after OPEC+ decided last week to largely continue production cuts in April, two sources said.

The world's third biggest oil consumer imports about 84% of its crude needs with over 60% of that coming from West Asian countries, which are typically cheaper than those from the West.

India, hit hard by rising oil prices, has urged producers to ease output cuts and help the global economic recovery. In response, the Saudi energy minister told India to



All-weather suppliers: India cannot be held hostage by decisions of West Asian producers, says source. ■REUTERS

dip into strategic reserves filled with cheaper oil bought last year.

"We have asked companies to aggressively look for diversification," said a government source. "We can-

not be held hostage to the arbitrary decision of Middle East producers. When they wanted to stabilise the market we stood by them."

India had not cancelled any shipment of West Asian

crude when oil demand collapsed due to COVID-19, the source said. OPEC's share in India's oil imports declined to historic lows in the first 10 months of this fiscal year.

'Long-term pay off'

While initial costs could be high, the strategy will pay off in the long term, the source said. One plan is to import oil from new producer Guyana, the sources said. Indian Oil Corp. has also renewed its oil import contract with Russia, they added.

India's oil ministry and IOC did not respond to requests for comment.

Iraq and Saudi Arabia are the two biggest suppliers of crude oil to India.

As OTP deliveries fail, TRAI holds back norms on commercial texts

Key entities failed to fulfil regulations leading to disruption'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Following disruptions in SMS and OTP deliveries for banking, payments and other transactions, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Tuesday temporarily suspended the implementation of norms for commercial text messages, which came into effect on Monday, for seven days.

"It has been observed that some of the principal entities [senders of messages] have not fulfilled the requirements as envisaged in [the] regulations... As a result, their SMS were getting dropped after implementation of the scrubbing of SMS by telecom service providers (TSPs)," the regulator noted.

TRAI added that in order to protect the interests of consumers, it had been decided that 'scrubbing' of SMS by telecom providers would be suspended temporarily for seven days to enable the principal entities to register the template of SMS by the customers.

"However, the pace of growth will differ... While the first half will benefit optically because of low-base effect, the second half will see a more broad-based pick-up in economic activity," Crisil said.

"TSPs are being requested to inform their principal entities to take immediate necessary action in this regard and facilitate their registration including SMS

template in a time-bound manner," it said.

The new blockchain-based regulation, which provides for registration of senders, telemarketers, headers, content templates, consent templates, registration of fine-grained subscriber preference, were introduced to curb the menace of unsolicited commercial communications (UCC).

The temporary suspension follows complaints from consumers, many of whom took to social media, that they were not receiving SMSs and OTPs for many services, including for banking and e-commerce, following the implementation of the new norms.

The regulator also noted that TSPs published the re-

quirements of a new regulatory framework in leading newspapers, from time to time, to inform all principal entities to get onboarded.

'No end to spam'

According to a survey by LocalCircles, 74% of respondents said they still get spam SMS despite registering on TRAI's 'Do Not Call Registry'. "37% said they receive 4-7 messages every day, 36% said 8 or more, 25% said 1-3, while only 2% said they don't get unwanted SMS at all," the survey group said.

Jhulan and Smriti script a dominant victory for India

Spinner Rajeshwari, too, chips in with the ball while Punam Raut contributes with the bat as Mithali's side pulls level in ODI series

SA IN INDIA

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
LUCKNOW
Smriti Mandhana posted an emphatic statement on behalf of the host, as India raced to a nine-wicket victory over South Africa, with more than 21 overs to spare, in the second One-Day International at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Stadium here on Tuesday.

Setting the tempo

The ever smiling and relaxed Smriti, whose classy stroke-play lays stress on timing rather than power, set the tempo for the Indian chase. She pulled and hooked two sixes off Shabnim Ismail in the first over, after South Africa had set a modest target of 158.

Yet, the beauty of the Indian display of authority lay more in the restraint than the free-flowing strokes, as Smriti and opener Punam Raut put on 138 runs for the second wicket, being very judicious with their shot se-



Firing on all cylinders: Jhulan's four wickets had the South Africans on a leash before Smriti took over. ■ BCCI



SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA

Lizelle Lee lbw b Jhulan 4 (6b, 1x4), Laura Wolvaardt c Sushma b Mansi 9 (13b, 2x4), Sune Luus c Sushma b Mansi 36 (57b, 5x4), Lara Goodall b Harmanpreet 49 (77b, 2x4), Mignon du Preez c Deepthi b Rajeshwari 11 (20b, 1x4), Marizanne Kapp c Deepthi b Jhulan 10 (16b, 2x4), Trisha Chetty c Harmanpreet b Rajeshwari 12 (25b), Nadine de Klerk b Jhulan 8 (17b, 1x4), Shabnim Ismail b Jhulan 0 (2b), Ayabonga Khaka (not out) 5 (13b, 1x4), Nonkululeko Mlaba, Mithali b Rajeshwari 0 (2b); Extras (b-4, lb-1, w-6, nb-2): 13; Total (in 41 overs): 157.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-21 (Jemimah, 4.1). ■ SOUTHERN AFRICA BOWLING

Shabnim 6-0-46-1, Kapp 6-1-7-0, Khala 7-1-23-0, Mlaba 3-0-29-0, Luus 4-0-28-0, de Klerk 2.4-0-26-0.

Toss: India; Player-of-the-month: Jhulan Goswami.

India won by nine wickets with 21.2 overs to spare to level five-match series 1-1.

Third ODI: March 12, 9 a.m.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-5 (Lee, 0.6 overs), 2-20 (Wolvaardt, 5.1), 3-80 (Luus, 20.4), 4-99 (du Preez, 25.5), 5-113 (Kapp, 29.1), 6-130 (Goodall, 33.1), 7-144 (de Klerk, 37.3), 8-144 (Shabnim, 37.5), 9-156

INDIA BOWLING

Jhulan 10-0-42-4, Mansi 7-1-23-2, Deepthi 6-0-20-0, Rajeshwari 9-0-37-3, Punam 8-0-30-0, Harmanpreet 1-1-0-1.

INDIA

Jemimah Rodrigues b Shabnim 8 (19b, 1x4), Smriti Mandhana (not out) 80 (64b, 10x4, 3x6), Punam Raut (not out) 62 (89b, 8x4); Extras (w-8, nb-1): 9; Total (for one wk): 28.4 overs: 159.

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Fighting UP downs Delhi

Upendra Yadav and Karan Sharma script brilliant rally

HAZARE TROPHY

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Delhi's top-order batting failed for the second time in three days and a fighting Uttar Pradesh did not allow the host any real chance of making a comeback.

Eventually, UP cruised to an emphatic 46-run victory in the quarterfinals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Tuesday.

On Thursday, UP will return to Ferozeshah Kotla stadium in the semifinal.

Put in to bat, UP recovered from 66 for four by riding on a 129-run stand involving Upendra Yadav (112, 101b, 11x4, 2x6) and skipper Karan Sharma (83, 100b, 11x4) to reach 280 for seven in 50 overs.

Rattled by left-arm medium pacer Yash Dayal (3/53) who sent back openers Dhruv Shorey and Hiten Datalal in the second over of the innings, Delhi never recovered. Though Lalit Yadav (61, 78b, 8x4) and Anuj Rawat (47, 64b, 4x4) gave some hope to Delhi during their

102-run stand for the sixth wicket, the mounting required run-rate kept UP ahead in the game.

If the Delhi dugout expected the duo of Rawat and Sangwan to produce another match-winning seventh-wicket stand like they did miraculously against Uttarakhand on Sunday, it was not to be.

In the other quarterfinal at Air Force ground (Palam), Mumbai, chasing 285 in its quarterfinal against Saurashtra, reached the target in the 42nd over. Prithvi Shaw led the way with a strokeful 185 (123b, 21x4, 7x6) and put n 238 for the opening wicket with Yashavni Jaiswal (75, 10x4, 1x6).

The scores: Saurashtra 284/5 in 50 overs (Samarth Vyas 90, Chirag Jani 53 n.o., Vishvaraj Singh Jadeja 53) lost to Mumbai 285/1 in 41.5 overs (Prithvi Shaw 185 n.o., Yashavni Jaiswal 75).

Uttar Pradesh 280/7 in 50 overs (Upendra Yadav 112, Karan Sharma 83, Sameer Chaudhary 43 not out) beat Delhi 234 in 48.1 overs (Lalit Yadav 61, Anuj Rawat 47).

Semifinals: March 11: Mumbai vs Karnataka; UP vs Gujarat.



Swinging into action: With UP 66 for four, Upendra added 129 with Karan to tilt the scales in his side's favour. ■ FILE PHOTO

TV PICKS

Champions League: Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Thursday)

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 11.30 p.m.

ATP 250: Chile Open, Eurosport (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

IN BRIEF

Injured Williamson to miss Bangladesh ODIs
WELLINGTON
Captain Kane Williamson will miss New Zealand's three One-Day Internationals against Bangladesh this month with an elbow injury. Williamson has a small tear in his left elbow tendon that requires immediate treatment, NZC medical manager Dayle Shackel said. The ODIs will be played on March 20, 23 and 26. AP

Divij & Zelenay crash out

MARSEILLE (FRANCE)
Divij Sharan, seeded fourth with Igor Zelenay of Slovakia, lost to Spaniards Alejandro Davodovich Fokina and Marc Lopez 6-4, 6-2 in the doubles first round of the ATP 250 tennis tournament here.

The results: €409,765 ATP, Marseille, France: First round: Alejandro Davidovich Fokina & Marc Lopez (Esp) bt Igor Zelenay (Svk) & Divij Sharan 6-4, 6-2.

Gymnastics test event cancelled

TOKYO
A gymnastics test event for the postponed Tokyo Olympics that would have included athletes from outside Japan was cancelled on Tuesday.

The international event will be replaced by a local event with only Japanese gymnasts to test the venue for the upcoming Olympics. Travel restrictions were cited as a prime reason for the cancellation. The Tokyo Olympics are to open on July 23. AP

Sharath Kamal shocks World No. 16 Franziska



Fighting back: Sharath had to draw from his reserves after trailing 0-7 in the fourth game. ■ FILE PHOTO: BISWARANJAN ROUT

Sathiyan and Manika lose to top-seeded Japanese

TABLE TENNIS

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

Sharath Kamal turned the clock back to produce a vintage performance in knocking out World No. 16 Patrick Franziska (Germany) 12-10, 3-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-9 for a place in the pre-quarterfinals of the World Table Tennis Star Contender tournament in Doha on Tuesday.

Sharath, ranked 32nd, had to draw from his reserves after trailing 0-7 in the fourth game. He used all his experience to close the gap 6-8 before the German managed

to force the decider.

"These points were crucial for me when I entered the deciding game," Sharath told *The Hindu* after pulling off a series of brilliant points in the close fifth game.

Stunning shots

Some stunning blocks off the backhand and a good number of forearm drives clearly surprised the higher-ranked German. Down 3-5 in the decider, Sharath switched gears during the power-hitting rallies against his former teammate at Borussia Dusseldorf Club in the Bundesliga for two years.

The players tied until 8-8 when Sharath broke free and established two match-points. Franziska saved one, but after a long rally his forehand return found the net-chord and went long.

A little before Sharath sealed his place in the pre-quarterfinals, G. Sathiyan and Manika Batra lost their second round matches to top-seeded Japanese rivals.

The results (second round):

Men: Sharath Kamal bt Patrick Franziska (Ger) 12-10, 3-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-9; Tomokazu Harimoto (Jpn) bt G. Sathiyan 11-4, 11-5, 11-8.

Women: Mima Ito (Jpn) bt Manika Batra 11-7, 11-6, 11-7.

Prajwal Dev fights past Denim Yadav

SPORTS BUREAU

INDORE
S.D. Prajwal Dev fought his way past Denim Yadav 6-2, 5-7, 6-2 in the first round of the \$15,000 ITF men's tennis tournament at the Indore Tennis Club on Tuesday.

In doubles, the top-seeded pair of Saketh Myneni and Vijay Sundar Prashanth was beaten 11-9 in the super tie-break by Italy's Lorenzo Bocchi and Leonardo Catani in the pre-quarterfinals.

The results:

Singles (first round): Oliver Crawford (USA) bt Nitin Kumar Sinha 4-6, 6-2, 6-1; Dalwinder Singh bt Raghu Jaishankari 6-3, 6-0; Manish Sureshkumar bt Anirudh Chandrasekar 6-3, 6-2; S.D. Prajwal Dev bt Denim Yadav 6-2, 5-7, 6-2.

Gymnastics test event cancelled

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The international event will be replaced by a local event with only Japanese gymnasts to test the venue for the upcoming Olympics. Travel restrictions were cited as a prime reason for the cancellation. The Tokyo Olympics are to open on July 23. AP

Gayatri advances

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Gayatri Menon of Kerala bounced back from a bad start to put it across Veda Varshita of Telangana 3-6, 6-2, 7-5 in the first round of the Haryana Open ₹500,000 women's tennis tournament at the Tennis Project, Baliawas, on Tuesday.

The results:

Singles (first round): Yubarani Banerjee bt Kundal Wajgane 6-3, 6-3, [10-6]; Jonathan Binding & Henry Patten (GBR) bt P.C. Vignesh & Muthu Aadhiya Senthilkumar 6-0, 6-2; Sidharth Rawat & Manish Sureshkumar bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Niki Poonacha 6-2, 6-2; Jatin Dahiya & Dalwinder Singh bt Aryan Goveas & Dhruv Sunish 7-6(9), 6-3; Zane Khan (USA) & Dominik Palan (Cze) bt Filip Bergevi & Jonathan Mridha (Swe) 7-5, 6-3.

Ankit Chopra & Aaditya Tevari bt Atharva Sharma & Vedit Vaghela 6-3, 3-6, [10-6]; Jonathan Binding & Henry Patten (GBR) bt P.C. Vignesh & Muthu Aadhiya Senthilkumar 6-0, 6-2; Sidharth Rawat & Manish Sureshkumar bt Anirudh Chandrasekar & Niki Poonacha 6-2, 6-2; Priyanshi Bhandari bt Jannat Kaur 6-0, 6-2.

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Rishika Sunarka bt Anu Moar 6-0, 6-0; Lakshmi Sarvanji bt Harshali Mandavkar 7-5 (retd.); Gayatri Menon bt Veda Varshita 3-6, 6-2, 7-5; Bala Gayathri Snigdha bt Shilpi Das 6-1, 6-1.

Influential Havertz gives Chelsea a vital victory

Plays a key role in both goals; Inter Milan goes six points clear

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCIES

LONDON

Chelsea cemented its grip on the fourth place in the Premier League as Kai Havertz finally delivered an influential display in a vital 2-0 win over top-four rival Everton on Monday.

Havertz has endured a disappointing first season following his £70 million move from Bayer Leverkusen last year. But the Germany midfielder was given a rare start by Chelsea boss Tuchel and he responded by playing the key role in both goals.

Havertz's shot was deflected into the Everton net for a Ben Godfrey own goal in the first-half.

The 21-year-old has not scored in the league since



Playmaker: Havertz, who was given a rare start by Chelsea boss Tuchel, responded with a brilliant show. ■ AFP

October but Tuchel entrusted him with an important role as Chelsea's false nine. His intelligent movement put him in position to earn the second-half penalty that Jorginho converted. Chelsea is now four points

Reid happy with India's performance



Optimistic: Reid wants the team to accelerate the learnings. ■ FILE PHOTO

HOCKEY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ANTWERP

National men's hockey team chief coach Graham Reid feels India needs to accelerate its learning from the European tour and tighten its defence in the build up to the Tokyo Olympics.

Reid is contented with his side's performance in the just-concluded tour, where India remained unbeaten. The two-week tour was the country's first assignment since 2020.

"I'm pretty happy with the performance; I'm very happy with the way the tour was – from the point of view

of getting some international competition. That was really important," Reid said on Monday. During the four-match tour, India posted a 6-1 win and 1-1 draw against Germany and followed it up with a 1-1 draw and 3-2 win over Great Britain.

"We go back to Bengaluru from here and will be training there for a few weeks before we set out on another tour of our FIH Pro League matches in Argentina."

"I believe the next few months leading up to Tokyo will be busy for us with competition and some training. The Olympic year has well and truly started for us now and we need to accelerate our learnings."

ROYAL SOAP OPRAH!

Amul
HARRY FOR IT!

Messi to Paris: Barca's nightmare and PSG's dream?



Work to do: Barca, trailing 4-1, needs a miracle from Messi to turn it around against the Mbappe-inspired PSG. ■ AFP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE PARIS

As Lionel Messi lands in Paris for the Champions League contest on Wednesday, the inevitable temptation is to think ahead to next season and wonder if the Argentine might be a regular fixture in the French capital.

That remains the nightmare scenario for Barcelona fans, even if their new president Joan Laporta announced following his election victory on Sunday that he was "convinced he wants to stay."

On the evidence of the first leg of its Champions League last-16 tie, PSG has bypassed Barca. Its 4-1 win at the Camp Nou means it would take a stunning turnaround in Wednesday's return leg to stop it

from reaching the quarterfinals. A move to one of Spain's giants was long seen as the pinnacle for any player, but times have changed, as proven by Neymar's transfer to Paris for a world record €222 million (\$264m at the time) in 2017.

PSG and City are probably the only likely destinations for Messi should he leave. But could a switch to Paris really happen? Money may have once proven no obstacle for PSG, but the current climate means signing Messi could be beyond even it. A place in the quarterfinals of the Champions League, at Messi's expense, should not be.

Wednesday's fixtures: PSG vs Barcelona; Liverpool vs Leipzig, both matches at 1.30 a.m. (Thursday). +

Humpy is BBC's Indian sportswoman of the year

Lifetime award for Anju, Manu Bhaker chosen emerging player



Koneru Humpy. ■ PTI



Anju Bobby George. ■ PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD

World rapid chess champion Koneru Humpy has won the BBC Indian Sportswoman-of-the-Year award, according to a media release on Tuesday.

"This award is very precious, not only to me but the entire chess fraternity. Being an indoor game, chess doesn't get as much attention as sports like cricket in India," Humpy said from Vijayawada. "But, with this award, I hope, the game will draw people's attention."

"I think I could win over the years because of will-power and confidence. A woman player should never think about quitting the game. Marriage and motherhood are part of life and should not change the course of our lives," Humpy said.

Inter broke the deadlock nine minutes after the break when Atalanta failed to properly clear a corner and Skriniar fired the loose ball into the bottom left corner.

Everton's first away league defeat since November was a significant blow to its hopes of a top-four place.