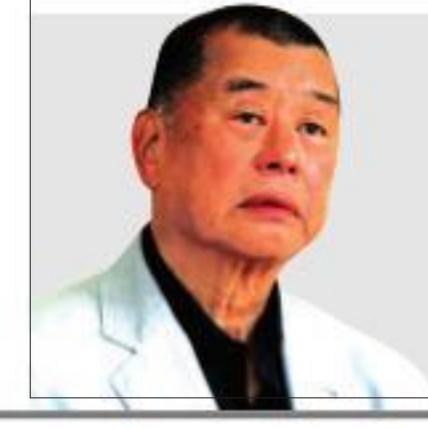




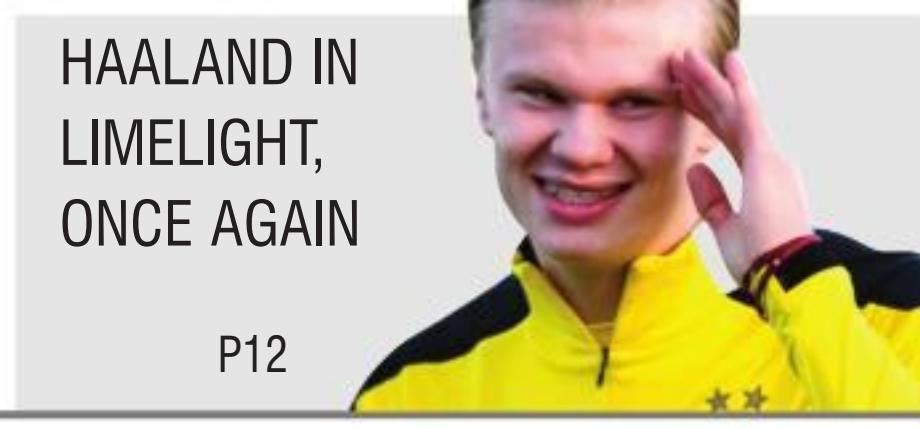
UGANDA: CRISIS AT  
THE HELM



HONG KONG  
ACTIVIST DENIED  
BAIL AGAIN



BIDEN ADMIN TO  
INTRODUCE US  
CITIZENSHIP ACT



HAALAND IN  
LIMELIGHT,  
ONCE AGAIN

P6

P9

P10

P12

## WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Moderate fog in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 28 and 10 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 100% Min: 52%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 27.8°C (+4) Min: 9.6°C (-1)

SUN RISES

06:55 hrs

MOON RISES

11:18 hrs

SUN SETS

18:14 hrs

MOON SETS

01:04 hrs

## THUMBNAILS

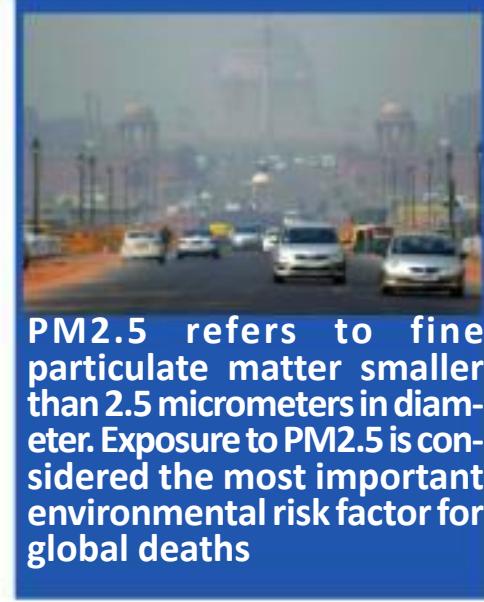


Journalists participate in silent sit-in protest against rampant harassment of media persons, at Press Club in New Delhi on Thursday. SNS

Record deal for Chris Morris in IPL auction: All-rounders and foreign fast bowlers fetched the big bucks at this year's IPL players' auction where South Africa's Chris Morris clinched a record-breaking Rs 16.25 crore deal with Rajasthan Royals and uncapped Karnataka player Krishnappa Gowtham also invited a bank-breaking bid. Morris became the most expensive buy in the IPL auction history with Rajasthan Royals shelling out big money for the all-rounder even as uncapped players such as Gowtham also hogged the limelight. P12

Murder case in Unnao deaths: Uttar Pradesh police on Thursday registered a case of murder into the deaths of two teenage girls whose bodies were found in a field even as a post-mortem revealed no injury marks. A third girl is being treated for suspected poisoning. The UP human rights body has taken note of the incident at Babubhara village in Unnao district while political parties slammed the Yogi Adityanath government over it.

Air pollution due to PM2.5 killed 54,000 in Delhi last year: Study



NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Air pollution caused by hazardous PM2.5 fine particulate matter led to the death of 54,000 people in Delhi last year where pollution levels remained almost six times above the prescribed WHO limits, according to a new study. According to a Greenpeace Southeast Asia analysis of IQAir data, 1,800 deaths per million were estimated due to PM2.5 air pollution in Delhi.

"The PM2.5 air pollution claimed approximately 54,000 lives in India's national capital in 2020," the study said.

PM2.5 refers to fine particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter. Exposure to PM2.5 is considered the most important environmental risk factor for global deaths.

NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

## Prove majority on 22 Feb: Pudu Guv to CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUDUCHERRY, 18 FEBRUARY

The Congress government in the Union Territory will have to prove its majority in the Assembly on 22 February with Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Thursday ordering the floor test, hours after assuming charge vowing to function in accordance with the Constitution.

The development came days after a ruling party MLA resigned, becoming the fourth to quit the Assembly since last month, bringing down the numbers of the Congress-DMK alliance to 14 in the 33-member House with an effective strength of 28.

Soundararajan, the Telangana Governor handed additional charge of the UT on

The Supreme Court on Thursday closed the proceedings initiated to probe a larger conspiracy behind sexual harassment allegations against ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi and "fixing" of benches at the top court. A bench headed by Justice Sanjaya Kishan Kaul said that nearly two years have passed and the possibility of retrieving electronic records is very little.

The top court, while closing the suo motu proceedings in the case, said the in-house probe has been completed and the three-member panel headed by Justice S. Bobde, the current CJI, has already given the report exonerating the former CJI.



The top court referred to the letter of the Director of Intelligence Bureau that some conspiracy might have ensued due to certain tough decisions taken by former Chief Justice Gogoi like verdict on preparation of the NRC in Assam. There are strong reasons to believe that some kind of conspiracy might have been undertaken against the then CJI Gogoi

The top court referred to the letter of the Director of Intelligence Bureau that some conspiracy might have ensued due to certain tough decisions taken by former Chief Justice Gogoi like verdict on preparation of the National Register for Citizens (NRC) in Assam. There are strong reasons to believe that some

## 'Disengagement of Chinese, Indian troops at LAC going on smoothly'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BEIJING, 18 FEBRUARY

China on Thursday said the disengagement process of the Chinese and Indian front-line troops at the eastern Ladakh border was progressing smoothly and expressed hope that both sides will make concerted efforts to achieve the goal.

On 10 February, China's Defence Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian in a brief press release announced that the Chinese and Indian front-line troops at the South and North banks of the Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh started synchronised and organised disengagement.

"The relevant process is smooth on the whole. We hope that the two sides will

The relevant process is smooth on the whole. We hope that the two sides will work in concerted efforts to achieve the goal. According to the consensus of our multi-round negotiations, the front-line troops have started disengagement in a synchronised way on both sides

HUA CHUNYING  
CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

work in concerted efforts to achieve the goal," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said on Thursday when asked how the disengagement process is proceeding. "According to the consensus of our multi-round

negotiations, the front-line troops have started disengagement in a synchronised and organised way on both sides," Hua said. About the timeline of the disengagement of the troops, she said, "I'm not aware of the specifics."

After nine months of border stand-off in eastern Ladakh, the two armies reached an agreement on disengagement in the North and South banks of Pangong lake that mandates both sides to cease forward deployment of troops in a "phased, coordinated and verifiable" manner.

The Indian Army on Tuesday released short video and photographs showing thinning down of troops and dismantling of bunkers, camps by the Chinese military in eastern Ladakh.

We are of the view that the suo motu proceedings in the present case is accordingly closed and the report be sealed again, it said, adding that the veracity of the allegations levelled by lawyer Utsav Singh Bains could not be verified completely due to the limited access of records and other collaborative mate-

rial. The top court, while referring to the report of Justice Patnaik, further said that simultaneously the report on the existence of conspiracy cannot be completely ruled out.

On 25 April, 2019, the top court had appointed former apex court judge Justice Patnaik to hold an inquiry into the sensational allegations of a lawyer about "larger conspiracy" to frame Gogoi and fixing of benches in the top court.

The apex court made it clear that inquiry by Justice Patnaik shall not be with respect to the "alleged misbehavior" involving the CJI, against whom allegations of sexual allegations have been levelled by a former top court employee.

## With China on mind, Quad FMs call for freedom of navigation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

The four 'Quad' members - India, Japan, Australia and the US, emphasised their commitment to upholding a rules-based international order, underpinned by respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty

region, with clear support for ASEAN cohesion and centrality. It was noted that the Indo-Pacific concept had gathered growing international support, including in Europe," the MEA said.

The ministers discussed ongoing efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, including vaccination programmes. They expressed their commitment to cooperate in addressing this challenge, enhancing access to affordable vaccines, medicines and medical equipment. India's efforts at providing vaccines to 74 countries was recognised and appreciated.

They exchanged views on responding to climate change and furthering cooperation in areas such as maritime security, HADR, supply chain resilience and counter-terrorism.

In the discussion pertaining to recent developments in Myanmar, the upholding of rule of law and the democratic transition was reiterated by India. Noting that regular "Quad" consultations hold value, the ministers agreed to continue these useful discussions.

# Maha districts face stricter Covid curbs

More than 5,000 new Covid-19 cases in the state after a gap of 75 days

SNS & PTI  
MUMBAI/NEW DELHI,  
18 FEBRUARY

**O**n a day that the state of Maharashtra reported over 5,400 new Covid-19 cases, the state administration announced a ten-day lockdown in Yavatmal district in the Vidarbha region, while a weekend lockdown was announced in neighbouring Amravati district.

After a gap of 75 days, Maharashtra on Thursday reported more than 5,000 new Covid-19 cases, a sizable number of them coming from Akola and Nagpur divisions.

The state recorded 5,427 new cases on Thursday, the highest one-day count this year, along with 38 fatalities. It had reported 4,787 new Covid-19 cases on Wednesday. The state had reported 5,229 infections on December 4, which had been followed by a gradual drop in cases.

The decline had prompted the state government to relax restrictions on movement and gatherings further, including the restrictions on travel by local trains in Mumbai.

But since the last week, the state is reporting increase in the daily numbers of infections, setting alarm bells ringing.

With the spurt in cases, the administration in Yavatmal district ordered a ten-day lockdown from Thursday night, including curbs on gatherings and the closure of schools, while a weekend lockdown was

### PM suggests special visa scheme for health workers

NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Addressing a meeting of experts and health officials from neighbouring countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today suggested creating a special visa scheme for doctors and nurses within the region so that they can travel quickly during health emergencies, on the request of the receiving country.

Apart from India, representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Pakistan, Seychelles and Sri Lanka attended the meeting on "Covid-19 Management: Experience, Good Practices and Way Forward".

Modi lauded the way the health systems of the countries cooperated during the pandemic and for meeting the challenge in the most densely populated region with coordinated response.

He recalled the creation of the Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund to meet the immediate needs of the country.

Modi lauded the way the health systems of the countries cooperated during the pandemic and for meeting the challenge in the most densely populated region with coordinated response.

He suggested that the regional countries could create a platform for collecting, compiling and studying data about the effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines among their populations. SNS

Covid-19 norms are not followed, people should be prepared for a fresh round of strict lockdown.

The country's tally of Covid-19 cases, meanwhile, reached 1,09,50,201 as of 8 a.m. on Thursday, with 12,881 new infections being reported in the previous 24 hours, while recoveries have reached 1,06,56,845, according to the Union health ministry.

The death toll increased to 1,56,014 with 101 daily new fatalities over the same period. The active caseload stands at 1,37,342.

These fresh cases came to light following 60,441 tests. The positivity rate stood at 0.22 per cent.

Delhi's Covid caseload mounted to 6,37,445, the health bulletin said.

The cumulative figure of Covid fatalities climbed to 10,896. (SEE P2)

### FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES	1,09,50,201
ACTIVE CASES	1,37,342
NEW CASES	12,881
NEW RECOVERIES	11,987
TOTAL DEATHS	1,56,014
UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 08.00 A.M. THURSDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2021	

Agitating farmer groups on Thursday held a four-hour nationwide 'rail roko' agitation with the railways saying there was negligible impact on services though some trains were stopped by officials at stations as a precautionary measure.

In Punjab and Haryana, farmers at several places squatted on railway tracks which led to disruption in normal movement of trains on some routes.

Protests were also staged at some places in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

However, in many states, it was a low-key affair. The All India Kisan Sabha claimed the agitation received massive response across the country'. It further claimed that some activists were arrested in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana. "The massive success of the rail roko struggle is a warning to the Modi government. The farmers across the country have expressed their determination to continue the struggle till the demands are met with," the Sabha said in a statement.

region, with clear support for ASEAN cohesion and centrality. It was noted that the Indo-Pacific concept had gathered growing international support, including in Europe," the MEA said.

The four 'Quad' members - India, Japan, Australia and the US, emphasised their commitment to upholding a rules-based international order, underpinned by respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty

region, with clear support for ASEAN cohesion and centrality. It was noted that the Indo-Pacific concept had gathered growing international support, including in Europe," the MEA said.

The ministers discussed ongoing efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, including vaccination programmes. They expressed their commitment to cooperate in addressing this challenge, enhancing access to affordable vaccines, medicines and medical equipment. India's efforts at providing vaccines to 74 countries was recognised and appreciated.

They exchanged views on responding to climate change and furthering cooperation in areas such as maritime security, HADR, supply chain resilience and counter-terrorism.

In the discussion pertaining to recent developments in Myanmar, the upholding of rule of law and the democratic transition was reiterated by India. Noting that regular "Quad" consultations hold value, the ministers agreed to continue these useful discussions.

## Supreme Court closes 'conspiracy' probe in ex-CJI case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

The Supreme Court on Thursday closed the proceedings initiated to probe a larger conspiracy behind sexual harassment allegations against ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi and "fixing" of benches at the top court.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjaya Kishan Kaul said that nearly two years have passed and the possibility of retrieving electronic records is very little.

The top court referred to the letter of the Director of Intelligence Bureau that some conspiracy might have ensued due to certain tough decisions taken by former Chief Justice Gogoi like verdict on preparation of the NRC in Assam. There are strong reasons to believe that some kind of conspiracy might have been undertaken against the then CJI Gogoi

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kind of conspiracy might have been undertaken against the then CJI Gogoi, the bench said, while quoting the report of Justice Patnaik.

It said that in view of the mandate of the order dated 25 April, 2019, Justice Patnaik's report opines that it cannot really inquire whether the decisions of the then CJI on the judicial side had triggered the conspiracy against Gogoi.

## North Corp turns up heat on property tax defaulters

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Seeking not to allow property tax defaulters to go scot-free, the North Corporation has now started issuing notices to defaulting owners for attachment of their properties and has asked them to pay their property tax dues as per new guidelines and use factors.

According to a North Corporation official, Karol Bagh Zone has started survey of properties for property tax. More than 1200 properties owners were issued notices for payment of property tax.

**According to a North Corporation official, Karol Bagh Zone has started survey of properties for property tax. More than 1200 properties owners were issued notices for payment of property tax**

commercial properties were not paying tax as per DMC Act," said the official.

He said that notices have also been sent to hospitals like Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, BLK Hospital, Delhi Heart and Lungs Institute for taking the "wrong use factor and thereby paying less property tax".

"It is expected that hospitals will give additional Rs 20 crore as pending property tax. It was found that some

big hospitals were running educational courses but were not paying the correct use factor," said the official.

He also said that "All the private schools and coaching institutions have been intimated to pay their property tax dues as per new MVC guidelines and use factor".

The North Corporation said that Karol Bagh Zone has collected Rs 88 crore in the current financial year, and has set its target to achieve Rs 210 crore.

The official said that during the survey public awareness was also being spread by using auto tippers and e-rickshaws. People can pay house tax either in zonal offices or online. The North Corporation has launched an amnesty scheme for waiver of complete interest and penalty which is valid up to 2 March.

Air quality 'very poor' in NCR for 4th day in a row

NOIDA, 18 FEBRUARY

The average air quality across Ghaziabad, Noida, Greater Noida and Faridabad remained "very poor" for the fourth day in a row, while it improved slightly to reach the "poor" zone in Gurgaon, data issued by a government agency on Thursday showed.

Pollutants PM 2.5 and PM 10 also remained in the air of the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The average 24-hour AQI at 4pm on Thursday was 325 in Ghaziabad, 315 in Noida, 336 in Greater Noida, 307 in Faridabad and 296 in Gurgaon, according to CPCB's Sameer app.

## 'PM2.5 air pollution claimed 54K lives in Capital in 2020'

Delhi's air pollutant levels remained almost 6 times above the prescribed WHO limits: Study

PTI

NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Air pollution caused by hazardous PM2.5 fine particulate matter led to the death of 54,000 people in Delhi last year where pollution levels remained almost six times above the prescribed WHO limits, according to a new study.

According to a Greenpeace Southeast Asia analysis of IQAir data, 1800 deaths per million were estimated due to PM2.5 air pollution in Delhi.

"The PM2.5 air pollution claimed approximately 54,000 lives in India's national capital in 2020," the study said.

PM2.5 refers to fine particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers in diameter. Exposure to PM2.5 is considered the most important environmental risk factor for deaths globally, and was attributed to 4.2 million premature deaths in 2015, the study said.

The study noted that the damage is equally worrying in other Indian cities.

An estimated 25,000 avoidable deaths in Mumbai in 2020 have been attributed to air pollution. Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Lucknow estimated an approximate 12,000, 11,000, 11,000, and 6,700 avoidable deaths respectively due to polluted air," it said.

Noting that the air pollutant levels in Delhi remained almost six times above the prescribed WHO limits of 10 g/m3 annual mean, the study said the estimated air pollution-related economic losses were USD 8.1 billion (Rs 58,895 crore), which amounts to 13 per cent of Delhi's annual GDP.

"Despite a temporary



FILE PHOTO

reprise in air quality owing to the lockdown, the latest figures from the report underscore the need to act immediately. The need of the hour is to rapidly scale up renewable energy, bring an end to fossil fuel emissions and boost sustainable and accessible transport systems," the study said.

Globally, approximate 160,000 deaths have been attributed to PM2.5 air pollution in the five most populous cities of Delhi (30 million), Mexico City (22 million), Sao Paulo (22 million), Shanghai (26 million) and Tokyo (37 million), it said.

"We need to ensure our growth demand is fuelled by sustainable and cleaner sources of energy and cities should promote low cost, active and carbon-neutral transport options that prioritise walking, cycling, and public transport, the increased use of clean energy and clean transport will not only improve the public health but it will also strengthen the economy and public money," added Chanchal.

Commenting on the regulations made by cost estimator CEO of IQAir, Frank Hammes says, "Breathing should not be deadly. The fact that poor air quality claimed an estimated 160,000 lives in the five largest cities alone should give us pause, especially in a year when many cities were seeing lower air pollution levels due to less economic activity. Governments, corporations and individuals must do more to eliminate the sources of air pollution and make our cities better places to live."

To show the impact of air pollution related deaths on the economy, Greenpeace said it used the approach called willingness-to-pay which means a lost life year or a year lived with disability is converted to money by the amount that people are willing to pay in order to avoid this negative outcome.

## Nursery admission process begins

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Nursery admission in schools across the national capital began on Thursday.

The application window will close on March 4.

The Directorate of Education (DoE) had last week notified the admission schedule, bringing respite for anxious parents who have been waiting for the notification for over two months.

"The first list of selected children will be displayed on March 20, followed by second list on March 25 and subsequent list for admission, if any, on March 27. The entire admission process will conclude on March 31," a DoE official said.

Usually, nursery admission in around 1,700 schools in the national capital begin in the last week of November.

"We have told schools that no deviation from the notified schedule shall be permitted. Each school shall display the admission schedule on its notice board and website.

Further, each school shall ensure that application forms for admission are made available to all applicants till the last date of submission of form," the official said.

Schools were asked to notify their number of seats and admission criteria by February 15.

"The number of seats at the entry levels shall not be less than the highest number of seats in the entry level classes during the last three years -- 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21.

"Schools shall develop and adopt criteria for admission which shall be fair, reasonable, well defined, equitable, non-discriminatory, unambiguous and transparent," the official added.

A monitoring cell is being constituted in each district under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director (District) concerned, who shall ensure that each private school uploads the criteria and their points on the online module and further ensure that the school shall not adopt those criteria which were abolished by the department and upheld by the Delhi High Court.



A workshop on 'ease of doing business' was organised in the Capital on Thursday by the land resources department of the Government of India in collaboration with the Delhi government's revenue department.

## Delhi's active corona cases stand at 1,053

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

The national capital today reported 130 fresh Covid-19 cases and 2 coronavirus-linked deaths, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These fresh cases came to light following 60,441 tests conducted across the city, which included 38,956 RT-PCR/CBNAAT/TrueNat tests and 21,485 rapid antigen tests. The positivity rate stood at 0.22 per cent.

Delhi's Covid caseload mounted to 6,37,445, the health bulletin said.

The cumulative figure of

Covid fatalities climbed to 10,896. No fresh death due to the deadly virus was reported in the city yesterday for the third time this month.

The number of recovered coronavirus patients over the last 24 hours was stated to be 153, which took their cumulative tally in the city to 6,25,496 so far.

The count of active cases remained 1,053 and the number of those patients getting treatment under home isolation due to Covid-19. Today I met both families, presented a Rs 1 crore cheque to each of the two families as honorarium.

In future also I will be standing with such families."

## Delhi court directs lodging of FIR in case of caste-based question asked in DSSSB exam

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

A Delhi court has directed the concerned authority to register an FIR under the provisions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, in a case of caste-based question being allegedly asked in the primary teachers' recruitment exam by the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB).

"Observe that the question with caste abusive words was set up in paper by paper setter not only once i.e. on October 13, 2018, but again the very next year i.e. in paper dated August 18, 2019.

Additional Sessions Judge Ravinder Bedi said prima facie

"Prima facie the alleged words in questions papers of 2018 and 2019 disclosed commission of various cognizable offences committed by the DSSSB."

The court directed the officer empowered under the Act to conduct an investigation in the case and file a monthly report before the court.

"Observe that the question with caste abusive words was set up in paper by paper setter not only once i.e. on October 13, 2018, but again the very next year i.e. in paper dated August 18, 2019.

## The Statesman

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MANJUJA WADHWA  
Additional District Judge-02  
Shahdara District,  
Room No. 52  
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi  
PC No. 02/2021

1. Smt. Manjusha Wadhwा, b/o Sh. Ashok Kumar Banka, d/o Sh. L. N. Bhattacharya, d/o Sh. Manik Vihar, Delhi-110092  
Petitioner  
Versus

All concerned.  
Whereas in the abovenoted petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt secured amount and Service Benefit lying with Airport of India, Raiv Gandhi Bhawan, Safdarjung Airport, New Delhi, to be standing in the name of Late Ms. Seema Sethi, d/o Sh. L. Sh. Syam Sunder Sethi, deceased.

Whereas the t at 10 (Ten) O'clock in the forenoon has been fixed for 29-03-2021 hearing on the application notice is hereby given to all concerned.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court this 15th day of February, 2021.

Administrative Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (West)  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi  
Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF  
SHRI AMAR DASS  
Administrative Civil Judge-cum-Additional Rent Controller (West)  
Court Room No. 112,  
1st Floor  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi  
Petition No. : SC-112/2020

To,  
1. Yashpal Sethi, s/o Sh. Shyam Sunder Sethi  
2. Dalip Kumar Sethi, s/o Sh. Shyam Sunder Sethi  
3. Ms. Neeta, d/o Sh. Shyam Sunder Sethi  
4. Rani Sethi, d/o Sh. Shyam Sunder Sethi  
All r/o 21, B-Block, Asha Park, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110018.

— Petitioners  
Versus

State  
FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE  
CATE INDIAN  
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

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The organisation made great efforts to make people aware of freedom. Swami Pranavananda thought of a free India

AMIT SHAH  
HOME MINISTER

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2021

03

# 'Rail roko': Farmers block tracks in Punjab, Haryana

The four-hour-long countrywide rail blockade called by farmer unions protesting against the central government's controversial new agriculture laws passes off peacefully

IANS

CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI,  
18 FEBRUARY

Farmers protesting against the Centre's new agriculture laws blocked railway lines at most places in Punjab and Haryana in response to the call given by the farmers' unions for a nationwide 'rail roko' on Thursday.

Though the four-hour blockades ended peacefully, the commuters faced a harrowing time.

Carrying the national flag along with their union flags, the protesters, comprising women, elders and children, started assembling along the railway lines and began squatting on the tracks well ahead of the start of the protest at 12 noon.

Heavy police deployment was in place in Haryana and Punjab to deal with any un-



ward incident.

At several protest sites, special arrangements were made for holding 'langars' or community kitchens.

Farmers protesting against the legislations have expressed apprehension that these laws

would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the 'mercy' of big corporate entities.

The farmers' four-hour 'rail roko' protest over the three farm laws had "minimal or neg-

ligible" impact on train operations across the country and passed off without any untoward incident, railway officials said.

Railway Ministry spokesperson DJ Narain said, "The rail roko agitation passed

off without any untoward incident. There was negligible or minimal impact on running of the trains across the country."

He said that the train movement in all the zones is normal now.

The official said the majority of the zones have not reported a single case of any stoppage of trains by the agitators.

He said that North Central Railway, South Eastern Railway, Southern Railway, South Eastern Railway, North Frontier Railway, Central Railway and South Western Railway did not report any untoward incident.

The spokesperson said that a few trains were stopped in some areas of some zonal railways but now train operations are normal.

"While dealing with the rail roko agitation, utmost patience was exercised by all concerned," he added.

## SAD asks Centre to take up Sikh pilgrims' security issue with Pak

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 18 FEBRUARY

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Thursday asked the Central government to take up the issue of perceived security threat to Sikh devotees visiting Pakistan with the latter government instead of arbitrarily denying permission to a Sikh jatha (caravan of pilgrims) which was scheduled to visit Sri Nankana Sahib on the hundredth anniversary of Saka Nankana Sahib.

The Union home ministry decision was conveyed on Wednesday to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the highest temporal body of Sikhs, which had organised the visit to attend the 100th anniversary of Saka Nankana Sahib.

Terming the denial of permission to the Sikh Jatha one day before it was scheduled to visit Pakistan as extremely unfortunate, former minister Dr Daljit Singh Cheema (in photo)

said, "This action has sent a wrong signal to the Sikh sangat and has hurt its feelings."

Stating the Union home ministry's reasons for denial of permission to the 600-strong Jatha after its members had been issued visas was perplexing Dr



Cheema said "We fail to understand what new factors have come to play within days. Moreover even if the central government has any input regarding threat to the security of the devotees visiting Pakistan it should discuss the same with its Pak counterparts instead of taking knee jerk reactions on its own accord".

India had suspended travel to Pakistan in March 2020 in view of the coronavirus pandemic. The home ministry letter said while the pandemic continues to persist, it is pertinent to note that Pakistan has so far recorded over half a million cases with over 10,000-plus deaths due to Covid. Considering the capacity of health infrastructure in Pakistan, it is not advisable for a large group of our citizens to visit Pakistan for a week during the pandemic.

## HP seeks Centre's nod to include more groups in Covid jabs drive

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 18 FEBRUARY

The Himachal Pradesh government will seek nod from the Centre to include more categories of persons like bus drivers, conductors, teachers, media persons among others — who are in direct contact with masses and prone to catch and spread coronavirus infection — under the Covid vaccination drive.

The decision was taken in the State Steering Committee meeting for the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination drive meeting which was held on Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Anil Khachi.

The Committee lauded the performance of the state in vaccination drive and discussed the issues of sections of society as bus drivers, conductors, teachers, media persons etc who are in direct contact with masses and are considered more vulnerable to catch and spread COVID-19 infection.

The committee directed to take up the matter with the Union government for permission to cover persons with these occupations in the ongoing phase of vaccination of frontline workers, a state government official said. Khachi directed the Health department to ensure 100 per cent vaccination of the Healthcare workers and front-

line workers with second dose who have been inoculated with the first dose.

Secretary Health Amitabh Awasthi detailed about the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive in the state.

Mission Director National Health Mission Nipun Jindal informed that 3,67,500 doses of Covishield vaccine has been received in the state in three lots.

He further stated that till 16th February 2021, 63282 Healthcare workers (HCW) and 20963 Frontline workers (FLW) had been vaccinated, resulting in an achievement of 76 percent and 41 percent respectively against the target. The deadlines for the first dose for HCWs and FLWs

are 20th February 2021 and 1st March 2021 respectively, he added.

Jindal said the committee was further apprised that 2907 HCWs have been administered the 2nd dose as well.

"The vaccine wastage in the state has been 3.46 percent which is well below the permissible limit of 10 percent. The AEFI percentage occurrence as reported on application is 0.6 percent.

The state is undertaking regular IEC campaigns to counter misinformation and vaccine hesitancy and the cooperation from all departments is being received for the smooth implementation of vaccination drive," he added.

### FADING OUT



A view of darkening horizon during sunset from Shimla on Thursday.

LALIT KUMAR

## Jai Ram highlights 'Swarnim Rath Yatra' at HP BJP meet

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 18 FEBRUARY

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Thursday said that each and every Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker should ensure that every Himachali gets a feeling of "connection with the glorious journey of the state's development over 50 years".

He was addressing the state BJP executive committee meeting at Dharamshala in Kangra district.

Thakur said that the state government has planned to hold a massive programme to highlight the 50 years statehood journey of HP. He said that this Yatra would be called "Swarnim Rath Yatra" and would be held throughout the state for 51 days.

He said that the journey would focus on the development of the state during the last 50 years. He said that this event would be held at the government level and sought cooperation of every section of the society to make people aware that Himachal has achieved success during the last fifty years.



The chief minister said the Rath Yatra would start from Himachal Day on 15 April this year and would cover every nook and corner of the state. He said that effective use of social media, print media and traditional media would be ensured.

He said that the state level Rath Yatra Coordination Committee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of former Speaker, Himachal Pradesh Assembly and MLA Dr Rajiv Bindal. He said that this would have a detailed presentation on the achievements of the state.

He said that the state government is also planning to hold a special session of the state Vidhan Sabha and efforts

would be made to invite the President, Vice President or Lok Sabha Speaker of the country.

Thakur said the main objective of the Swarnim Himachal Rath Yatra is to ensure active participation of every Himachali and to instill a sense of belongingness. He said the Yatra would focus on showcasing the glorious 50 years developmental journey of Himachal Pradesh. He said that active participation of Ministers, MLAs and elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies must be ensured to make the event a success.

He said that issues like women empowerment, upliftment of the weaker sections would also be ensured in the Rath Yatra. Former Speaker of Himachal Assembly and MLA Dr Rajiv Bindal also gave his suggestions to make the event a grand success. He said that a proper coordination between the elected representatives and members of respective Panchayati Raj Institutions must be ensured to motivate the people to participate in the rally.

## Environmental concerns related to hydroelectric projects also need to be addressed: HP Governor

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 18 FEBRUARY

Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya on Thursday said hydropower generation plays an important role in increasing the economic resources but the state needed to do more work while addressing concerns related to environmental protection.

After a visit to Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Project at Rampur in Shimla, Dattatreya said the state was one of the leading states in the field of power generation where surplus energy was being generated.

"Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Station of 1500 MW capacity is the country's largest hydropower plant which is providing electricity to around nine states of the country.

The project boasts of the largest and longest headrace tunnel, largest desilting chambers, deepest and largest surge shaft and the largest underground power complex," he added.

He further stated that the



HP Governor Bandaru Dattatreya during his visit to Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Project at Rampur in Shimla.

He added the premises were immaculately clean and offered an extraordinary view of nature.

"Himachal is a land of God and Goddess and is known as Dev Bhoomi and the significance of Dev Bhoomi is reflected in these ancient temples," he added.

## Khattar calls for rejuvenation of 1890 ponds in Haryana

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 18 FEBRUARY



to the notice of the authorities concerned so that appropriate action can be taken.

It was informed at the meeting that as per the orders issued by the government, a total of 905 ponds have been completed under the various schemes during fiscal year 2019-20 and 2020-21 and construction work of 756 ponds is about to be completed soon. Currently in the 18 model ponds, the used water of the houses is being allowed to flow into the ponds only after being treated by Constructed Wetland Technology and the rejuvenation of the proposed 200 ponds in 2020-21 will be started soon.

The CM said presently there is any encroachment on ponds, then prepare a report regarding the same and bring

the details of the crop sown in every acre should be registered by the farmers on the Meri Basal - Mera Byora' portal. Besides this, the details of patches of land lying vacant should also be updated.

During a meeting of Haryana Kisan Kalyan Pradhikaran held here today, it was informed at present 92 lakh acres of land is verified, of which about 68 lakh acres of land is under cultivation. On the remaining uncultivated land, the CM directed to ascertain the usage of the remaining 24 lakh acres of land. He said that the mechanism of crop verification will be strengthened.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures

# BLAZERS SUITS & JACKETS SALE

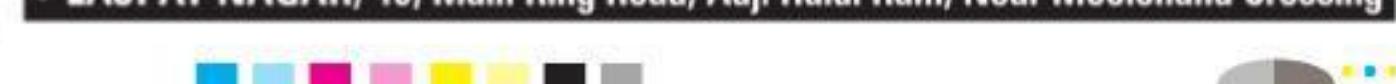
upto 60% off

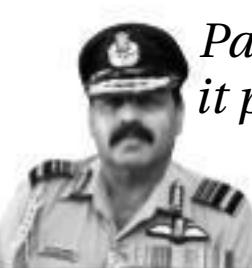
Formals & Wedding collection

By Economy Sales: 9212758425

ARROW Raymond Colorplus LOUIS PHILIPPE PARK AVENUE

- PUNCHKUAN ROAD, Garwal Bhawan, (Near Jhandewalan, Gole Chkr.)
- WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
- JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing





Pakistan's plan of armoured thrust was brilliant, but the only thing it probably forgot to factor, was India's air power.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL R K S BHADAURIA  
RECALLING THE DECISIVE BATTLE OF LONGEWALA

**India**

## India to gift 2 lakh Covid-19 vaccines to UN Peace-Keepers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

India has announced a gift of 200,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine for United Nations Peace-Keeping Forces.

Addressing the virtual open debate of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on the "implementation of resolution 2532 (2020) on the cessation of hostilities in the context of the pandemic," exten-

nal affairs minister S Jaishankar said, "Keeping in mind the UN Peacekeepers who operate in such difficult circumstances, we would like to announce today a gift of 200,000 doses for them."

## TENDER

**SOUTH DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (EMS)/DEMS/SZ  
ROOM NO. 38, ZONAL OFFICE BUILDING,  
GREEN PARK, NEW DELHI-110016  
Tel.: 011-26967172

### PRESS NOTICE FOR NOTICE INVITING TENDERS CUM REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

NIT No. EE/(EMS)/SZ/T/2020-21/04 Dated:- 12/02/2021  
South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) invites sealed Technical and Financial Proposals (manually) from the interested bidders who necessarily be a Ltd/Pvt. Ltd Company, registered under the companies Act, 1956 (Bidding in the form of proprietorship/JV Consortium is not permitted) for "Lifting and Transportation of Construction and Demolition waste (C&D waste) on demand from various locations of South Zone, SDMC and disposal to SLC site at Okhla or any other site designated by SDMC" for a period of 3 years as per following details:-

Estimated Cost - Rs. 10.34 Crores.

Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) - Exempted. Bidder has to submit a certificate as per Circular No. D/SE/(PS)SDMC/2020-21/181 dated 31.12.2020, **RFP document - RFP document can be obtained by intending bidders, (by hand) from the office of the undersigned on any working day between 02:00PM to 5:00PM on payment of Rs. 1500/- (non-refundable) in the form of DD/Pay order in favour of Commissioner, SDMC payable at New Delhi. RFP documents can also be downloaded from the website [www.mcdonline.nic.in/sdmcorp](http://www.mcdonline.nic.in/sdmcorp), however in that case RFP document fee worth Rs. 1500/- shall have to be submitted along with technical bid in the form of a separate DD/Pay order.**

Last date for issue of RFP Document:- 08/03/2021 till 5:00 PM

Last date for Submission of Proposal:- 09/03/2021 till 3:00 PM

Date of Opening of Technical Bids:- 09/03/2021 till 3:30 PM

A pre bid meeting shall be held with perspective bidders on 26/02/2021 at 11:00AM in the office of Director (DEMS), 19th Floor, Dr. S.P. Mukherjee Civic Centre, Minto Road, New Delhi-110002.

For more details and further updates from time to time, please refer to website [www.mcdonline.gov.in](http://www.mcdonline.gov.in)

Executive Engineer  
EMS/DEMS/SZ

RO No. 70/DPI/S/2020-21

## HIMACHAL PRADESH JAL SHAKTI VIBHAG NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

The Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Mandi invites tenders on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following work(s) through offline process:-

Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Cost of Form	Time Limit
1 Providing LWSS to PC Habitation in census village Jhiri; Nagwani, Shill Mashora & Takoli in GP Nagwani & Takoli Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing & Testing of GI pipe 65mm dia from Node N-N12 = 500 Rmt, Node N12-N18 = 600 Total 65mm dia = 1100 Rmt, 32mm dia from Node N-N6 = 500 Rmt) (UNDER JMM)	2,61,700/-	5234/-	250/-	Three Months
2 Replacement and Extension of WSS Sathan Banog Sanyarka in GP Lagdhara Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing and Testing of Paralel GI pipe line 20mm dia = 1500 Rmt from Storage Tank to village Sathan).	1,58,577/-	3200/-	250/-	Three Months
3 Replacement and Extension of WSS Sathan Banog Sanyarka in GP Lagdhara Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing and Testing of Paralel GI pipe line 20mm dia = 1400 Rmt from Storage Tank Lagdhara to village Harian Basti Lagdhara).	1,46,005/-	2900/-	250/-	Three Months
4 Replacement and Extension of WSS Sathan Banog Sanyarka in GP Lagdhara Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing and Testing of Paralel GI pipe line 20mm dia = 1300 Rmt from Storage Tank Dhawali to village Dhawali).	1,37,435/-	2800/-	250/-	Three Months
5 Aug of Sewerage Scheme Mandi Town and Providing sewerage facility to adjoining villages of Mandi Town in Distt Mandi HP (SH:- C/O RCC Pillar and Platform for Sewerage pipe line 200mm dia near STP Khaliyar to Bijani from RD 60 to 120 Rmt).	3,53,720/-	7100/-	250/-	Three Months
6 Aug of Sewerage Scheme Mandi Town and Providing sewerage facility to adjoining villages of Mandi Town in Distt Mandi HP (SH:- C/O RCC Pillar and Platform for Sewerage pipe line 200mm dia near STP Khaliyar to Bijani from RD 0 to 60 Rmt).	3,57,883/-	7200/-	250/-	Three Months
7 Providing LWSS to PC Habitation in census village Jhiri; Nagwani, Shill Mashora & Takoli in GP Nagwani & Takoli Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing & Testing of GI pipe 50mm dia from Node E-E1 = 100 Rmt, 40mm dia from Node E1-F1 = 900 Rmt, 32mm dia from Node E-E2 = 200 Rmt, E2-E3 = 300 Rmt Total 32mm dia = 500 Rmt, 25mm dia from Node E3-E4 = 250 Rmt, 20mm dia from Node F9-F10 = 150 Rmt, Node F10 - F11 = 100 Rmt Total 20mm dia = 250 Rmt & 15mm dia from Node F11-F12 = 150 Rmt, Node F12-F13 = 150 Rmt Total 15mm dia = 300 Rmt) (UNDER JMM).	2,60,400/-	5208/-	250/-	Three Months
8 Providing LWSS to PC Habitation in census village DPF Saran; Kanjor & Ropra in GP Cheitalhatgarh Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing, Testing of GI pipe line 15mm dia at various points for house service connections = 95 Nos).	1,38,320/-	2800/-	250/-	Three Months
9 Providing LWSS to PC Habitation in census village Jhiri; Nagwani, Shill Mashora & Takoli in GP Nagwani & Takoli Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (UNDER JMM) (SH:- Laying, Jointing, Testing of GI pipe line 15mm dia at various points for house service connections = 95 Nos).	1,38,320/-	2800/-	250/-	Three Months
10 Providing LWSS to NC/PC habitation from Umri river to Tung, Bijan and its adjoining villages in GP Tung & Bijan Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP (SH:- Laying, Jointing and Testing of GI pipe of 150mm dia (MC) for R/Rain Water Stage. 1st stage & 2nd stage and Providing & Fixing of submersible pumpset enclosure at Raw Water Stage).	1,32,027/-	2700/-	250/-	Three Months
11 Augmentation of WSS Thalkandhar in GP Gharan, WSS to NC/PC Habitation in CV Rehan, Bandhi & Halag in GP Gharan, Bandhi, Aug. of WSS Palnidhar Bandal and WSS Saran, Badehani, Khablash Surath, Sehgal & Sansoi, Rahri in GP Kotadhar in Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP,(PHASE-2nd ) (SH:- Laying, Jointing and Testing of GI pipe line 50mm dia = 935 Rmt).	1,12,780/-	2300/-	250/-	Three Months
12 Augmentation of WSS Thalkandhar in GP Gharan, WSS to NC/PC Habitation in CV Rehan, Bandhi & Halag in GP Gharan, Bandhi, Aug. of WSS Palnidhar Bandal and WSS Saran, Badehani, Khablash Surath, Sehgal & Sansoi, Rahri in GP Kotadhar in Tehsil Sadar Distt Mandi HP,(PHASE-2nd ) (SH:- Laying, Jointing and Testing of GI pipe line 50mm dia = 915 Rmt).	1,10,373/-	2300/-	250/-	Three Months

Last date of sale of tender form from divisional office: 23-02-2021 upto 1.30 PM. The tender shall be received on dated 24-02-2021 till 3.00 PM and shall be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM in presence of tendered or their authorized representative.

The tender detailed conditions can be obtained from the website [www.hiph.org](http://www.hiph.org) and tender form from office of Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti Division Mandi upto date specified above after showing the documents as mentioned at Sr. No 1 to 5 of terms and condition.

583/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

The Executive Engineer Jal Shakti Division Bharmaur invites tenders on behalf of Government of Himachal Pradesh from approved eligible contractors for the following work(s) through e-tendering process.

Name of work	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time Limit	Cost of tender form
1 Repair of Rest House at Jal Shakti Sub-Division Bharmaur in Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- Providing and fixing vito lamination wooden flooring 80mm thick	15,53,16/-	3106/-	one Month	250/-
2 C/o WSS Tundha to Chale Phase I & II in GP Tundha Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- Providing laying jointing of GI pipe 15mm dia & 20mm dia at various RDs	24,040/-	4808/-	Three Month	250/-
3 Restoration of Rain Damages to WSS Kugti in GP Kugti Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- Providing laying jointing and testing of GI pipe 1540 Rmt for Karik Swami Mandir Kugti	1,37,942/-	3759/-	Three Month	250/-
4 A/R & M/o to WSS Kuned Jyoti in GP Kuned Tehsil & Distt. Chamba (SH:- C/o Head wear at Nallian)	15,54,51/-	3109/-	Three Month	250/-
5 A/R & M/o to WSS Loharka Kilod in GP Kilod Tehsil & Distt. Chamba (SH:- C/o RCC storage tank 8000 lit. cap. At Shinkha	11,66,654/-	2333/-	Three Month	250/-
6 Restoration of Rain Damages to WSS Gehra in GP Gehra Tehsil & Distt. Chamba (SH:- C/o crate work at source)	12,66,72/-	2573/-	Three Month	250/-
7 A/R & M/o to IPH Staff quarter Type-II under IPH sub-Division Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- Repair of Building at Type-II quarter	1,93,586/-	3872/-	One month	250/-
8 Restoration of rain damages to WSS Harsar in GP Harsar Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- C/o PCC R/wall & P/F Barbed wire fencing around the intake chamber	1,84,971/-	3699/-	One month	250/-
9 Restoration of rain damages to WSS Prangala in GP Prangala Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- C/o PCC R/wall & P/F Barbed wire fencing around the intake Chamber	10,48,399/-	2968/-	Three Month	250/-
10 A/R & M/o to WSS Bharmaur & its surrounding area in Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:-Laying jointing and testing of GI pipe 25mm dia 470 Rmt, 20mm dia 250 rmt, at Vill. Sandohue	20,36,51/-	4073/-	Three Month	250/-
11 Providing sewerage facility to Village Sandohue in Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- Providing laying and testing of DI pipe 150 mm dia & C/o manhole cover complete in all respect near Vill. Sandohue	27,26,66/-	5453/-	Three Month	250/-
12 A/R & M/o to WSS Bharmaur & its surrounding area in Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:-Laying jointing and testing of GI Pipe of various Dia at Forest Rest House Gharu)	69,26,00/-	13852/-	Three Month	250/-
13 Providing flood protection work to Kugti Nallian in GP Kugti Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- Providing wire crate at RD 60 to RD 80) two layer LHS & RHS	11,66,822/-	23336/-	Three Month	250/-
14 Remodeling of WSS Holi & its surrounding area in GP Holi Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- P/F Zinc alume 50000 Lit. cap.	15,65,02/-	5330/-	Six Month	250/-
15 A/R & M/o to WSS Digu to Durge in GP Durge Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- C/o 1 No intake & excavation laying jointing & testing of GI pipe Rd 0 to 1600 Rmt at Thedu mata Mainer	16,43,43/-	3287/-	One Month	250/-
16 Augmentation of WSS Bharmaur & its surrounding area in Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- C/o store building	14,94,818/-	29896/-	Three Month	250/-
17 Restoration of Rain damages to WSS Suktar Banoo Holi in GP Holi Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- C/o intake chamber & Exc. Laying jointing of GI pipe	14,41,76/-	2884/-	Three Month	250/-
18 Augmentation of WSS Hanjan Basti Garola in GP Garola Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- P/F zinc alume s/tank 30000 Lit. cap.	12,60,581/-	25212/-	Three Month	250/-
19 Restoration of rain damages to WSS to left out Hamlets to Vill. Suppa from old phindi nallian in GP Poolan in Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- Providing laying jointing and testing of HDPE pipe 32mm dia (OD) 1200 Rmt	15,66,35/-	3133/-	One Month	250/-
20 Restoration of Rain Damages to WSS Badgram in GP Badgram in Tehsil Bharmaur distt. Chamba (SH:- Providing laying jointing and testing of HDPE pipe 25mm dia (OD) 1260 Rmt	7,77,248/-	15545/-	Three Month	250/-
21 C/o WSS from Jhiku to sati Mata Mandir in GP Garola Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- P/F zinc alume s/tank 30000 Lit. cap.	3,45,176/-	6904/-	One Month	250/-
22 Establishing water testing Lab facility at Jal Shakti Sub-Division Killar under Jal Shakti Division Bharmaur (SH:- Providing supplying & installation of Lab equipments at Jal Shakti Sub-Division Bharmaur under Jal Shakti Division Bharmaur)	21,14,48/-	4229/-	Three Month	250/-
23 Providing Flood Protection work to Kugti Nallian in GP Kugti Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba (SH:- Providing wire crate at RD 25 to RD 40) two layer LHS & RHS	54,32,35/-	10865/-	Three Month	250/-
24 A/R & M/o to WSS Bharmaur & its surrounding area in Tehsil Bharmaur (SH:- Excavation laying jointing & testing of GI pipe 20mm dia at RD 0 to RD 1000	14,33,75/-	2868/-	Three Month	250/-
25 Aug of WSS Bharmaur and its surrounding area Tehsil Bharmaur Distt. Chamba Phase-I (SH:- Ex/ L/J & testing of GI pipe at Node No. 2-3.4-5.5-39.9-29	21,14,48/-	4229/-	Three Month	250/-

Last date of sale of tender form from Jal Shakti Division Bharmaur on dated 22-02-2021. 3:00 PM The tender shall be received on 23-02-2021 till 2:00 PM and shall be opened on the same day at 3:00 PM in presence of tendered or their authorized representative.

[www.hiph.org](http://www.hiph.org)

No-EE-JSD-BMR-GA-Tender/2020-8990

Dated : 16-02-2021

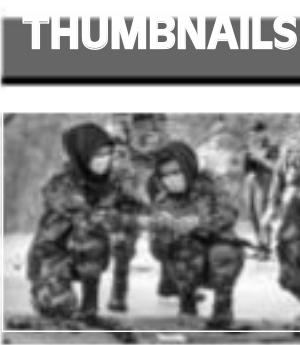
Executive Engineer  
Jal Shakti Division Bharmaur

589/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

## 'After Covid, fuel issue another jolt'

CPM says oil price hike will increase prices of all essential items

UP govt is not only suppressing the Dalit society but is also crushing honour &amp; human rights of women.

CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA  
AFTER THE BODIES OF TWO MINOR DALIT GIRLS WERE FOUND IN A FIELD IN UNNAO

Officers from the Afghan National Army during a four-week training session at Officers' Training Academy in Chennai on Thursday.

IANS

**Andhra civic polls:** TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu suffered a jolt as YSRCP won majority of the village panchayats in Kuppam Assembly constituency represented by the former chief minister.

SNS

**Scindia school to conduct SAA:** The Scindia School, one of the boys' boarding schools in Gwalior, will conduct its Scindia School Aptitude Analysis (SAA) on 27 February. The test will be for fresh admissions for the academic year 2021-22. It will be conducted in Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi, Lucknow & Gwalior, said the Press release statement.

SNS

**Debt Recovery Tribunal-H, Delhi**  
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

O.A. No. 801 / 2018  
**BANK OF BARODA**  
Versus Applicant  
M/s Shri Shyam Fabrics  
Defendants

To,  
1. M/s. Shri Shyam Fabrics (Proprietorship Concern) Through Its Proprietor Shri Sandeep Goswami Having Its Office At: D-56, First Floor, ODS Market, Lajpat Nagar-IV, New Delhi-110024. Also at: A-90, First Floor, Sector-7, Tha Rampur Residential Colony, Village Chikambapur, Pargana-Loh, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad U.P.-201001.

2. Shri Sandeep Goswami Proprietor of M/s. Shri Shyam Fabrics Having Its Office At: D-56, First Floor, ODS Market, Lajpat Nagar-IV, New Delhi-110024. Also at: A-90, First Floor, Sector-7, Tha Rampur Residential Colony, Village Chikambapur, Pargana-Loh, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad U.P.-201001.

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 1,19,66,932.42 (Rs One Crore Nineteen Lacs Sixty Six Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty Two and Paisa Forty Two Only) against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Lt. Registrar on 08-04-2021 at 10.30 A.M. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.tribunals.gov.in) Phone No. 011-23748473)

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic Situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application / Software;

(ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by 'Registrar/Recovery Officer-U' and Recovery Officer-Jl shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates/Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No. 011-23748473.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on the 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2021.

by order of this Tribunal  
for Registrar

Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry.

Amit K. Dar, Lt. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi

Phone: 011-23748473

E-mail: drt1@nic.in

# Be ready to sacrifice standing crop: Tikait

Says farmers will harvest crops, continue with stir same time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
HISAR, 18 FEBRUARY

**A**sserting that they won't return home till the farm laws are repealed, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Thursday said farmers should be ready to sacrifice their standing crop for it.

Tikait said the government should not be under the impression that the movement against the laws will end as farmers will go to their villages to harvest their crop.

Even if you have to set your standing crop on fire, you should be prepared for it. The government should not harbour this impression that farmers will return home. We will harvest crops and continue our agitation at the same time, he said addressing a "mahapanchayat" at Kharak Poonia village of Hisar.

"There will be no 'ghar wapsi' till then," he said.

Tikait also asked farmers to ready for the next call of the unions spearheading the stir. Keep your tractors filled with fuel and facing



towards Delhi's direction. You can get a call to move at any time, that will be decided by the committee (farmers unions), he said. Tikait said after Haryana, they will be holding panchayats in other parts of the country, including West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. While earlier farmers had given a call for a tractor rally in Delhi, Tikait said the next time, they will go to the national capital with their agricultural implements.

Addressing the gathering,

"rail roko" agitation, said chief spokesperson of the North-Western Railway, Gaurav Gaur.

**SP protests outside UP Assembly:** Samajwadi Party legislators on Thursday staged a protest outside the Uttar Pradesh Assembly building against the Centre's farm laws before the beginning of the state's Budget session.

Raising slogans against the government and in favour of farmers, the SP legislators sat before a statue of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh and demanded that the laws be repealed.

**Rail roko' protest in UP peaceful:** The 'rail roko' call by farmer unions on Thursday remained peaceful and did not have much impact in Uttar Pradesh with farmers organising token protests near railway tracks and stations in the state.

Farmers protested in Chitrakoot, Hamipur, Mahoba, Lalitpur, Fatehpur, Amethi and other districts of the state.

## Foreign envoys visit J&K, Opp criticises Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, 18 FEBRUARY



the situation after removal of Art 370.

Impressed with the situation, Eritrea ambassador remarked that change is visible and said that the envoy's visit to J&K is an eye opener and improves the understanding of important issues. The group includes Euro-

pean Union ambassador Ugo Astuto, and envoys of some 10 European countries, including French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain. Envoys and senior diplomats of Bangladesh are also part of the group. Former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was quick in reacting to their visit

and said in a rally: "Go is busy wooing foreign envoys through guided tours to seek 'all is well' certificate. Former chief minister Omar Abdullah tweeted: "Thank you for visiting Kashmir. Now please send some real tourists from your countries to visit J&K".

## Army on high alert at Indo-Myanmar border

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 18 FEBRUARY



In the wake of Myanmar having recently witnessed a military coup against its civilian government, the Indian Army is on high alert at the Indo-Myanmar border to avert any possible cross border infiltration by insurgents, said Lt Gen Anil Chauhan, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command.

Addressing the Press on the sidelines of the investiture ceremony held at Fort William today, Lt Gen Chauhan, talking on measures taken by the Indian Army at the Indo-Myanmar border, said he does not want to comment on the internal matters of that country but did not rule out the possibility of cross-border infiltration threats due to the prevailing political turmoil in Myanmar.

The Eastern Command's army commander said, "For the past three years, Indian Army is working in close coordination with the Myanmar Army (Tatmadaw) to curb the

cross border infiltration of Indian insurgent groups who are also inimical to Myanmar. However, post this recent political development inside their country, if the commitment of Myanmar Army towards their internal security increases then it can affect their deployment on the Indo-Myanmar border. This opportunity could be used by the insurgents to their advantage. We are alert and closely observing the situation."

The cross border infiltration mainly by insurgent groups in the North East to Myanmar is

an issue existing since long. This makes the Indo-Myanmar border a security challenge for the armed forces.

The Army commander further highlighted that Eastern Command have been training troops for unconventional warfare. Recently, the Eastern command inducted new defence assets such as ultralight howitzers the M777, aviation assets and equipments relating to electronic warfare. A synergy has been developed with the Indian Air Force whereby the newly inducted Chinook helicopters provided an edge to the joint operations.

Meanwhile, the investiture ceremony today witnessed distribution of 18 Sena Medals for gallantry and nine for distinguished work. Eight Vishist Sena Medal were awarded to the bravehearts. A total of 21 units of various arms and services which had outstanding performances during their deployment in the Eastern Command were awarded with coveted citations by the GOC-in-C.

SNS

## Rise of tourists in J&K sign of tourism revival: Minister

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY



Rise in tourists in Jammu and Kashmir is a sign of revival of the sector post the coronavirus pandemic, Union Tourism Minister Prahlad Patel said on Thursday, hitting out at naysayers who claimed that the scrapping of the erstwhile state's special status had taken a toll.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the third India Tourism Mart, organised by the Federation of Associations in India Tourism and Hospitality (FATH), Patel said the data indicated that tourists visited Srinagar and Jammu in more numbers in January as compared to the same period last year.

In January 2020, around 3,750 visited Srinagar, while

mote domestic tourism as international travel will be restricted for some time," he said.

Patel praised the sector for its resilience and urged hotels, service providers and others involved with the tourism industry to get themselves registered on portals, such as SAATHI and Nidhi.

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan also addressed the gathering and expressed his appreciation at the participation of over 250 delegates from 60 countries who attended the event virtually.

"There has been a continuous negative discourse on the effect of tourism in J&K due to the abrogation of Article 370. The data that is coming this year negates these claims. Some other states like Goa have also started showing signs of recovery, while states like Maharashtra and Kerala are still not open. We have to pro-

and security precautions in place.

"India has embarked on the world's largest immunization program against COVID-19. We have not only vaccinated over 8.5 million people in India but have also sent millions of doses to other countries seeking our help," Vardhan said.

Speaking on the advancements in the healthcare facilities, the minister noted that while India had always been a popular tourist destination, it had also emerged as a leading destination for medical tourism over the last few years.

To encourage it further, the government has already started issuing medical visas and planning to soon restart e-tourist visas, as well as scheduled international flights, he added.

## BJP will end Trinamul's 'cut-money culture': Shah



PM to virtually attend VBU convocation today

SURI, 18 FEBRUARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually take part in the convocation programme of Visva-Bharati on February 19, the central university said on Thursday. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhray 'Nishank' and West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhakhar, who is also the rector of VBU, will attend the convocation in person, the university said in a statement.

The convocation will start at 'Amra Kunja' (the Mango grove) in Santiniketan campus at 9.30 am and continue for two-and-a-half hours, it said.

A limited number of students will also be present at the programme.

The Gangasagar Mela will also be made part of the international tourist circuit. Shah said the 'Namami Gange' programme for cleaning River Ganga will also be implemented in the state. "We will ensure that the Utarayan Mela (Gangasagar Mela) becomes part of the international tourist circuit...this place becomes a big tourist spot, and its fame spreads across the world," he said.

## SPECIAL TRAINS

For the convenience of passengers, Railways have decided to run the following Special Express Trains as per the schedule given below:-

09325/09326 Indore Jn.-Amritsar Jn.-Indore Jn. Special (Bi-Weekly)

Train No. 09325	STATIONS	Train No. 09326
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
— 19:45	Indore Jn.	00:55 —
21:00 —	Amritsar Jn.	01:50 —

Days of Run : 09325 Ex. Indore Jn. on Tue, Fri from 23.02.2021 (till further advise) and 09326 Ex. Amritsar Jn. on Thu, Sun from 25.02.2021 (till further advise)

Stoppage: Dewas, Makshi, Shajapur, Biyavra Raigarh, Ruthiyai, Gunia, Shivpuri, Gwalior Jn., Agra Cantt., Raja Ki Mandi, Mathura Jn., Faridabad, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Ghaziabad, Meerut City, Muzaffarnagar, Deoband, Saharanpur, Yamunanagar Jagadhari, Ambala Cantt. Jn., Sirhind Jn., Ludhiana Jn., Jalandhar City & Beas Stations.

Accommodation : 2 Tier AC, 3 Tier AC, Sleeper and 2nd Seating (Fully Reserved.)

02909/02910 Bandra(T)-Hazrat Nizamuddin-Bandra(T) Garib Rath Superfast Special (Tri-Weekly)

Train No. 02909	STATIONS	Train No. 02910
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.
— 17:30	Bandra (T)	09:15 —
10:10 —	Hazrat Nizamuddin	16:30 —

Days of Run : 02909 Ex. Bandra (T) on Tue, Thu, Sat from 02.03.2021 (till further advise) and 02910 Ex. Hazrat Nizamuddin on Wed, Fri, Sun from 03.03.2021 (till further advise)

Stoppage: Borivali, Surat, Vadodara Jn., Ratlam Jn., Kota Jn. & Mathura Jn. Stations.

Accommodation : 1st Class, 2 Tier AC and 3 Tier AC

09009/0910 Mumbai Central-New Delhi-Mumbai Central Duronto Superfast Special (Bi-Weekly)

Train No. 09009	STATIONS	Train No. 0910
ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.	ARR. DEP.




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## Afghan quagmire

US President Joe Biden has not as yet indicated which way he's leaning on a crucial decision for the security situation in South Asia - whether or not he will withdraw the last 2,500-3000 American troops remaining in Afghanistan by the May 2021 deadline envisaged in the Doha deal between USA and the Taliban last year. Unlike his predecessor who could shrug off the pressure from those in favour of an American foreign policy emphasis on promoting democracy, human rights and gender equality as a means to enhancing its security given his constituency wanted nothing to do with such lofty overseas ambitions, Mr Biden is beholden to precisely this band of progressives. Scholars such as Madiha Afzal of Brookings argue that a false step at this stage would essentially hand Afghanistan to the Taliban, which would risk massive repercussions including the potential of a strengthened Al-Qaida. That, in turn, would reverse hard-won gains for a new generation of Afghans and at the same time seriously damage the credibility of an American administration that champions these values. The argument being made is that it is a flawed either/or narrative which assumes that May 2021 is a unilateral deadline for the USA when, in fact, the Doha deal was signed by two parties, with conditions both had promised to fulfil. Till the Taliban verifiably holds up its end of the bargain, the logic goes, Washington should stay put. For its own sake and for the Afghans.

But what if Mr Biden doesn't bite, as it were? If the USA pulls out of Afghanistan as stipulated in the peace deal, how would it impact the security and stability of the South Asian region? First, there is the obvious danger of Islamabad getting a firmer handle on the affairs of its western neighbour via its proxy - the Taliban's nexus with Pakistan's deep state is far too well-documented to need elaboration. Then there is the fact that the Doha deal's main counterterrorism condition on the Taliban is that "Afghan soil will not be used against the security of the United States or its allies" and it specifies that the Taliban must not only not host terror organisations such as Al-Qaida but it must prevent them from operating in Afghanistan. Quite apart from the normalisation of the Taliban which New Delhi has had to accept albeit with nose pinched given the significant support its brand of religious conservatism enjoys in Afghan society, there is real concern in India about just how serious and capable the USA will be in enforcing punitive measures were Afghan soil to be used against its 'allies' if they have no boots on the ground. India has to take care of its own security concerns. Strengthening ties with Iran and Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan is one aspect of being prepared for whatever decision President Biden takes. But keeping the faith with non-Taliban political forces in Afghanistan and providing them full moral, diplomatic and economic support, as officialese would have it, is vital.

## Crisis at the helm

Just as fish rots from the head, Uganda is in crisis at the helm. The post-presidential election crisis in the country has deepened with at least 31 of 44 allegedly kidnapped victims yet to be traced. They were abducted by security forces in the aftermath of the polls in January, whose outcome has been rejected as fraudulent by the main Opposition candidate. Palpably enough, pressure has been ratcheted up on the Ugandan government to rescue those who have been abducted. This underlines the distressing reality that democracy is at a discount. The internal affairs minister, Gen. Jeje Odongo's statement on those still missing has been greeted with consternation by Ugandans who allege that the people were taken at night in vans without licence plates. "We undertake to investigate each and every one of the reported incidents," Odongo said. It was the first time a top representative of the Ugandan establishment has acknowledged the reported abductions. The kidnappings have rendered the result decidedly spurious and several lawmakers, including the parliamentary Speaker, have asked the authorities for an explanation. President Yoweri Museveni's government, therefore, rests on a dubious foundation. Predictably, the authorities have denied targeting civilians. President Museveni is often credited with presiding over relative peace and security. But the election season was the most violent in years, with security forces accused of cracking down on supporters of Bobi Wine, Museveni's main challenger. Police accused his supporters of planning riots that could lead to a change of regime. Mr Wine has asserted that 3,000 of his followers are missing, are either in jail or are unaccounted for after alleged abductions by security forces. Attorneys for Mr Wine, a popular singer whose real name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, have this week filed a legal challenge with the Supreme Court seeking to nullify Museveni's victory and bar him from running for the presidency again. It is unclear when oral arguments will start. Museveni apparently has a strong support base, indeed a President who has never lost in the courts, and analysts say the nine-judge panel is not likely to rule against him. He was declared the winner of the election with 58 per cent of the vote, while Wine secured 35 per cent. The reaffirmation of the psephological swing means little or nothing in Uganda. The Opposition leader has binned the results as fraudulent, with soldiers allegedly stuffing ballot boxes, casting ballots for people and chasing voters away from polling stations. January's presidential election, therefore, marked the virtual suppression of the electorate. Museveni has dismissed allegations of vote-rigging, calling the election "the most cheating-free" since independence from Britain in 1962. Events ever since the election don't really bear him out, however. As Museveni has lost his credibility, so too has Uganda in the wider canvas.

# Social Sector Woes

Funds have been committed to the Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for the next five years, textile parks are to come up in the next three years. Similarly, a scheme to benefit discoms is to come up in the next five years, a scheme to fly the Indian flag on merchantmen would take five years. Such instances abound, lessening the clarity of Budget provisions



The Finance Minister declared in her Budget Speech that Budget 2021 was for the poor and disadvantaged. Doubling farmers' income, strong infrastructure, healthy India, good governance, opportunities for youth, education for all, women empowerment, and inclusive development were the goals that the Budget was geared to achieve. Monetary allocations in the Budget, however, tell a different story.

"Education Suffers" and "Education Needs More Funds, Not Less" (*The Statesman*, 5 January) bring out how the allocation for education has been reduced from last year's Rs 99,311 crore to Rs 93,224 crore this year, and how the cut would impact education. Suffice it to say that the educational reforms proposed under the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) would be difficult to implement on a reduced budget; Central and State Governments are already spending less than 2.6 per cent of the GDP on education, as against a goal of 6 per cent visualised by NEP.

The Finance Minister announced that expenditure on 'Health and Wellbeing' was proposed to be hiked to Rs 2,23,846 crore in 2021-22 from the earlier year's Budget Estimate (BE) of Rs 94,452 crores, an increase of 137 per cent. What the FM did not elaborate was that out of the incremental sum, Rs 38,512 crore was the increased allocation to the Water and Sanitation Department and Rs 36,022 crore was the Finance Commission grant to the Water and Sanitation Department. The FM has also included another grant of Rs 13,192 crore to States by the Finance Commission in the Health Budget. Clean water and good sanitation do add to the health of the nation but it would definitely be stretching things a bit if expenditure on water and sanitation is treated as expenditure on health. A redeeming feature of the Budget is that it provides Rs 35,000 crore separately for vaccination against Covid-19, which would be sufficient to vaccinate our entire vulnerable population.

Villages and agriculture have not fared well in Budget 2021. The subsidy on fertilisers, the life-line of farmers, has been sharply cut from the Revised Estimates (RE) figure of Rs 1,33,947 crore to Rs 79,530 crore. Fund availability for Rural Development is down from the RE figure of Rs 2,16,342 crore to Rs 1,94,633 crore. The provision for Agriculture and Allied Activities is Rs 1,48,301 crore against the BE of Rs

1,54,775 crore in 2020-21. The maximum number of times agriculture was mentioned in the Budget was by way of Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess, which has been imposed on a number of items. Also mentioned prominently in the Budget speech were the sums spent by the Government in purchasing agricultural produce in earlier years.

The FM mentioned that while the budgeted expenditure of FY 2020-21 was Rs 30.42 lakh crore but due to incremental expenditure to contain Covid-19, actual expenditure was set to cross Rs 34.83 crore. Taking a hard look at Budget Statistics, we find that the additional expenditure in the Budget is almost entirely made up of repayment of off-balance sheet borrowings of the Government from entities like National Small Savings Funds (NSSF), in earlier years. Similarly, the FM's assertion that out of the total expenditure of Rs 30.42 lakh crore, Rs 27.1 lakh crore was earmarked for Atmanirbhar packages is a play with figures; the stimulus packages were provisions for credit by banks and other institutions, the actual financial outlay of the Centre did not exceed Rs 2 lakh crore.

Budget 2021 has reduced the allocation for MNREGA from the RE of Rs 1,11,500 crore to Rs 73,000 crore.

After spending Rs 42,617 crore on social assistance programmes in FY 2020-21, the expenditure proposed on social assistance programmes in 2021-22 is a paltry Rs 9,200 crore, seemingly the Government is withdrawing support for the poor and marginalised, in a big way. Reduced allocations for MNREGA and social assistance programmes would shrink the safety net for the poor, who may face a difficult time in the coming year.

Probably, the Government being a staunch believer in the power of markets, wishes to prioritise the revival of the financial sector, feeling that the revival of financial markets would lead to a revival of the entire economy. Various measures have been announced and resources have been allocated for the benefit of the financial sector like the establishment of a 'bad bank' (asset reconstruction company or ARC), another development finance institution (DFI), bank recapitalisation etc. Major incentives have

been announced for investors located in GIFT City, Gandhinagar. Further, no new revenue raising measures have been proposed in the Budget, despite a projected shortfall of Rs 2.89 lakh crore in tax receipts.

On the other hand, the sum of Rs 64,180 crore allocated to Pradhan Mantri Aatmanirbhar Swasthya Bharat Yojana (PMASBY) for developing primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare in addition to the National Health Mission is proposed to be spent in the next six years. Similarly, the allocation for the Jal Jeevan Mission is spread over the next five years and so is the allocation to Urban Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0.

Funds have been committed to the Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for the next five years, textile parks are to come up in the next three years. Similarly, a scheme to benefit discoms is to come up in the next

five years, a scheme to fly the Indian flag on merchantmen would take five years. Such instances abound, lessening the clarity of Budget provisions and making one wonder if the Government is rethinking the abolition of the Five-Year Plans.

The FM estimated Rs 1,75,000 crore as receipts from disinvestment in BE 2021-22, which is an under-assessment, in view of the long list of Government enterprises to be privatised viz. BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam, an un-named insurance company and two un-named Public Sector Banks. Probably, the Government is not feeling confident, given its dismal record of privatisation in the last six years. The Indian economy, like all major economies, is experiencing a K-shaped recovery, with well-organised businesses on an upward trajectory while the unorganised sector is facing a downturn. According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), the 1017 listed companies studied by it showed PAT (profit after tax) at 10.6 per cent and an increase in net profit by 71 per cent. However, the corporate sector is not doing well uniformly; the share market is at an all-time high, sectors like pharmaceuticals are doing exceedingly well, but sectors like travel

and tourism are in the dumps. Oxfam's "Virus Inequality Report" concludes that during the pandemic, the wealth of India's top 100 billionaires increased by Rs 12 lakh crore while 1.3 crore workers lost their jobs. CMIE statistics also reveal that employment declined by 20 per cent in the first quarter and 3.5 per cent in the second, the unemployment rate in December 2020 was 6.2 per cent, up by .3 per cent over the same month in the previous year, which meant that 1.5 crore fewer workers were employed in December 2020, compared to the number employed in December 2019. According to a World Bank report 30 per cent of the Indian workforce has shifted from formal to informal employment, mostly self-employment.

The rise in unemployment was both quantitative as well as qualitative; unemployment was more pronounced in urban regions, among women, among the relatively younger workers, graduates and post graduates and salaried employees.

Rich households, that derived income from interest and dividends, did not suffer any significant loss of income during the lockdown, rather with the ban on mall shopping, travel and outings such households saved money.

On the other hand, poor households became poorer because of unemployment and closure of small businesses.

It did not help that the fiscal stimulus announced by the FM was more for businesses and less for poor households, beyond providing subsistence food items. According to advance estimates of the National Statistical Office, consumption is set to contract by 9.5 per cent, mostly in the poorer sections of society.

Covid-19 has transformed India from the world's fastest-growing large economy into the world's fastest-contracting economy. This trend would probably be reversed soon, but at a huge cost.

The Indian economy would emerge from recession with a record fiscal deficit, record public debt, a new "twin-balance sheet problem," not to mention some complex monetary challenges.

Even more worrisome is the fact that Budget 2021 provisions are,

in essence, a repeat of the provisions of Budget 2020.

An expectation that Budget 2021 would help the poor and disadvantaged is likely to be belied, as Einstein had said: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results."

habitat. In a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, scientists from the China CDC found evidence of human-to-human transmission as early as mid-December 2019, which again suggests virus circulation weeks before it was identified in Wuhan.

The findings of WHO's expert team, though tentative, seem to buttress the Chinese government's protestations of innocence. Transparency is a prerequisite for this investigation as WHO must provide definitive answers.

The global body will succeed only when scientific investigation is allowed to follow its course without being politicized.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,

Chakdaha, 16 February.

A MEMBER OF THE

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ASIAN NEWS NETWORK

**ASIAN VOICES**

## Contempt of conscience

On Monday, four former chief justices visited the Supreme Court, which they headed at different times, to assert that their opinion on the House dissolution was part of freedom of expression and did not amount to contempt of court. Min Bahadur Rayamajhi, Anup Raj Sharma, Kalyan Shrestha and Sushila Karki had been summoned by the apex court to respond to a petition which said the joint statement they released was an attempt to influence the bench hearing cases against the House dissolution. By appearing before the court in response, they have shown their respect for and faith in the judiciary. For starters, the former chief justices had on January 8 released a joint statement saying the constitution did not allow the prime minister to dissolve the House of Representatives. The charges of contempt of court filed against the former chief justices were amateurish attempts to discourage citizens from speaking up about matters that concern them. But the incident also opened a new debate about what counts as freedom of expression and what counts as contempt of court, and where these two concepts diverge. The responses of the four former chief justices have clearly outlined what constitutes freedom of speech, and why it is crucial for safeguarding democracy. Their opinion was that Prime Minister KP Oli's act of House dissolution was unconstitutional. They rightly said that they were entitled to call it an unconstitutional act as per the freedom of speech bestowed on them, as citizens, by the constitution. The way the four former judges were summoned to the top court for merely expressing their opinion on contemporary political developments

**THE KATHMANDU POST**

In the capacity of citizens, there is a high probability of the very idea of contempt of court being misused for petty purposes in the future. And that is a dangerous sign for the times to come. The judiciary cannot be dragged into petty whims of individuals who cannot stand the opinions of other people. More so, the judiciary cannot continue to expand its precious resources entertaining such whims. Otherwise, what this leads to is a systematic erosion of the credibility of public institutions that are responsible to uphold democratic ideals.

The judiciary, as the custodian of freedom of expression, cannot be too touchy about questions being asked about its work. There is a serious problem with the idea that the judiciary is a sanctimonious institution whose authority cannot be questioned. The judiciary is not above public scrutiny. The judiciary also has an obligation to uphold the idea of freedom of speech, which is a hallmark of a democratic society.

That former chief justices have today been dragged to the court for expressing their opinion on issues they care about should also serve as a warning bell for the sitting justices as to how they are to act on matters of freedom of expression, as their present acts pave the way for the future of democracy. Judges must act as custodians not only of constitutional and legal provisions but also of moral values that keep society together. Even in cases where a judgement has already been passed, a fair criticism on the merits of the judgement does not amount to contempt of court, although the very idea of fair criticism is open to interpretation. Pressing charges against citizens who speak anything that goes against our narrow, personal worldview is tantamount to contempt of conscience. We cannot afford to become a republic of hurt sentiments and fragile egos. Or perhaps we have already become one. In such a case, it is high time we came back to our senses and let freedom of speech and divergent views flourish.

## DISHA AND THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

SIR, The arrest of 21-year-old Disha Ravi comes as a shock to me. The Delhi Police has alleged that she has created the "toolkit" document related to the farmers' protest and shared it on social media. Is backing an ongoing protest something anti-national? Does raising one's voice against anything related to governance amount to sedition?

In another development, as reported in your paper today, a member of the legal wing of Tamil Nadu BJP submitted a petition to the cyber crime cell demanding action against actor Oviya who tweeted with the hashtag #GoBackModi just before the Prime Minister visited Chennai on Sunday.

How does a citizen of India raise his/her voice if he/she finds fault with the way a system is functioning? Doesn't the Constitution provide for freedom of expression? The slightest hint of personal freedom or rebellion is ruthlessly quashed. This authoritarian attitude of the present dispensation is worthy of criticism. Development cannot come at the cost of tolerance and freedom of expression.

Yours, etc., Anupam Neogi, Kolkata, 16 February.

## Conspiracy theory binned

SIR, This refers to the editorial, "Origin of Covid" (16 February). By concluding that a virus leak from a laboratory in China's Wuhan, where the SARS-CoV-2 virus

first emerged, is "extremely unlikely" and did not require further study, a 17-member WHO team and its Chinese counterparts have put to rest conspiracy theories that



emerged early during the pandemic. While many scientists had dismissed the lab-origin theory, in mid-February 2020, a group of 27 prominent scientists from outside China "strongly condemned conspiracy theories" in a letter published in *The Lancet*. Even a year since the letter and after nearly half-a-million genome submissions to a public database, scientists have not found any sign of direct human influence. The WHO team's investigation now strongly suggests virus origin to a natural reservoir in bats, but unlikely to have been in Wuhan, which is miles from any natural bat

habitat. In a report in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, scientists from the China CDC found evidence of human-to-human transmission as early as mid-December 2019, which again suggests virus circulation weeks before it was identified in Wuhan. The findings of WHO's expert team, though tentative, seem to buttress the Chinese government's protestations of innocence. Transparency is a prerequisite for this investigation as WHO must provide definitive answers.

The global body will succeed only when scientific investigation is allowed to follow its course without being politicized.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,

Chakdaha, 16 February.

DEBAPRIYA MUKHERJEE AND ARNAB CHATTERJEE

In one tutorial centre, we observed that young children were gossiping in low voices among themselves sitting on the mat as their teacher prepared to teach them about the germination of seeds and growth of plants, equipped with pictures of life cycle of plants. Outside the classroom, there was a garden harbouring many flower and vegetable plants. Curious children pointed to this garden and tried to draw the attention of teacher. But the teacher drew their attention back to his lecture so that children would perform well in the examination.

A student of class VIII raised his hand to ask if there were any places in the world where there was no plant. The teacher stopped mid-sentence with, "No questions now, please; it is time for learning". This way of teaching forces children to miss how to sow seeds followed by the joy of their germination in the garden. It could be a scene in almost any school. Children, full of questions about things that interest them, are learning not to ask them at school. It is not the fault of teachers. They have so many tasks to meet.

Against a background of tests and targets, unscripted queries go mainly unanswered and learning opportunities are lost. Children are born curious. The number of questions a toddler asks can seem infinite – it is one of the critical methods humans adopt to learn. According to researchers, children ask an average of 107 questions an hour. One child is generally asking three questions a minute at its peak. Unfortunately during learning, teachers do not encourage questions being asked in the classroom and thereby a child's creativity and conversational skills do not increase. But promoting curiosity is a foundation for early learning that we should be emphasising when we look at academic achievement.

When teachers tell young children not to ask questions during their lecture, high-performing students are found to be less curious, because they see curiosity as a risk to their results whereas curious students who ask lots of questions get better results by understanding a topic more deeply.

Keeping in view, I (D.P. Mukherjee) opened a "Rural Science Centre" in my village named Moutorh, Purulia district, West Bengal in my personal capacity to convince children that learning is a fun. When I started to teach a group of students, I realised that it would become increasingly difficult to hold their attention through a full day of learning. So the best possible option is to present the required curriculum to my students in an interesting and relatable way because there was one thing in common among all the children – they did not like reading textbooks. Students were found to be most receptive when I

## Nurture curiosity, do not kill it

any time on any topic that interests them. Ultimately it is our education system that kills curiosity. Many people in educational communities give emphasis on the behavior of the children while learning and their performance in the examination. Often educational bureaucracies have shunted curiosity to the side.

Many of us as guardians, educators, students or politicians forget that education does more than just impart literacy, it empowers students to take risks and face the world with confidence. One silver lining is that NEP-20 is expected to inspire a shift from rote learning to in-depth understanding. The curriculum content will be reduced to core essentials and create more space for critical thinking, discussion and analysis. Teaching and learning will be more interactive, exploratory, collaborative, and experiential. Age group of 3-6 years under the school curriculum has been recognised globally as the crucial stage for the development of mental faculties of a child.

Education is not just learning how to be a problem solver, but a blazer of trails, a setter of bars, and a raiser of stakes. Researchers gauged levels of curiosity when the children were babies, toddlers and preschoolers, using parent visits and questionnaires. Reading, maths and behaviour were then checked in kindergarten (the first year of school), where they found that the most curious children performed best. In a finding critical to tackling the stubborn achievement gap between poorer and richer children, disadvantaged children had the strongest connection between curiosity and performance.

Now every alternate day, one experiment is being carried out to make them understand that science is fun. Gradually, students gain an interest in science and have started consulting their text book on certain scientific topics and other events in their daily life. Even the quiet students who did not like to read have started to discuss the experiments with their guardians when they go back to the homes.

While teaching math at the elementary level, I made up examples that helped students to understand better. Instead of asking them to divide 20 imaginary apples, I asked them to put their 20 friends in teams and they visualized the problem and

could make analogies that they could relate to their enjoyment. This applies to all subjects.

Most students enjoy hearing stories to which they can relate, and tend to remember the lessons associated with an experience. In biology, mutualism is an equal relationship while parasitism is like the friend who keeps eating your food but never brings any to share. This is why it is very important for us to make the process of learning as easy to absorb as possible. Nothing motivates learners as much as fun does because it comes from genuine interest from within instead of pressure from others. Students are much more likely to invest extra time in the learning process if they enjoy it.

Let our children create their own structure or timetable for the day, combining their ideas and home learning. Now it is high time to understand what operation to use. Most students enjoy hearing stories to which they can relate, and tend to remember the lessons associated with an experience. In biology, mutualism is an equal relationship while parasitism is like the friend who keeps eating your food but never brings any to share. This is why it is very important for us to make the process of learning as easy to absorb as possible. Nothing motivates learners as much as fun does because it comes from genuine interest from within instead of pressure from others. Students are much more likely to invest extra time in the learning process if they enjoy it.

The writers are, respectively, former Senior Scientist, Central Pollution Control Board and a Class VIII student of Chelima BP High School, Purulia.

**Nepal and the Hindu Rashtra**

CK LAL

Jaleshwar was a one-car-a soft-cover Russian Jeep that took the Anchaladishon pleasure jaunts and hunting trips in the countryside-town tip until the early-1960s. The only motorcycle belonged to the baba dakter (Senior Physician) of the local hospital who made house calls for a fee on his noisy bhatbhattyaduring odd hours. These days, the main streets of the town witness traffic-jams.

What hasn't changed at all is the number of devotees making the rounds of temples dotting the town with Jaleshwarnath being the presiding deity. Another noticeable change is in the fanaticism of worshippers. Once a badge of honour of the social elite, secularism has now become a term of derision.

Hindutva zealotry permeates the air in the marketplace, where conversations routinely veer towards the necessity of restoring the Hindu tag in the official name of Nepal. It's extremely doubtful if anyone in the Madhes benefited from being the subject of the 'only Hindu kingdom in the world', but the manufactured nostalgia of supposed glories repeatedly comes up in conversations with shopkeepers and shoppers alike.

Religious bigotry is even more pronounced in nearby Janakpur-dham, the capital city of Province 2, and the place celebrated as the hometown of Vaishnavite Goddess Janaki. Over a century old, the Janaki Temple, built in the imposing Mughal-Rajput architectural style, sits in the middle of the city. Numerous holy

ponds and sacred shrines have sprouted around the grand temple. The Parikrama Sadak encircles the old town. The settlement is growing northwards towards the East-West Highway.

A premier centre of the Ramanandi sect of Vaishnavs, Janakpur attracts the devout from all over South Asia and beyond. Consequently, it pays to be demonstratively religious in this town. Despite its newly-acquired status as a provincial capital, Janakpur continues to bask in the bliss of being the hometown of Princes Janaki of the Videhas.

Like other streams of the Bhakti movement, the Ramanandi sect of the Vaishnavs was renowned for asceticism, tolerance, pacifism and egalitarianism. The Vaishnavs, Shaks and Shavas – devotees of Vishnu, Kali and Shiva respectively - have practised their traditional faiths of all-encompassing Hinduism without animosity for centuries. The rabid religiosity of the Hindutva kind is a relatively recent import from across the border.

On Sunday, 14 February, a purportedly religious procession was doing the rounds of downtown Janakpur early in the afternoon with loudspeakers blaring full volume from the lead vehicle. A middle-aged man holding the mike led the cavalcade. With a Bhadgaule cap on his head displaying the crossed khukuris insignia of Gurkha Regiments, he looked somewhat odd in the mass waving triangular flags coloured saffron.

A closer look at the face of the conductor of the crowd showed that

there was no piety in his exhortations. Menace was oozing out of his bloodshot eyes. Threat and intimidation in slogans such as 'come what may, we shall have the Hindu Rashtra way' were unmistakable.

What the procession lacked in numbers - a few dozen marchers at most - was made up by the passion of some youngsters waving the national flag. The crimson-red Double Triangle with its blue borders and white sun and moon stitched to the surface stands out anywhere. It looked even more distinctive when being waved with saffron banners.

The faux faith called Hindutva is a 20th-century invention. The nationalist ideology of Hindutva was enunciated in a pamphlet by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The conceptualisation of India as the 'fatherland of Hindus' was patterned after the fascism upsurge in Europe. There was nothing Indian, which is an idea of various thoughts intermingling to produce a distinctive whole that lets its parts flourish, in its re-imagination as Brahminical Bharatvarsha.

Even though part of a nominally Hindu Rashtra, its practice in Mithila has always been relatively mild. A mosque built for the Muslim masons of Janaki Mandir during its construction still stands in its backyard. The beauteous visage of the Dulaha Sarkar (the groom god) came to be replaced with that of the image of the warrior prince of Ayodhya wielding a bow with its arrow strung to shoot only in the late-1980s in the wake of the Ramshila Movement of Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

A closer look at the face of the conductor of the crowd showed that

Seemingly contradictory impulses for republican governance and Hindu culture have driven the politics of the region for one simple reason - the malevolence of Hindutva was never the part of popular imagination. The French laïcité seeks freedom from religion but secularism is meant to secure freedom of all faiths. It's possible to believe in *sarba dharma sambhav* (equanimity towards all religions) and remain fundamentally secular at the same time. The Hindutva ideology doesn't allow such an ambiguity.

In an attempt to placate the Hindutva establishment of India, schemers of the 16-point conspiracy took over the responsibility of protecting and promoting *sanatan* traditions. It was the adoption of a state religion through the backdoor. The controversial statute is either too Hindu or not Hindu enough depending upon who is doing the interpreting.

The charter hasn't stopped the current dispensation from allocating loads of gold to build the *jahari* of Pashupatinath Temple. It didn't come in the way of committing billions of rupees for a Ram Temple at a contested site in the middle of the pandemic. And yet, the statute continues to instigate quite a few fundamentalists to yearn for a 'pure' Hindu Rashtra.

According to the 'Democracy Index' of *The Economist*, no democratic regime exists in South Asia. Along with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Pakistan, Nepal figures in the list as a country with a hybrid regime. Afghanistan retains its position as an authoritarian state. Sinhala ethnonationalists make Sri Lanka a flawed democracy despite the robustness of

its institutions.

India has seen its greatest fall since 2014; the self-described largest democracy of the world has acquired the dubious distinction of being flawed due to the failure of the regime in ensuring fundamental freedoms. Hybridity, according to postcolonial theorists, refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonisation.

The invention of an imaginary past and bygone glory are the basic features of ethnonationalism. Envisioning a participatory self-governance is the fundamental principle of democracy. A hybrid fusion of these two contradictory ambitions produces regimes that are addled by their beliefs and shackled by desire.

Democracy everywhere is almost always a work-in-progress rather than a stable condition, as the rise of popularly-elected authoritarian regimes in several countries have repeatedly shown. George Jacob Holyoake, the propounder of secularism as a political ideal also coined the term jingoism. While the political proposition (secularism) of English newspaperman is the mainstay of democracy, his description of the nationalist trait with an apt name (jingoism) is an insidious element of demagogic populism.

Harmless as it may seem, the political call for a Hindu Rashtra poses a mortal threat to the very idea of republican *Nepaliyata* as an imagined community. On Falgun 7, a day that deserves to be marked as the true National Unity Day, the idea of secularity requires fresh commitments from the adherents of democracy.

The Kathmandu Post/ANN

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, FRIDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2021

07

100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

Fifty years ago the question of spontaneous generation was being keenly debated by biologists. The supporters of the theory relied mainly upon the appearance, in boiled and, it was believed, hermetically sealed infusions, of bacteria, which had apparently originated *de novo*. The discovery of spores of bacteria, which had hitherto escaped detection, was regarded as the refutation of the theory of spontaneous generation and as the explanation of the appearance of the bacteria. A paper read some time ago by Professor Moore and Mr. T.A. Webster at the Royal Society has revived interest in this discussion. The paper does not profess to explain the origin of life, but it carries back the investigation to an earlier stage. The bacteria, once regarded as the most primitive of living organisms, must now be regarded as highly organised systems. The most primitive and fundamental chemical processes for living organisms are the two by means of which their living substance is derived from water and air. It has long been known that carbon dioxide is absorbed from water, but it has hitherto been doubtful whence the lowest organisms derive their nitrogen. Recent researches have led to the coining of the term "photosynthesis" to describe the process by which the most primitive organisms absorb their nitrogen from the sunlight.

### NEWS ITEMS

#### DELHI MOTOR SHOW FIRE

Delhi, Feb 18

The fire that broke out in the Delhi motor show last evening caused considerable damage, which at rough estimate, amounts to about five to seven lakhs. It is not yet known to what extent the damage is covered by insurance. The fire started at about five in the afternoon and the high wind helped it to spread rapidly. In a quarter of an hour a large number of the stalls, which were built of bamboo with thatched roofs and walls, were in flames. Great confusion followed, and though the police and spectators rendered all possible assistance the majority of the stalls in the north and north-east portion of the show were burned down. Those firms whose stalls were well packed with cars petrol and accessories could save very little.

#### "BURMA'S PROGRESS"

Rangoon, Feb 18

The publication by the Burmese Government of a weekly newspaper in Burmese, called *Burma's Progress*, is arousing strong opposition from the newspapers here, which describe the venture as "completion on the part of the Government with commercial enterprise." The Rangoon Gazette says that the Government of Burma proposed to meet the deficits on their newspaper out of the national revenues by trenching on the advertising business, which has been built up by private enterprise, whatever way it is looked at, it seems to the journal this innovation of the Government becoming an advertising medium is indefensible and the more will the Government and public realise that the Government's position in the case is a false one. The loss of it to private firms may be serious.

#### CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

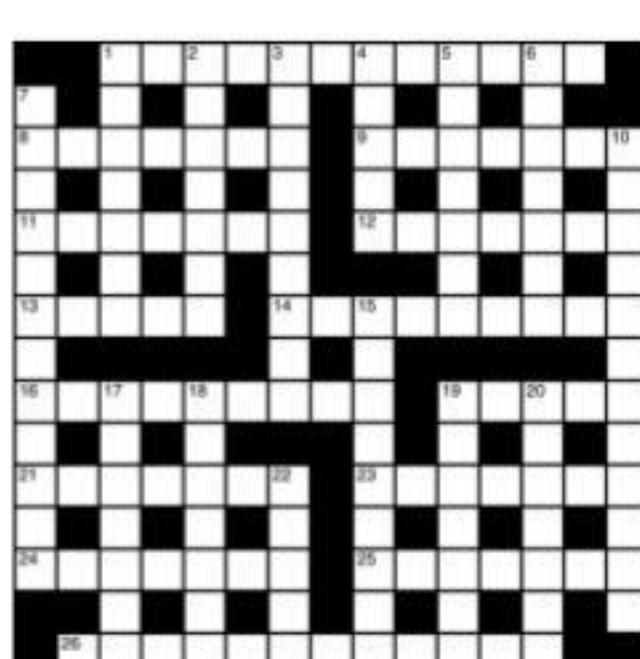
The Rev. Mr. Paton, addressing a conference of the Central Board of Missions at Westminster today, said that the type of student of today was very different from the pre-war type, as he evinced keen interest in internationalism and had a patriotic trust in the League of Nations. He declared that great mischief had been done in the past in the prejudicing of Christian Indians against the British by missionaries blackening India on the platform; but the Indian point of view was now taken into consideration, and he predicted that the time would come when Indians would plead alongside the English for the Church to send her best men to the East.

#### ARREST OF KHILAFAT LEADERS

Madras, Feb 18

At today's meeting of the Council the question of the election of presidents of District Boards was resumed. On a division being taken, the motion to deprive the Government of the power of nomination was lost by 60 votes to 13. Mr. Krishnam Nair, Member of Malabar drew attention to the Khilafat arrests at Calicut, and said the District Magistrate's order prohibiting meetings could not be justified in a town like Calicut, where the population was largely non-Mahomedan and where the influence of the educated classes would have the effect of counter-acting any movement calculated to end in violence. At Calicut there was no disturbance or intimidation of people by Non-cooperation propagandists. The District Magistrate ought to have taken a broader and more comprehensive view of the situation.

### CROSSWORD



#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

1 Harder areas after storm revealing place with water shortage (6,6)  
8 European city exchange disregarding Germany? (7)  
9 Agree to take part with mother withholding name? That's for the best (7)  
11 Mountain range contains popular places to go (7)  
12 Something missing in favourite feature of skirt (7)  
13 Intimidating behaviour in the past involving historic monarch (5)  
14 The writer's weapon to constrain junior academic

16 Name put down, after reflection, to receive college discourse (9)  
19 Rat in middle of pigeonry? That's an inspiration (5)  
21 Biscuit: a form of tack consumed by Old English (7)  
23 Agree to start work? (4,3)  
24 Diminish qualification somewhat diminished after receiving commercial endorsement? (7)  
25 Clean and healthy account about start of month (7)  
26 Where horse manure may go, confidentially (5,3,4)

DOWN

1 Porn supremo perhaps becoming less successful (7)  
2 Willing to participate, gave out in a ring after heavyweight's entrance (4-1-2)  
3 Artists risk altering top of traditional mini? (2-2,5)  
4 Look defeated - day turning not so good (5)  
5 Sea still not quite stormy? Be on your way (3,4)  
6 Recipe: various ingredients to make in small baking dish (7)  
7 You and the congregation receiving start of sermon

NO 28830

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



Three 'Bs' ~ Buddhism, Bollywood and Business ~ can help expand people to people engagement and strengthen economic ties between India and Singapore

PIYUSH GOYAL  
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

**Merlin project:** Leading real estate company Merlin Group has launched its new luxury residential project "X" in Kolkata. At a formal function recently, Saket Mohta, managing director of Merlin Group, unveiled the project among guests and dignitaries. Speaking on the project, Mohta said: "Merlin X has been conceptualised to be the home for the connoisseur. Each apartment will portray all features of a luxury apartment and we are redefining luxury living with the launch of X." The project, which will have a built-up area of 3.26 lakh sq. ft., will be completed by 2025, said a Press release from the company.

SNS

**Spice Money:** Spice Money has launched first-of-its-kind zero investment entry programme that allows rural entrepreneurs to be a part of the Spice Money Adhikari network completely free of cost. The limited period zero investment programme will shape Spice Money's vision to digitally and financially empower one crore rural entrepreneurs across the country, said a company statement.

SNS

**Moglix foray:** B2B commerce company Moglix has announced its foray into the supply chain financing space with the roll-out of its digital platform Credix. It is a digital supply financing platform from Moglix that provides quick collateral-free working capital solutions, exclusively to its suppliers, pan-India through its collaboration with banks, the company said.

SNS

**Sharp printer:** Sharp, a wholly-owned Indian subsidiary of Sharp Corporation, Japan, has announced the launch of a compact smart colour multifunctional printer (MFP) ~ the BP-30C25Z ~ for office use. It has been designed especially for SME, education, healthcare, BFSI, legal and corporates in India and offers a full range of operational and security features, said a Press release.

SNS

**Blue Star:** Blue Star Limited has announced the launch of a new range of commercial refrigeration products and solutions, ideal for storing vaccines, to further support the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. These comprise specifically designed, temperature-controlled refrigerators and transporters, which are integral for building a robust ecosystem for vaccine distribution in India, the company said in a Press statement.

SNS

**SoftTech engineers Ltd forays into global market:** SoftTech Engineers Limited, an NSE listed firm in the SME sector, forayed into the global market by expanding its business activities in the US, UK, Malaysia and Singapore with its novel 'civil' platform. The company shared its vision for growth in the AEC (Architecture, Engineering & Construction) domain, leveraging technological innovations, said the Press release.

SNS

# Cairn CEO meets finance secy over arbitration ruling

"We had a constructive dialogue and the dialogue is ongoing," Thomson told reporters after meeting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

## TAX TROUBLE

► Thomson had been seeking to meet finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and had even posted a video last week outlining his desire to meet her towards finding a quick resolution.

► Cairn has threatened to seize Indian government assets overseas if New Delhi fails to return the value of the shares sold, dividend seized and tax refund withheld by the income tax department to recover part of the tax demand.

► An international tri-



bunal had in December unanimously ruled that India violated its obligations under the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty in 2014, when the income tax department slapped a Rs 10,247-crore tax demand.

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part of the tax demand.

The firm has started identifying assets it could seize if the Indian government does not comply with the tribunal order. Sources have said that these could include airplanes and ships.

Last week, it filed cases in the US, the UK and the Netherlands courts to register the arbitration award, a prelude to seek-

ing legal seizure of assets.

Cairn's hands have been forced by its shareholders who after waiting patiently for seven years for resolution of the tax issue, now wants action to recover the award.

The shareholders include big financial institutions such as BlackRock, Fidelity, Franklin Templeton, Schroders and Aviva.

But, since the 582-page judgment was issued, the government has given no indication about whether it intends to honour the verdict, even though payment was due immediately.

Rather than sit and wait for the government response, Cairn has moved to cover for all eventualities, the sources said. Before going in for the meeting, Thompson said the arbitration the company initiated against the income tax department slapping a Rs 10,247-crore tax demand using legislation that gave it powers to levy taxes retrospectively.

Soon after seeking Rs 10,247 crore in taxes over alleged capital gains made by the company over a 2006-07 reorganisation of India business before its listing, the tax department seized Cairn's residual 10 per cent stake in Cairn India.

award has been granted," he said. "Our shareholders want this to be resolved as quickly as possible and that is why we are here to have a discussion today."

He refused to comment on the government challenging the award, saying the company is looking forward to "a positive resolution."

"We are looking forward to having a discussion with the government, let's see how it goes," he said.

An international tribunal had in December unanimously ruled that India violated its obligations under the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty in 2014, when the income tax department slapped a Rs 10,247-crore tax demand using legislation that gave it powers to levy taxes retrospectively.

Addressing a Press conference, CAIT secretary-general Praveen Khandelwal demanded an "immediate ban on Amazon's portal and its operations in India" and an investigation against the company in a time-bound manner. He also urged the government to probe the business practices of Amazon and Flipkart.

The traders' body also wrote to commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal in this regard today.

"Our association has been requesting your good office to take appropriate steps and investigate and penalise the multinational companies like Amazon and Flipkart (Walmart) for the blatant violation and/or exploitation of the loopholes of the FDI system and its tax slabs to simplify and rationalise it for easier compliance by traders.

## 'Bandh' call

NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Traders' body CAIT today said all commercial markets across the country will remain closed on 26 February in view of its "Bharat Bandh" call demanding a review of the provisions of the goods and services tax (GST) regime. The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said dharnas (protests) will be held nationwide in 1,500 places demanding the Centre, state governments and the GST Council to keep in abeyance the "draconian" provisions of GST. It also called for a review of the GST system and its tax slabs to simplify and rationalise it for easier compliance by traders.

policy and the Foreign Exchange Management Act/Rules," CAIT said in the letter to Goyal.

E-mails sent to Amazon and Flipkart seeking comments for the story did not elicit any response.

PTI

# CAIT demands ban on Amazon's e-commerce operations in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Traders' body CAIT today demanded the government to impose a ban on Amazon's e-commerce portal and its operations in India, accusing the global e-tailing giant of indulging in predatory pricing, deep discounting and inventory control.

Addressing a Press conference, CAIT secretary-general Praveen Khandelwal demanded an "immediate ban on Amazon's portal and its operations in India" and an investigation against the company in a time-bound manner. He also urged the government to probe the business practices of Amazon and Flipkart.

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"Our association has been requesting your good office to take appropriate steps and investigate and penalise the multinational companies like Amazon and Flipkart (Walmart) for the blatant violation and/or exploitation of the loopholes of the FDI system and its tax slabs to simplify and rationalise it for easier compliance by traders.

quacy ratios got further boost with this infusion, IndusInd Bank said.

"The capital adequacy ratio, including 9M FY21(April-December) profits was at 16.93 per cent as of 31 December 2020 and this will get augmented to approximately 17.68 per cent with this capital inflow," it added.

In September 2020, the bank completed preferential issues of equity capital of Rs 3,288 crore and this was subscribed by the promoters.

While they paid Rs 673.82 crore towards 25 per cent of the warrant subscription at a price of Rs 1,709 per share reflecting a premium of 65 per cent over the closing price on Wednesday.

The private sector lender had issued convertible warrants to IIHL and its subsidiary IL on 6 July 2019, for a total amount of Rs 2,695.26 crore against 1,57,70,985 shares.

Together with the current warrants conversion, the bank has raised Rs 5,309 crore of equity capital during financial year 2020-21.

IndusInd Bank stock was trading Rs 0.79 per cent up at Rs 1040.80 on BSE.

# IndusInd Bank gets ₹2,021 cr capital boost from promoters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

Hinduja Group's IndusInd Bank has received Rs 2,021 crore equity from the promoters after the conversion of preference warrants into equity shares.

"The warrants were issued as an integral part of the merger with Bharat Financial Inclusion Limited in July 2019. The promoter entities had paid Rs 673 crore at the time of subscription to the warrants and the balance amount of

Rs 2,021 crore was paid today," IndusInd Bank said in a BSE filing.

The two promoter entities are IndusInd International Holdings Limited (IIHL) and IndusInd Limited (IL).

The finance committee of the bank today approved allotment of 1,57,70,985 shares to the promoter entities. The warrants are converted at a price of Rs 1,709 per share reflecting a premium of 65 per cent over the closing price on Wednesday.

The private sector lender had issued convertible warrants to IIHL and its subsidiary IL on 6 July 2019, for a total amount of Rs 2,695.26 crore against 1,57,70,985 shares.

While they paid Rs 673.82 crore towards 25 per cent of the warrant subscription at a price of Rs 1,709 per piece, the rest of Rs 2,021.44 crore was to be paid on 5 January 2021, for conversion of remaining 75 per cent warrants into equity shares.

The bank's capital ade-

# Maruti plans to launch Jimny in India

NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

The country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) is evaluating the feasibility of launching its off-roader Jimny in the domestic market, having started exporting the model from India last month, according to company officials.

The company, which commenced exports of Jimny to Latin American countries such as Colombia and Peru in January, however, is not exporting it to Europe due to frequent changes in regulations in the continent.

"We are currently evaluating the feasibility of its launch in the domestic market. As you may recall, we had shown this Jimny at the Auto Expo in February 2020, and we got some really nice response. And we are currently studying the various aspects of the marketing as to when, if at all, we can launch that vehicle in India," MSI executive director (marketing and sales) Shashank Srivastava said in an investor call.

He was responding to a query on when the Jimny could be launched in India.

The three-door, four-wheel drive, all-terrain vehicle, Jimny is being exported to Latin America, the West Asia and African markets from India as the company's parent Suzuki Motor Corporation looks to make the country a global production hub for the model.

When asked about the potential volumes of Jimny in the export markets, Maruti Suzuki executive vice-president corporate and government affairs Rahul Bharti said the company has just started the export of Jimny, and it needs to go further into time to understand how the business is and what kind of volumes it is able to get.

PTI

# Indian Oil pact for hydrogen fuel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 18 FEBRUARY

India is the third-largest energy consumer with growing energy demand, making it the place to be, for any energy entrepreneur in any part of the globe.

CHARMENDRA PRADHAN  
OIL MINISTER

The CoE-H will facilitate the transfer and sharing of technology, know-how and experience through the green hydrogen value chain and other relevant technologies, including hydrogen storage and fuel cells.

The CoE-H will be a vehicle for promoting R&D projects in green and blue hydrogen between Norwegian and Indian R&D institutions/universities.

"Working closely with industry and governments on both sides, CoE-H will be leveraging its intellectual strengths in developing cost-efficient and scalable and

sustainable technological solutions. The CoE will also pilot fuel cell research," it said.

The institute will also act as a think-tank towards developing codes and standards for best industrial practices, safety, product protocols and regulations in the area of hydrogen and fuel cells.

The partnership between IOC and Greenstat will actively assist partners/stakeholders to develop business models based upon feasibility studies besides facilitating consultancies to industry, utilities and regulators on hydrogen storage, hydrogen production, refuelling stations,

fuel cells and CCUS technologies, the statement said.

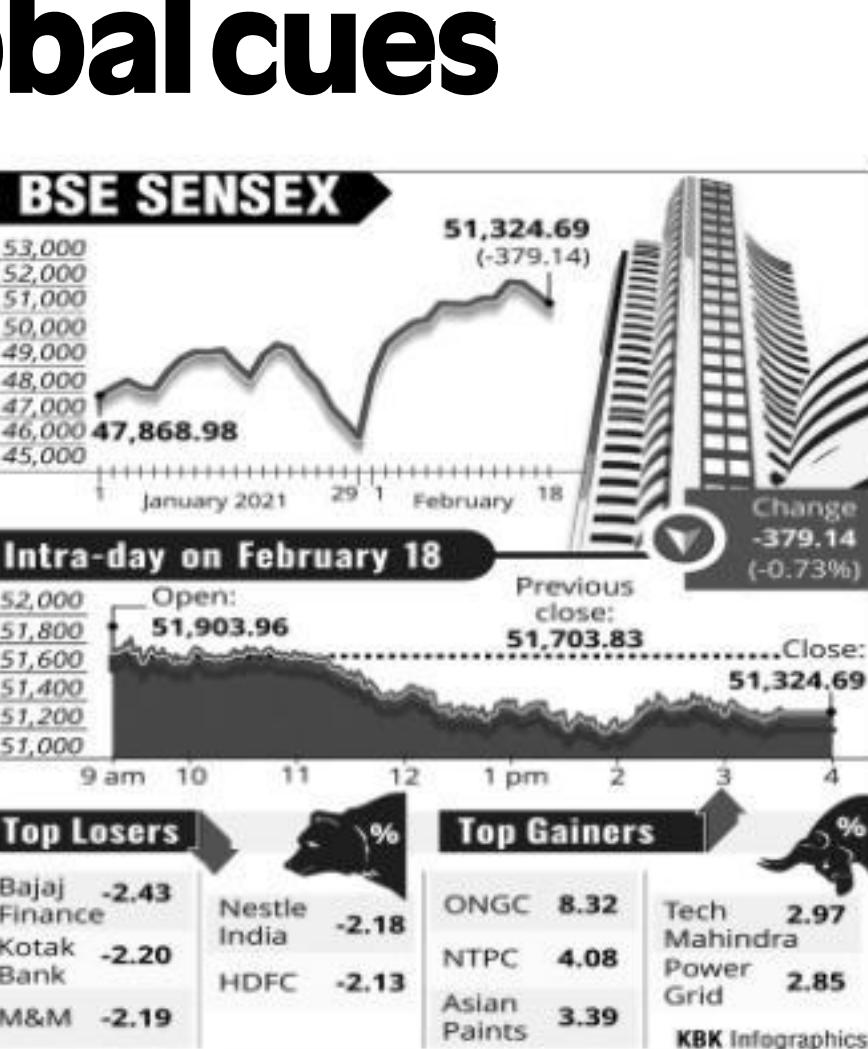
Speaking on the occasion, oil minister Charmendra Pradhan talked about the importance government is giving to the exploration of new and emerging forms of energy.

India, he said, is the third-largest energy consumer with growing energy demand, making it the place to be, for any energy entrepreneur in any part of the globe.

He called for greater synergy between science, technology and entrepreneurship to create a win-win for all.

Speaking about hydrogen energy, Pradhan said: "We see hydrogen as the future energy."

He also expressed happiness at the encouraging results being shown by the pilot project under which 50 buses in Delhi are running on hydrogen-CNG fuel.



# Equity benchmarks fall on negative global cues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 18 FEBRUARY

Domestic stock indices nursed losses for the third consecutive session today as a lack-lustre trend in global equities and concerns over stretched valuations sparked a retreat from risky assets.

Banking and finance stocks bore the brunt of heavy selling, with HDFC twins being the top drags on the Sensex for the second day.

The 30-share BSE benchmark ended 379.14 points or 0.73 percent lower at 51,324.69 points. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty dropped 89.95 points or 0.59 percent to finish at 15,118.95 points.

Bajaj Finance was the top laggard among the Sensex

constituents, declining 2.43 per cent, followed by Kotak Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Nestle India, HDFC, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank.

On the other hand, ONGC was the biggest gainer, rallying 8.32 per cent. NTPC, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid and IndusInd Bank were among the other winners.

Global markets struggled amid rising crude oil prices, with inflation concerns weighing on risk sentiment.

"Market remained in the mood for consolidation for the third day, impacted by negative cues from Asian markets. Globally, markets are showing weakness due to spike in US bond yield while improving corporate earnings and continued inflow of foreign

funds is providing support to the domestic market.

"Bearish rally in the market was led by private banks and auto stocks while PSU banks continued its outperformance on hopes of privatisation," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

# Protests weaken Myanmar economy

Three-quarters of the country's civil servants are on strike, all private banks are closed; Protesters wait for international community to act

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
YANGON, 18 FEBRUARY

**S**tate railway workers in Myanmar continued to strike Thursday despite a police rampage the previous night targeting them in a sign of the military junta's concern over growing civil disobedience by public workers protesting the coup.

Three-quarters of the country's civil servants are on strike, all private banks are closed and the protests have weakened the economy significantly, said Tom Andrews, the independent UN human rights expert on Myanmar.

Andrews said in an interview from Virginia, where he lives, that the protesters have weakened the economy significantly and are looking for the international community to act.

The most important thing the international commun-



ity can do now is focused, targeted, tough economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure, he said.

Aggressive actions by security forces Wednesday night in a Mandalay neighbourhood where state railway workers are housed reflected the increased focus of the protests on businesses and government institutions that sustain the economy.

Railway workers began their strike on Sunday, join-

ing a civil disobedience movement initiated by medical workers that is the backbone of resistance to the February 1 coup that ousted the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Truck drivers have also staged work stoppages.

The railway strike has received support from ordinary citizens who have placed themselves on railroad tracks to stop trains that the military has commandeered.

## China denies backing coup in Myanmar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BEIJING, 18 FEBRUARY

China on Thursday denied that it was backing the military coup in Myanmar amid protests in front of its embassy in Yangon by pro-democracy protesters who accused Beijing of aiding the coup plotters.

Pro-democracy protesters have staged repeated demonstrations outside the Chinese embassy in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital, demanding that Bei-

jing stop supporting the country's junta, Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* reported. Holding up signs saying "Support Myanmar, Don't support dictators" and "Stop helping the military", the pro-democracy protesters accused Beijing of aiding the coup plotters.

Asked at a media briefing here on Thursday about the allegations that Beijing backed the coup, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson replied, "You said there are some 'rumours' circu-

lating in Myanmar. It's true. Some say China is behind the thing. But our Ambassador to Myanmar already stated China's position and refuted those rumours".

"I would like to reiterate again that those are totally rumours circulating online. They are intended to sow discord between the two countries," she said.

China shared close relations with the military junta when it ruled the country for over two decades and later with Suu Kyi.

wounds, which they said were caused by rubber bullets. Unconfirmed reports said several railway workers were arrested.

Alabour activist said many people believe the disobedience movement is an effective way of bringing down the junta, and that is why it has attracted support from government workers in the health, education and transport sectors, as well as private workers such as bank employees and engineers.

Factory workers joined the initial protest marches but their financial circumstances keep them from taking part every day, he said on condition of anonymity to protect his own safety.

The junta has said it took over after detaining Suu Kyi and other leaders and preventing Parliament from convening because elections last November were tainted by voting irregularities.

Hong Kong activist Jimmy Lai denied bail again

HONG KONG, 18 FEBRUARY

Prominent Hong Kong democracy advocate and newspaper publisher Jimmy Lai was again denied bail on Thursday ahead of his April trial on charges of colluding with foreign forces.

Lai is one of several activists facing charges and possibly lengthy prison terms under the sweeping National Security Law that Beijing imposed on the semi-autonomous southern Chinese city last year following massive anti-government protests in 2019.

Critics at home and abroad say the legislation amounts to a crackdown on political dissent and free speech that is eroding the rights and freedoms promised to Hong Kong under the one country, two systems framework following the handover from British colonial rule in 1997.

Arrested and charged in early December, Lai was at first denied bail then granted it on appeal under strict conditions amounting for a form of house arrest. That prompted a withering attack on the Hong Kong judiciary by the ruling Communist Party newspaper People's Daily.

Lai was then returned to prison under a provision of the law that allows a judge to deny bail in cases where the person may again commit the crime for which they are already facing charges.

Lai's latest appeal Thursday to Hong Kong's High Court was based on separate legal grounds. He also faces fraud charges related to the use of office space by his Apple Daily newspaper and other media holdings, which reported he was also arrested Wednesday on suspicion of aiding dissidents to flee Hong Kong.

AP

## US reporter held by al-Qaida-linked group in Syria released

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIRUT, 18 FEBRUARY

An American journalist, living in northwestern Syria for nearly a decade, has been released, six months after he was captured by an al-Qaida-linked militant group, Syrian opposition media reported.

Bilal Abdul Kareem, a native of Mount Vernon, N.Y., has been living in the rebel-held Syrian northwest since 2012, reporting on the Syrian government military campaigns against areas in opposition hands.

He had been detained last August, following a report he did about torture in the prisons of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the al-Qaida-linked group that dominates the area. Local prominent figures had appealed to the militants to release him.

Abdul Kareem had reportedly and collaborated with Western news outlets, which had largely stayed out of the war-torn country after a spate of kidnappings. He later set up his own news network, OnThe Ground News.

The U.S. State Department designated Hayat Tahrir al-Sham a terrorist group in 2018 despite its move to publicly disassociate itself from al-Qaida the previous year. Rights groups and the U.N.-backed Commission of Inquiry have accused the

## UAE dismantles Eritrea base as it pulls back after Yemen war

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, 18 FEBRUARY

The United Arab Emirates is dismantling parts of a military base it runs in the East African nation of Eritrea after it pulled back from the grinding war in nearby Yemen, satellite photos analysed by *The Associated Press* show.

The UAE built a port and expanded an airstrip in Assab beginning in September 2015, using the facility as a base to ferry heavy weaponry and Sudanese troops into Yemen as it fought alongside a Saudi-led coalition against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

But the country once

praised as Little Sparta by former US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis appears to have found the limits of its military expansion in Yemen's stalemate conflict, experts say. After it withdrew troops from the conflict, the satellite photos show it began shipping off equipment and tearing down even newly built structures.

"The Emiratis are paring back their strategic ambitions and are pulling out of places where they had presences," said Ryan Bohl, an analyst at the Texas-based private intelligence firm Stratfor.

Having that hard-power deployment exposed them to more risk than the Emiratis are now willing to tolerate.

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## TRIAL AND ERROR



Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak arrives at Kuala Lumpur High Court in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Thursday. The court on Thursday ordered Najib's wife Rosmah Mansor to enter her defense in a corruption trial linked to a 1.25 billion ringgit (\$310 million) solar energy project.

AGENCIES

## Killings surge in Syria camp housing Islamic State families

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BEIRUT, 18 FEBRUARY

The deaths stacked up: a policeman shot dead with a pistol equipped with a silencer, a local official gunned down, his son wounded, an Iraqi man beheaded. In total, 20 men and women were killed last month in the sprawling camp in northeastern Syria housing families of the Islamic State group.

The slayings in al-Hol camp nearly triple the deaths in previous months are largely believed to have been carried out by IS militants punishing perceived enemies and intimi-

cating anyone who wavers from their extremist line, say Syrian Kurdish officials who run the camp but say they struggle to keep it under control.

The jump in violence has heightened calls for countries to repatriate their citizens languishing in the camp, home to some 62,000 people. Those repatriations have slowed dramatically because

of the coronavirus epidemic, officials say. If left there, the thousands of children in the camp risk being radicalized, local and UN officials warn.

Al-Hol will be the womb that will give birth to new generations of extremists, said Abdullah Suleiman Ali, a Syrian researcher who focuses on jihadi groups.

It has been nearly two years since the US-led coalition captured the last sliver of territory held by the Islamic State group, ending their self-declared caliphate that covered large parts of Iraq and Syria.

The brutal war took several

years and left US-allied Kurdish authorities in control of eastern and northeast Syria, with a small presence of several hundred American forces still deployed there.

Since then, remaining IS militants have gone underground in the Syrian-Iraqi border region, continuing an insurgency. Though attacks in Syria are lower than they were in late 2019, IS sleeper cells continue to strike Syrian government troops, forces of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces and civilian administrators.

Al-Hol houses the wives, widows, children and other

family members of IS militants more than 80% of its 62,000 residents are women and children. The majority are Iraqis and Syrians, but it includes some 10,000 people from 57 other countries, housed in a highly secured separate area known as the Annex. Many of them remain die-hard IS supporters.

The camp has long been chaotic, with the hardcore militants among its population enforcing their will on others and seeking to prevent them from cooperating with Kurdish authorities guarding it. IS cells in Syria are in contact with residents of the

camp and support them, said a senior Kurdish official Badran Cia Kurd. Anyone who tries to reveal these contacts or stops dealing with Daesh is subjected to death, he said, using the Arabic acronym for IS.

The U.S.-backed SDF tweeted last week that, backed by air surveillance from the coalition, they detained an IS family smuggler in the area of Hadadia near the camp.

There are several reasons behind the increase of crime including attempts by Daesh members to impose their ideology in the camp against civilians who reject it, said Ali, the researcher.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- 1 Drop (4)
- 3 Precipitates in crystal form (5)
- 7 Revolt (4)
- 8 Full of incident (8)
- 9 Agreeable remark (10)
- 12 Metalworker (6)
- 13 Avoid (6)
- 15 Tact (10)
- 18 Be like (8)
- 20 Plant part (4)
- 21 Trunk (5)
- 22 Excessive amount (4)

#### DOWN

- 1 Sell (Slang) (4)
- 2 Floating leaf (4,3)
- 3 Behold (3)
- 4 Frequency (5)
- 5 Arborial rodent (8)
- 6 Practise (8)
- 10 Sample (8)
- 11 Repentant (8)
- 14 Command (7)
- 16 Shoot of approval (5)
- 17 Swag (4)
- 19 Shoot of disapproval (3)

#### SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

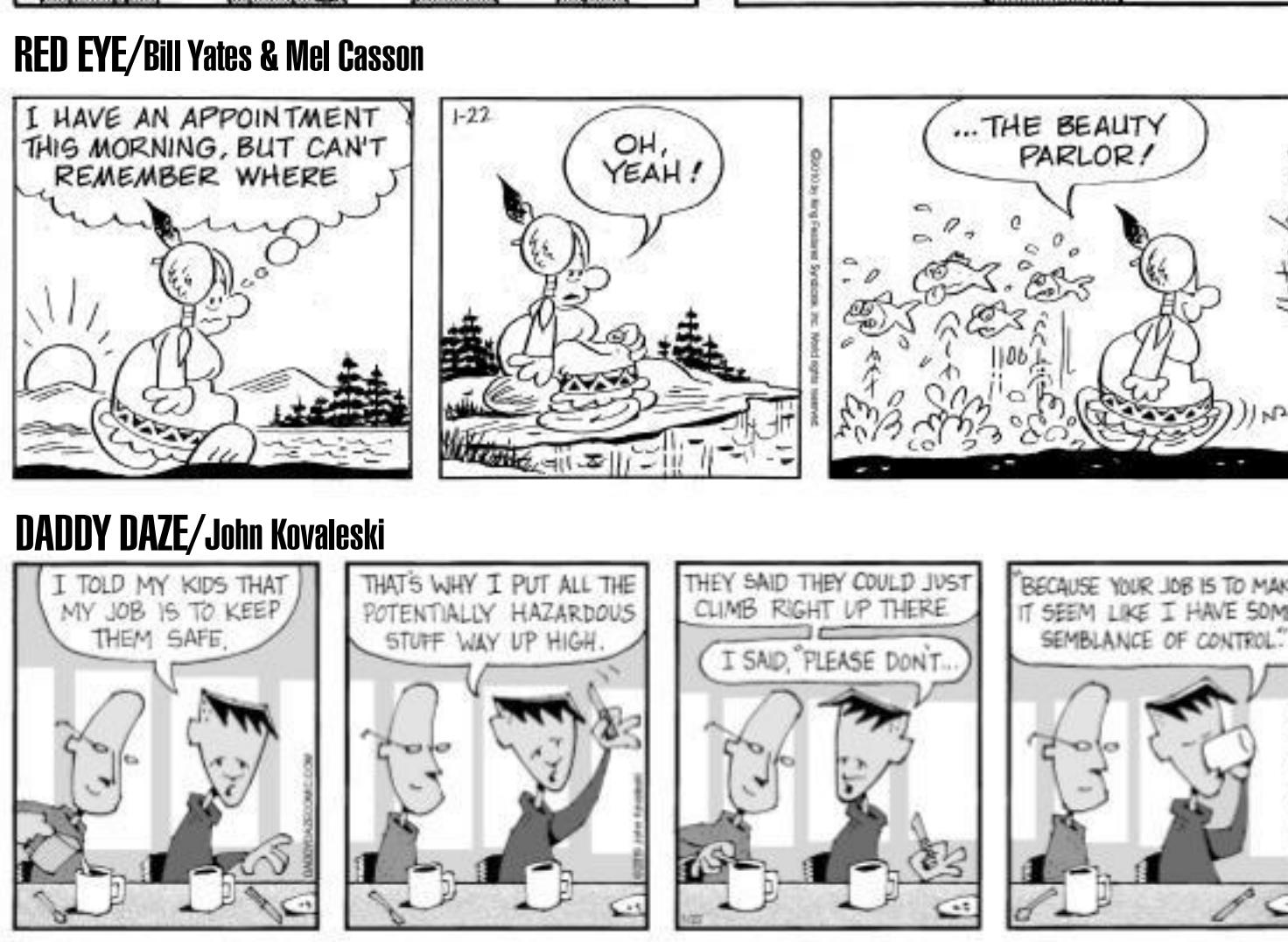
- ACROSS 1 Dill, 3 Aide (Delayed), 7 Area, 8 Airliner, 9 Converse, 11 Floral, 13 Roster, 15 House of cards, 18 Marigold, 20 Thud, 21 Vein, 22 Chap.
- DOWN 1 Doric, 2 Learner, 3 Air, 4 Drift, 5 Waterlo, 6 Become, 10 Stricken, 12 Loofah, 14 Stretch, 16 Slate, 17 Slurp, 19 Gif.

By arrangement with The Independent  
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23253230

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways 23861262, 109010383383, 180018038383, 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline Reservation 415281407
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23253230

#### AIRPORTS

- Port 011-25671580; Terminal I 23860626
- Rajasthan Roadways 23864470
- U.P. Roadways 23868709

#### FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Center 09910383383, 180018038383, 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline Reservation 25656421/25656431

- Air Canada Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23354373

- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 23466262 (City) 25652294 (Airport)
- Air Canada



*...some people in Western countries, such as the US don't want to hear China's objective and true voice*

CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SPOKESPERSON HUA CHUNYING

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	23
HONG KONG	21	15 CL
TOKYO	12	1 CL
LONDON	11	6 H
DUBAI	30	21 H
SAN FRANCISCO	16	8 S
NEW YORK	0	-4 R
MOSCOW	-14	-19 H

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



French President Emmanuel Macron attends a video conference meeting with African Union leaders following the ACT—an initiative to coordinate a global and united response to the pandemic, at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France. AGENCIES

**Bombing kills two lecturers:** An explosion in the Afghan capital on Thursday killed two lecturers at the Kabul University, after a bomb attached to the car they were travelling in went off, a police spokesman said. The attack took place around noon near the university. AP

**Moderate quake injures at least 10:** A magnitude 5.6 earthquake struck central Iran on Wednesday, injuring at least 10 people. Reports said search and rescue teams have been deployed to the area. AP

**Five Indian-origin persons in TIME list:** Five Indian-origin personalities, including Twitter's top lawyer Vijaya Gadde and UK's Finance minister Rishi Sunak, and an Indian activist feature in TIME magazine's annual list of 100 emerging leaders who are shaping the future". PTI

## Trump-McConnell feud threatens Republicans' path to power

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 18 FEBRUARY

Former President Donald Trump is escalating a political war within his own party that could undermine the Republican push to fight President Joe Biden's agenda and ultimately return to power.

A day after blistering Mitch McConnell, the Senate's top Republican, as a dour, sullen and unsmiling political hack, Trump repeated his baseless claim on Wednesday that he was the rightful winner of the November election in a series of interviews with conservative outlets after nearly a month of self-imposed silence.

Trump also continued to attack McConnell, accusing the Senate GOP leader of failing to stand up for Republicans

after McConnell blasted Trump for inciting the January 6 Capitol riot despite voting to acquit the former president at his second impeachment trial.

The Republicans are soft. They only hit their own, like Mitch, Trump complained on Newsmax.

"If they spent the same time hitting (Senate Democratic leader Chuck) Schumer and (President Joe) Biden, the Republicans would be much better off, that I can tell you," he said.

Republican officials in several battlegrounds carried by Biden, including Georgia and Arizona, have said the vote was fair. Trump's legal claims surrounding the vote were rejected by judges across the political spectrum, including many appointed by the former pres-



ident. McConnell himself described Trump's contention as an unhinged falsehood.

Leading GOP strategists described the exploding feud between the former Republican president and the Senate's most powerful Republican as, at best, a distraction and, at worst, a direct threat to the party's path to the House and Senate majorities in next year's midterms.

I don't think he cares about winning," Steven Law, a McConnell ally who leads the

most powerful Republican-aligned super PAC in Washington, said of Trump. "He just wants it to be about himself.

Law noted that Trump lost several states where Republicans face must-win Senate elections in next year's quest to break up Democrats' control of Congress, including in Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Republicans are also competing in Nevada and New Hampshire, where Trump was defeated, and in North Carolina, where Trump barely won.

If Trump tries to make himself the center of attention, Law said, "that actually could cost Republicans seats in the general election.

Such infighting is not altogether unusual after a politi-

cal party loses the White House, but in this case, the feuding factions have been willing to attack each other publicly.

And there was a broad consensus on Wednesday that the ugly intraparty clash would likely extend well into next year's congressional primary season.

The stakes may be higher this time, however, as key players, Trump, among them, have openly threatened the prospect of creating a new political party, which would endanger the Republican Party's very existence.

Roughly 120 anti-Trump Republicans, including current and former officeholders, secretly convened earlier in the month to contemplate the future of the GOP.

ing violence, but on Wednesday, he broke his monthlong silence, giving his first interviews since leaving the White House after the death of conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh.

On Newsmax, Trump said his team was still exploring its options for returning to social media and negotiating with a number of people, while still keeping the option of building his own platform on the table.

We're looking at a lot of different things, but I really wanted to be somewhat quiet, Trump said, sidestepping repeated questions about whether he intends to run again in 2024.

Too early to say, he said, while acknowledging that he missed being president.

## Facebook blocks news access in Australia

Oz govt condemned the move, which also prevented govt communications

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CANBERRA, 18 FEBRUARY

In a shocking act of retaliation Thursday, Facebook blocked Australians from sharing news, a milestone in the increasingly frantic jockeying between governments, media and powerful tech companies that one Australian minister called an assault on a sovereign nation and abuse of power.

Australia's government condemned the decision, which also prevented some government communications, including messages about emergency services, as well as some commercial pages. The digital platforms fear that what's happening in Australia will become an expensive precedent that larger countries will follow.

Facebook took the drastic action because the House of Representatives passed legislation that would make Facebook and Google pay for Australian journalism, said Treasurer Josh Frydenberg, who added that he was given no warning before Facebook acted. The legislation needs to be passed by the Senate before it becomes law.

Facebook's actions were unnecessary, they were heavy-handed and they will damage its reputation here in Australia, Frydenberg said.

Facebook said the pro-



posed Australian law fundamentally misunderstands the relationship between our platform and publishers who use it. This is an assault on a sovereign nation, Health Minister Greg Hunt told Parliament. It is an assault on people's freedom and, in particular, it's an utter abuse of big technologies' market power and control over technology.

Both Google and Facebook have threatened retaliation if Australia created the law, which the government contends will ensure media businesses receive fair payment for their journalism being linked on those platforms.

Australia's proposal requires a negotiation safety net through an arbitration panel. The digital giants would not be able to abuse their dominant negotiating positions by

making take-it-or-leave-it payment offers to news businesses for their journalism. If a news business refused to budge, the panel would make a binding decision on a winning offer.

Facebook had threatened to block access to Australian news rather than pay for it under the proposed News Media Bargaining Code.

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media organisation Seven West Media reached a deal earlier in the week. Their rival Nine Entertainment is reportedly close to its own pact, and state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corp. is in negotiations.

The government accused Facebook of endangering public safety by temporarily blocking state emergency services messaging on a day when there were severe fire and flood warnings in various parts of Australia.

The Bureau of Meteorology's weather warnings, a Hobart women's shelter and the Betoota Advocate, a satirical website named after an Australian ghost town, were among those surprised to find their content blocked at least temporarily.

Communications Minister Paul Fletcher said he had told Facebook that the government expected access to its pages to be restored.

The fact that there are organisations like state health departments, fire and emergency services... who have had their Facebook pages blocked, that's a public safety issue, Fletcher said. Facebook said in a statement: Any pages that are inadvertently impacted, we'll look to reverse. Health Minister Greg Hunt said the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne still didn't have its feed fixed more than eight hours later.

Both Google's threat has faded as it quickly stitches up licensing content deals with Australian media companies under its own News Showcase model.

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. announced a wide-ranging deal with Google on Wednesday. Major Australian

media organisation Seven West Media reached a deal earlier in the week. Their rival Nine Entertainment is reportedly close to its own pact, and state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corp. is in negotiations.

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## US Citizenship Act to be introduced, Indian IT professionals to benefit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON, 18 FEBRUARY

The Bill clears employment-based visa backlog, recapture unused visas, reduces lengthy wait times, and eliminates per-country visa caps

Proposed by President Joe Biden, the US Citizenship Act 2021, which among other things intends to eliminate the per-country cap for employment-based green cards would be introduced in Congress on Thursday, a move that would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals in America.

In a major move, those waiting for a Green Card for more than 10 years, would get the legal permanent residency immediately as they would be exempted from the visa cap.

Indian IT professionals waiting for a Green Card for more than 10 years, would get the legal permanent residency immediately as they would be exempted from the visa cap.

To be introduced by Senator Bob Menendez in the Senate and Congresswoman Linda

ident on January 20, clears employment-based visa backlog, recapture unused visas, reduces lengthy wait times, and eliminates per-country visa caps

The bill makes it easier for graduates of US universities with advanced STEM degrees to stay in the United States; improves access to green cards for workers in lower-wage sectors; and eliminates other unnecessary hurdles for employment-based green cards.

It provides dependents of H-1B visa holders work authorisation, and children are prevented from "aging out" of the system.

Spouses and permanent partners and children under the age of 21 of lawful permanent residents are now exempt from the caps. This is a change in law. It's what is in place right now for US citizens.

## More deadly storms await US, experts warn



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 18 FEBRUARY

The interim findings of a new UK government-backed study released on Thursday shows that Covid-19 infections in England have "fallen significantly" since January, reflecting the impact of the strict lockdown measures.

The Imperial College London-led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission research swab tested over 85,400 volunteers in England between February 4 and 13 to examine the levels of infection in the general population and found infections have dropped by two-thirds since lockdown began, with London showing an 80 per cent fall.

But the findings indicated coronavirus levels are still high, with one in 200 testing positive during that same period. These findings show encouraging signs infections are now heading in the right direction, but we must not drop our guard, said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

The figures offer some hope for UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is preparing to present a roadmap on Monday for gradually lifting lockdown restrictions. PTI

Deaths will be a surge of increased needs for society's most vulnerable as climate and natural disasters worsen.

Other Americans are at risk as well. Power supplies of all sorts failed in the extreme cold, including natural gas-fired power plants that were knocked offline amid icy conditions and, to a smaller extent, wind turbines that froze and stopped working.

Power outages in Texas dropped below 1 million on Thursday morning for the first time in four days, but many people remained without electricity or safe drinking water after winter storms wreaked havoc on the state's power grid and utilities.

Meanwhile, heavy snow and ice were expected Thursday in the Appalachians, northern Maryland and southern Pennsylvania, with the wintry weather moving into the Northeast by nightfall.

This week's storms, with more still heading east, fit a pattern of worsening extremes under climate change and demonstrate anew that local, state and federal officials have failed to do nearly enough to prepare for greater and more dangerous weather.

At least two dozen people have died this week, including from fire or carbon monoxide poisoning while struggling to find warmth inside their homes. In Oklahoma City, an Arctic blast plunged temperatures in the state capital as low as 14 degrees below 0 (-25 Celsius).

"This is a different kind of storm," said Kendra Clements, one of several businesspeople in Oklahoma City who opened their buildings to shelter homeless people. It was also a harbinger of what social service providers and gov-

## Percy inches towards 'seven minutes of terror'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CAPE CANAVERAL, 18 FEBRUARY

A NASA rover streaked toward a landing on Mars on Thursday in the riskiest step yet in an epic quest to bring back rocks that could answer whether life ever existed on the red planet.

Ground controllers at the space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, settled in nervously for the descent of Perseverance to the surface of Mars, long a deathtrap for incoming spacecraft. It takes a nail-biting 11 1/2 minutes for a signal that would confirm success to reach Earth.

The landing of the six-wheeled vehicle would mark

the third visit to Mars in just over a week. Two spacecraft from the United Arab Emirates and China swung into orbit around the planet on successive days last week. All three missions lifted off in July to take advantage of the close alignment of Earth and Mars, travelling some 300 million miles in nearly seven months.

Perseverance, the biggest, most advanced rover ever



it would have happened 3 billion to 4 billion years ago, when water still flowed on the planet.

Percy, as it is nicknamed, was designed to drill down with its 7-foot arm and collect rock samples that might hold signs of bygone microscopic life. The plan called for three to four dozen chalk-size samples to be sealed in tubes and set aside on Mars to be retrieved by a fetch rover and brought home by another rocket ship, with the goal of getting them back to Earth as early as 2031.

Scientists hope to answer one of the central questions of theology, philosophy and space exploration.

Are we alone in this sort of vast cosmic desert, just flying through space, or is life much

more common? Does it just emerge whenever and wherever the conditions are ripe? said deputy project scientist Ken Williford. Big, basic questions, and we don't know the answers yet. So we're really on the verge of being able to potentially answer these enormous questions.

China's spacecraft includes a smaller rover that also will be seeking evidence of life, if it makes it safely down from orbit in May or June.

Perseverance's descent has been described by NASA as "seven minutes of terror", in which flight controllers can only watch helplessly. The preprogrammed spacecraft was designed to hit the thin Martian atmosphere at 12,100 mph.

### RARE SIGHT



People enjoy themselves by the Dome of the Rock on the compound known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary during a snowy morning in Jerusalem's Old City. Jerusalem woke up to the rare experience of seeing its holy sites covered in snow on Thursday. AGENCIES

### TENDER

#### NORTHERN RAILWAY

VIVEK BINDRA

**A**n economic contraction unleashed by the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the employment and job situation in India. Job opportunities continued to shrink last year with employment contracting by 2.8 per cent in the October-December quarter, according to estimates by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. Even as many salaried employees lost jobs, youth entering the job market have been finding it hard to start a career. Back in May last year at the peak of the pandemic, a survey by British research firm Crosby Textor (CT) found that a whopping 86 per cent of Indians expressed concern about losing their livelihoods.

For the youth who are anxious about their career prospects, it is important to realise that while an economic crisis is real, it is only a transitory phase. With a vaccination drive already kicking off across the world, the worst is already behind us. India also launched a countrywide vaccination programme this month, raising hopes of a return to normalcy over the year. However, as we recover from this recessionary phase, the economy and the nature of jobs are bound to change. For the young workforce, this is the time to prepare for the new economic trends. Greater digitisation of work spaces, major shift in buying behaviours and growth of digital services has engendered the need for multiple skills among employees be it digital product management, data analysis or social media marketing.

Hence, there's no need to despair about a delay in career; rather one may concentrate in preparing to launch oneself in the new age economy. Here are the new trends that one needs to know:

#### Gig economy set to surge

One of the major post-Covid economic trends has been an increasing shift towards what is referred to as gig jobs. As organisations look to cut costs, they are displaying an increasing preference towards hiring freelancers for short term projects. On one hand, this has led to a drop in regular jobs, while on the other it has given rise to a wide array of part time work opportunities, which consultants and freelancers can avail. It is important to gauge this trend and be skilled to benefit from it. If struggling to secure a full time job, one must start by looking for short term work arrangements and gain experience thereof. Networking, marketing in professional platforms and starting a full-fledged career as solopreneur can be the fruitful approach.

One must utilize the spare time to upskill oneself and learn the new applications and technologies being used in one's domain. For example, if one is a traditional marketing professional, it is high time to learn digital and social media marketing skills to stay relevant. One can learn creative writing skills, brand manage-



**For the youth who are anxious about their job prospects, it is important to realise that while the monetary crisis is real, it is only a transitory phase**

ment, face and social media marketing. Enroll in a digital business skilling programme to hone the skills. Multiple skills are particularly important in a gig economy.

#### Field of data science will throw new opportunities

Even in the pre-Covid era, data analytics was a lucrative field. However, with a rapid surge towards digitisation post-Covid, it has received another major boost. Data is a major driver of a digital economy. Making sense of it helps organisations better understand their market, and predict and plan strategies accordingly. Data analysts work by applying models to tonnes of available data, making better sense of them and finding actionable insights. As a young professional looking to prepare for a lucrative field, one may use this time to enrol in online digital and social media marketing and brand management courses to upskill oneself for the new normal.

#### Digital marketing jobs will surge

Digital marketing or strategising sale of products online was already a rapidly growing field even before 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has served to significantly alter the buying and selling of products and services with even small organisations turning to digital mode to attract new customers. The demand for digital marketing strategists who excel in skills such as social media marketing, content marketing and SEO has therefore surged like never before. Even gig jobs are increasingly being offered in this domain. Young professionals can craft a dedicated career for themselves by skilling themselves in these strategies. One may use this time to enrol in online digital and social media marketing and brand management courses to upskill oneself for the new normal.

#### Acquiring multiple skills

While specialisation is desirable, it does not pay anymore to be a master of just one skill. In a changing economy, organisations actively look for multi-skilled individuals who can fit into different roles and plug in the skill gap in their team. It is important therefore that one must learn a series of new age skills that will come in handy once the job plunge is taken. It is important to master the art of good PPT presentation, all components of MS Office, be it Word or Excel; learning to properly navigate the new age communication platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft teams etc; and one must not underestimate the power of soft skills such as good written and verbal communication. All these skills will set one apart in a crowded and competitive space.

#### Considering entrepreneurship

A difficult time for the economy is also a time when new products and ideas can emerge as game-changers. If one has a business idea, it might be just the right time to take an entrepreneurial plunge. However, it is important to prepare for this significant project by undertaking a professional business skilling course. Business skill training courses help professionals learn essential financial management, leadership and problem solving skills, project management and time management - skills essential for both entrepreneurs and managers. In case one is already an entrepreneur looking to scale up one's business, business skilling and training can help significantly improve one's trade.

The writer is founder and CEO, Bada Business

VIDHU SHEKHAR

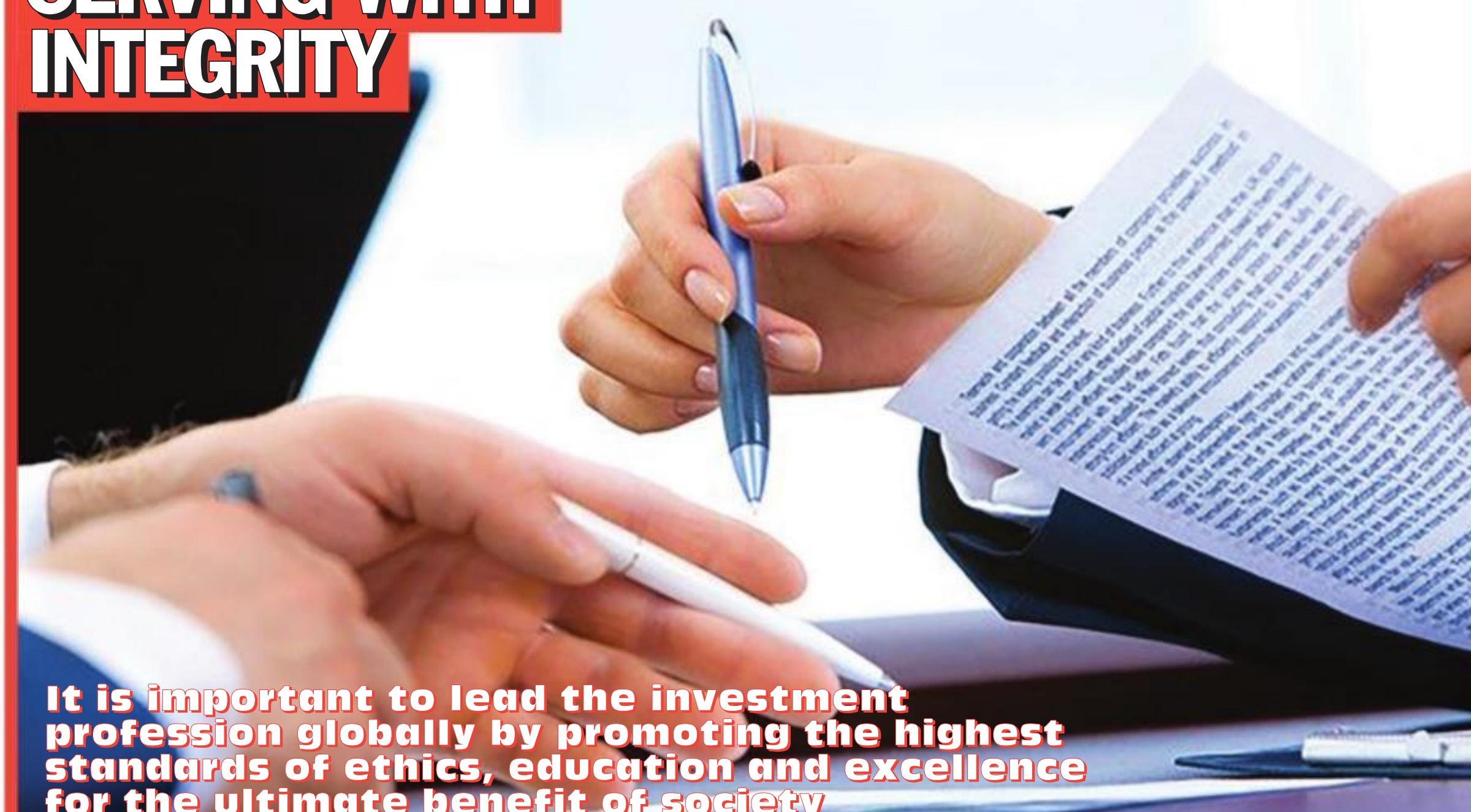
**W**hen I was very young, my mother bought me a picture book with the title *What Shall I Be*. Each page had the picture of a pilot, a doctor, a lawyer, painter or singer, with a line written in bold letters about why I would like to be that person - "I will be a pilot because I can fly high up in the sky". The one I liked best was the fireman, his face blackened with soot and wearing a fearless expression.

I remember being fascinated by the pictures in the book. It was probably the first time that I thought about my grown-up self. I didn't become any of the personalities in the picture book, but the idea that we somehow become a different person depending on the profession we choose remained in my consciousness. My first job was as a software engineer, and I took pride in my ability to understand the requirements of my users and build complex, resilient systems that stood the test of time. Like others in my profession, I took pride in my skills as well as the contribution that I was making.

So, what is common between a fireman, a doctor and an investment professional? Each of these is a profession that serves the community, and people have certain expectations from those who hold themselves out as a member of the profession. When an emergency occurs, firemen and doctors are both expected to drop whatever they are doing and save lives.

The investment profession is no exception to this rule. Our industry has become very complex, and it is often hard for new entrants to this industry to see how their particular job fits into the larger scheme of activities through which we make a difference to our customers. It is important to lead the investment profession globally by promoting the highest standards of ethics, education and professional excellence for the ultimate benefit of society. This will help to reaffirm the central tenet that our profession exists to serve society, and we will always be judged by how well we are doing this.

## SERVING WITH INTEGRITY



**It is important to lead the investment profession globally by promoting the highest standards of ethics, education and excellence for the ultimate benefit of society**

What does this mean for someone who is just starting out in the industry? If I am trying to get a job, any job, that will pay my bills and help me get on with life, why should I worry about such philosophical questions? The answer to this question lies in the powerful insight that long term success depends upon our ability to make the connection and ensure that what we are doing is ultimately connected to the well-being of our customers. A job is not merely a job - it is the mechanism through which one is practising one's profession.

Whether one works as a portfolio manager, a security analyst or a wealth advisor, whether one works in a boutique firm or a large multina-

tional, one needs to develop the consciousness that one is working in the long term interest of the ultimate customer.

There are two components to being a professional - what to do, and how to act. One has to be competent in whatever one does, and that requires one to acquire the knowledge, skills and experience the job entails. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Our industry is filled with stories of people who are otherwise competent but have put their own short-term interests ahead of the interests of their clients. This may lead to short term success but is ultimately bad both for one as a person as well as the profession as a whole.

It is important to place the integrity of the profession and the interest of clients above one's own interests. It also requires members to always act with integrity, competence and respect, and to maintain and develop their professional competence. The standards of professional conduct cover a wide range of topics specific to the practice of investment management. This includes professionalism, and integrity of capital markets, duties to clients and employers, standards related to investment analysis and recommendations, and dealing with conflicts of interests. Together, the codes and standards provide with a systematic framework for practising

the investment profession in a way that promotes integrity and professionalism.

Whether as doctors, lawyers or investment professionals, we receive the licence to practice from society. As experts in the profession, members of society count on us to do the right thing. If this trust is broken, we lose the licence. It is unlikely that we will ever be in the child's picture book along with the fireman, pilot and doctor, but the investment profession is as important as any of these professions. How we conduct ourselves will determine how the next generation will look at us.

The writer is country head - India, CFA Institute

#### PLUS POINTS

##### Supporting women



The British Council has launched a new programme -The British Council Scholarship for Women in STEM. This will allow over 100 women from India and other countries to obtain their advanced degree from a UK university, permitting them to further develop their careers in science. It includes tuition fees, monthly stipend, travel costs, visa and health coverage fees. The scholarship is open to women with dependents to apply and contains provision for scholars that might need a short pre-session English course to achieve the language level needed to undergo their studies. Applications are open until mid-March. For details, visit: [www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad/in-uk/scholarship-women-stem](http://www.britishcouncil.org/study-work-abroad/in-uk/scholarship-women-stem)

##### On economic revival



A book on creating economic awareness titled *Turn Around India: 2020 Surmounting Past Legacy* by RP Gupta was recently launched by Jual Oram, member of parliament, chairperson standing committee on defence, government of India. The book provides a practical and viable option for reviving Indian economy for creating new jobs and enlarging public income and also structural reforms such as fiscal and monetary stimuli for overcoming economic crisis as a consequence of the pandemic.

It is an intimate narrative of Gupta's experiences and how he attained success through sheer hard work and determination. Published by Himalaya Publishing House, it highlights the required modes and strategies to transform India into a vibrant economy and among the most developed nations of the world.

##### Digital revolution



Business leaders and academic minds shared fascinating insights on the present and future of business and workforce in the digital age at an international conference organised recently by Jaipuria School of Business, Ghaziabad. The topic was "Reimagining business and reskilling workforce for emerging digital ecosystem". The conference featured a keynote address by Saurabh Goel, president, Havells India Ltd and guest address by Ravichandran Venkataraman, founder CEO, Alive Consulting and Smriti Academy. The chief guest was Uttiyo Raychaudhuri, vice-provost for Internationalisation, University of Denver, USA.

"Businesses across all sectors have to keep an eye open for the technological developments that are transforming the corporate landscape and demanding re-skilling of the work force for the business environment of the digital age. Only then can we hope for a holistic societal development and true progress," said Shishir Jaipuria, chairman, Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Educational Institutions.

##### Keep riding

West Bengal Cyclists' Association recently organised the 39th State Cycling Championship 2021 at New Town, Rajarhat. The event witnessed participation of around 100 riders from the districts of West Bengal. The occasion was graced by Swapan Banerjee, president, Bengal Olympic Association, along with other eminent dignitaries.

This year the trophies were christened as Lt Bani Ghosh Champions Trophy and Lt Ruma Chatterjee Runners-Up Trophy. Both Ghosh and Chatterjee were cyclists of international repute and were associated with the sport in different capacities with BOA, Cycling Federation of India and WBCA.

The State Championship was held with support from department of youth services and sports, government of West Bengal; Bengal Olympic Association; HIDCO, and Bidhannagar police commissionerate.



