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Abhishek Saraf

Sanjita Mohapatra

### NEARBY



Farmers call for 'rail roko' from noon to 4 p.m. today

NEW DELHI

Farmer unions have called for a nationwide 'rail roko' on Thursday, between noon and 4 p.m., which they hope will force the government to break the deadlock over the three farm laws.

**NEWS ▶ PAGE 9**

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## Nikita Jacob gets 3-week transit anticipatory bail

Toolkit has no violent acts, says counsel

**SONAM SAIGAL**  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has granted transit anticipatory bail for three weeks to advocate Nikita Jacob in connection with climate campaigner Greta Thunberg's 'toolkit' related to the farmers' protest.

A single bench of Justice P.D. Naik granted her relief on Wednesday, after having reserved the order on Tuesday. Senior advocate Mihir Desai, appearing for Ms. Ja-



Nikita Jacob

cob, submitted the order of Justice Vibha Kankanwadi of the Aurangabad bench that granted 10 days' transit anticipatory bail to co-accused Shantanu Muluk in the same case on Tuesday.

Mr. Desai said Ms. Jacob was involved in preparing

the toolkit, but then it did not contain any violent acts or anything pertaining to taking over the Red Fort.

Counsel for the Delhi police Hiten Venegavkar raised questions about the maintainability of Ms. Jacob's application. He said there was no provision for transit bail under the Code of Criminal Procedure. The offence was registered in Delhi, he said, adding that under Section 438 of the Cr.P.C., the court did not have the power to grant anticipatory bail for cases outside its jurisdiction.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

**POLICE SEIZE LAPTOPS ▶ PAGE 9**

## Case against Priya Ramani rejected

She had accused M.J. Akbar of sexual harassment

**SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH**  
NEW DELHI



**Victory day:** Journalist Priya Ramani speaking to the media in New Delhi on Wednesday, after her acquittal. ■ ANI

dent "in public interest and for the public good".

The court also accepted Ms. Ramani's contention that Mr. Akbar "is not a man of stellar reputation" on the basis of her testimony and that of senior journalist Ghazala Wahab, who too

claimed being sexually harassed by Mr. Akbar.

"Despite how well-respected some persons are in society, they – in their personal lives – could show extreme cruelty to the females," the court observed.

Mr. Akbar had said that

'A historic moment'

Social media was flooded with messages congratulating Priya Ramani and her lawyer Rebecca John. "This is a historic moment in the struggle for equality at the workplace," senior lawyer Vrinda Grover said. ▶ PAGE 9

Ms. Ramani's tweets lowered his reputation. After the verdict, Mr. Akbar, who came with his battery of lawyers, left the courtroom without speaking to the media.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

**'WIN BELONGS TO ALL' ▶ PAGE 3**

## Cong. sweeps Punjab municipal elections

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH

The ruling Congress swept the municipal elections in Punjab, winning seven out of eight municipal corporations. While the BJP's former alliance partner, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), emerged as the principal Opposition party in most municipal bodies, the BJP's

performance was dismal.

Ahead of the Punjab Assembly poll, due in early 2022, the victory of the Congress, which forcefully supported the ongoing farmers' stir against the Centre's controversial farm laws, is being seen as a major boost for its electoral prospects.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

## Forgave my father's killers, says Rahul



Rahul Gandhi at a meeting in Puducherry on Wednesday. ■ T. SINGARAVELU

I felt tremendous pain but I don't feel hatred: Cong. leader

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
PUDUCHERRY

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said while the assassination of his father and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by the LTTE still hurt, he forgave the perpetrators.

"I don't have anger towards anybody. Of course, I lost my father and for me, it

was a very difficult time. It is like someone has cut your heart out. I felt tremendous pain. But I don't feel angry. I don't feel any hatred. I forgive," he said at an interaction at the Bharathidasan Government College for Women in Puducherry.

His remarks come at a time when there is a demand for the release of the seven

life convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

To a student's question on his feelings towards the LTTE members who assassinated his father in 1991, he spoke from his own life experience to underscore his message about the meaningless nature of violence.

**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

## Petrol price crosses ₹100 mark in Rajasthan

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan has one of the highest VAT rates on fuel despite the State government having reduced VAT on both petrol and diesel by 2% last month. The petrol rates touched record high in Sriganganagar apparently because of transportation cost.

In M.P.'s Anuppur, petrol was priced at ₹99.90 per litre

and diesel at ₹90.35.

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**DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 4**

## 2 PFI men held on terror charge

U.P. police say duo from Kerala planned to target Hindu outfits



Two persons from Kerala arrested by the U.P. police.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ice alleged. The STF alleged that the two were assembling deadly weapons and explosives to eliminate top office-bearers of Hindutva outfits as well as strike at some "very important and sensitive" places in U.P.

Those arrested are linked to the PFI outfit, said Prashant Kumar, Uttar Pradesh Additional Director-General of Police, Law and Order.

Mr. Kumar said they were arrested on inputs that PFI members were planning a criminal conspiracy, forming a terror group to challenge the unity and sovereignty of the Country and wage a war against the government.

Anis Ahmed, general secretary, PFI, termed the allegations a "bizarre and fake story", and said Badruddin and Khan were PFI members touring Bengal and Bihar for the outfit's expansion.

## Bengal Minister injured in bomb explosion at station

Hossain was boarding train to Kolkata

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Minister of State for Labour Jakir Hossain was injured in a bomb attack on Wednesday at Nimtita in Murshidabad district. Mr. Hossain, MLA from Jangipur in Murshidabad, is a prominent industrialist who owns one of the biggest beedi manufacturing factories in the State.

According to reports, Mr. Hossain was targeted when he was boarding a train to Kolkata at the Nimtita station. He sustained serious injuries and has been admitted to the Jangipur Subdivision Hospital. Videos of the attack that surfaced on social media and were aired by local television channels showed the Minister, along with his supporters, walking on platforms.

This is the first instance in recent times when a Minister of the State government has been attacked publicly.

**Leaders condemn attack**  
State Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh condemned the attack and raised questions about the law and order situation in West Bengal.

Trinamool Congress district president of Murshidabad, Abu Taher, said the party had requested the police to take action against those responsible for the attack.

**Leaders condemn attack**

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**CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8**

## Lawyer couple hacked to death

Legal fraternity in Telangana left in a state of shock

**MARRI RAMU**  
HYDERABAD

A lawyer couple practising at the Telangana High Court here was hacked to death on Wednesday by two persons in broad daylight on the main road near Kalvacherla village in Peddapalli district, 210 km from here.

The gory killing of Gattu Vaman Rao, who was in his early 50s, and his wife P. Nagamani, left the legal fraternity shocked.

Video clips showing two attackers indiscriminately

inflicting injuries on Mr. Rao with sharp-edged weapons has gone viral on social media.

**Dragged out of car**

Mr. Rao, accompanied by his wife, attended a case in Manthani court and was returning by car to his home in Bowenpally of Hyderabad with a driver.

The killers, who came in a four-wheeler, intercepted Mr. Rao's car around 2.30 p.m. Police said the killers dragged Mr. Rao outside

and attacked him.

Investigators suspect that though the attackers wanted to eliminate Mr. Rao, they killed his wife apparently worried over her disposing against them.

They were rushed to Peddapalli government hospital where they died while undergoing treatment.

While the police are pursuing all angles, it is said that a dispute over the construction of a temple in Mr. Rao's village could be one of the reasons.

## Rescue and relief operation at Tapovan slows down

Priority seems to be to clear tunnel and get dam functional rather than look for bodies, says activist

**JACOB KOSHY**  
TAPOVAN (UTTARAKHAND)

Ten days after an avalanche here barreled down from a breaking glacier leading to the death of 58 people and causing at least 200 to go missing, rescue and relief operations aimed at recovering bodies have slowed to a crawl.

Many of those missing were reportedly workers on the Sunday shift at the 520-MW Tapovan Vishnugadhy hydroelectric project and swept away by a storm of ice, water and debris.

A majority of these workers are believed to have been trapped in one of the intake tunnels of the under-construction project. "The tunnel is at least two km long, and we have so far been able to dig through barely 150 metres," said a disaster response officer working at the site. Nearly 50 of the 58 bo-

said Atul Sate, an activist at Joshimath, the tehsil where the disaster unfolded.

**No coordination**  
"In the first three days since the flood, there was no coordination among the various agencies – the Army, State and national disaster response force and the company. In that time, lives were lost and bodies became unrecognizable."

Earlier, the search team had drilled a hole to determine if a silt channel located 12 metres below the main tunnel could be used to reach the place where the workers were said to be trapped. "It didn't work out as the channel was also filled with water and mud," an official said.

Dipesh Nath has come to Tapovan looking for her nephew. "My relatives and I aren't allowed into the site. (With inputs from Devesh Pandey)

barrage of the plant, and locals say it was only after an agitation that officials began digging looking for bodies. Rescue operations are being led by the National Thermal Power Corporation, which is building the power plant. "Their priority is to clear the tunnel and get the dam functional as soon as possible rather than look for bodies,"

Then there are workers believed to be trapped near the

site. Many of those missing were reportedly workers on the Sunday shift at the 520-MW Tapovan Vishnugadhy hydroelectric project and swept away by a storm of ice, water and debris.

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## Traders ask police to open way for business

Shopkeepers in Singhu border say they are suffering losses due to ongoing stir

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

Shopkeepers from Shiva Market, located near the main protest stage at the Singhu border, gathered on Wednesday near the barricades set up close to their establishments, and requested authorities to allow them to open their shops.

Om Prakash, 32, a resident of Narela who runs a spare parts shop, said that before January 26, they were able to open their shops and some customers were still coming. "However, after the violence on Republic Day, we were forced to shut our shops. All routes have been blocked by the police. Two entry points that were open till then were closed after January 29," he said.

With an application in hand, the shopkeepers requested the officers on duty to let them meet senior officials. However, they were informed that the seniors were not available for talks.

The shopkeepers said that



Shops in Shiva Market have remained shut due to the farmers' protest at G.T. Karnal Road. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

because of the ongoing farmers' protest, they are suffering heavy losses and are unable to pay rent.

They sought help in opening up the market so they could restart their business.

Shopkeepers said they are managing to reach their shops to clean the premises, however, no customers are coming as all the routes are closed. "We go to clean the

shop once in two-three days but we are incurring huge losses," said Mr. Prakash who has a family of 10.

### Paying rent

Satnam, 32, another resident of Narela, said they have to pay rent of ₹30,000-₹50,000 a month, depending on space, but have not earned much in the past few weeks. "Our landlord is not

concerned that our shops are not opening. He is not waiving the rent. How will we survive?" he said, adding that he has to take care of his eight family members.

Shopkeepers also complained that goods worth lakhs are expiring or rotting away in their shops. Some have had to take out a loan to manage their household expenses. "I have taken a loan of ₹1.5 lakh on 3% interest to take care of household expenses," said Mr. Prakash.

### No one is listening'

Shopkeepers said that they have been trying to reach police officers for 10 days, and have been coming to the Singhu border for two days. "But no one is listening to us... All we want is for the police to allow us and our customers to reach the shops," said Mr. Satnam.

Residents of Singhu village had gathered last week demanding that barricades installed at the entry point of their village be removed.

## Farmers dig to get 'own water'

Protesters instal submersible pumps along Bahadurgarh and Rohtak bypass

JATIN ANAND  
BAHADURGARH

After langars serving food and beverages, including tea and lassi, thanks to a steady supply of vegetables plucked from their respective fields and desi milk from the livestock they maintain back home, protesting farmers are now making arrangements for their "own water" from the ground up.

As summer approaches and their gathering continues to swell, agitating farmers have begun installing submersible pumps on patches of land along the Bahadurgarh and Rohtak bypass.



Workers instal a submersible pump at the farmers' protest site in Bahadurgarh on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

is nothing in the face of the blessings of Mother Earth," said Ishwar Singh Dhul from Pai village in Haryana's Kaithal, overseeing the digging for one such pump at Pakoda Chowk near Rohtak bypass.

"Everyone has contributed whatever they could to arrange the pipes, water tanks and wages for the labourers. There are a lot of us, including me, who get pension of around ₹2,500 to ₹3,000 per month. I have contributed ₹500 and helped collect donations from other pensioners," Dharmpal Pai, 70, said.

From providing water for existing toilets to ensuring availability of water for bathing more than once a day, RO

purification systems too are being attached to such set-ups to provide multiple litres of drinking and cooking water "for as long as [the farmers] may need to wait" for the ongoing agitation to end.

As more women from their families join them in their tents by the roadside, arrangements will also ensure the creation of more ladies' toilets and bathrooms.

### Will help women

"Women from my village want to join the agitation. If they stay, they are forced to answer nature's call either at someone's house here or in the fields. After we make these arrangements, they

will be able to stay with us here for longer periods," said Simranjeet Singh from Bhatinda.

Virender Yadav, who runs a small business that provides submersible water pump installation services in Delhi's Bawana, said he rushed to the Rohtak bypass with his team of four on Tuesday to try his luck at getting a client or two. He wasn't disappointed.

"We just asked around and were commissioned to dig this one. Some others I know have dug around 10 to 12 of these. Till April, I've been told, the farmers want around 50 pump installations to be available to them," he said.

The one Mr. Yadav was asked to create will provide water to a dozen potable toilets, two adjacent bathing areas and replenish, multiple times a day, thousands of litres of RO-purified water for drinking and cooking.

"Tell the government we aren't going anywhere till our demands are met. We have enough provisions and now even water to last us till the next [Lok Sabha] elections in 2024. We have borne a winter on the streets and will bear a summer too," said Rajpal Dhul Pai.

## Farm law protester held for attacking policeman

Accused, a Nihang Sikh, stole an officer's car after threatening him with a sword

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

The arrested man has been identified as Harpreet, a member of the Nihang community. He had been staying at the Singhu border protest site for several days, said the police.

The police said that on Tuesday at around 8 p.m., the protester stole a car from a policeman and drove it towards Mukarba Chowk. The

policeman alerted other officers about the incident.

"After he was intercepted by a police van near Mukarba Chowk, he left the car at the spot and snatched a two-wheeler from a motorcyclist."

A police team led by SHO Samaypur Badli Ashish Dubey managed to stop the accused," added the officer.

When policemen tried to

catch him, he attacked them with a sword. The SHO received minor injuries while trying to overpower the accused, said the officer.

"The accused has been arrested under IPC sections related to robbery, attempt to murder and attacking an on-duty police officer. He has been sent to jail," added the officer.

## Police arrest man who swung swords at Red Fort

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

A man seen swinging two swords at the Red Fort rampart and allegedly attacking policemen on January 26 has been arrested, said a senior police officer on Wednesday.

The officer said that Maninder Singh alias Moni, a resident of Swaroop Nagar, was the most wanted person in the case. He works as a car AC mechanic.

"He was arrested on Tuesday night from Pitampura. Subsequently, two swords used at the Red Fort by the accused have been recovered from his house," said DCP (Special Cell) Pramod Kushwaha.

The officer added that the accused was seen in a video swinging two swords at the Red Fort with intent to motivate/radicalise and energise the violent anti-national elements.

The accused has disclosed to have been radicalised by watching provoking Facebook posts of various groups. He used to frequently visit the Singhu border and was influenced by the speeches made by leaders there, the police said. Before joining the rally, Maninder had kept two swords with him, said Mr. Kushwaha.

**Delhi Tourism**

**34<sup>th</sup> GARDEN TOURISM FESTIVAL**

**Theme: Colours of Nature**

**Arvind Kejriwal**  
Chief Minister, Delhi

**Highlights**

Display of various plants, nursery stalls, etc.  
Garden Bazaar: Sale of flowers, plants, gardening accessories, etc.  
Activities like sketch artist, puppet show, calligraphy artist, etc. On weekends  
Weekend workshops for Bonsai, Cactus and Succulents, Dahlia & Houseplants  
Cultural programme on weekends  
Various food and art & craft stalls  
Tak Tak Gadi, Sarangi, Dry Flowers, Paper Toys, Tarot and Flower Remedy, Reiki and Crystal, Thread Bangles, Name on Rice, Tereocotta Jewellery, Wrist Band, Name Plate Maker, Potter wheel with display and sale of items

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 to 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2021

**Venue:** Garden of Five Senses, near Saket Metro Station

**Time:** 11 am to 6 pm (Weekdays)  
11 am to 7.30 pm (Weekends)

**Free shuttle service from Saket Metro Station**

**Ticket price**  
Weekend 50/- | Weekdays 40/- | Sr. Citizen 40/-  
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Timings

DELHI

THURSDAY, FEB. 18	RISE 06:57 SET 18:14
FRIDAY, FEB. 19	RISE 10:45 SET 00:00
FRIDAY, FEB. 19	RISE 06:56 SET 18:15
FRIDAY, FEB. 19	RISE 11:18 SET 00:10
SATURDAY, FEB. 20	RISE 06:55 SET 18:15
SATURDAY, FEB. 20	RISE 11:55 SET 01:04

Delhi Weather max min  
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Safdarjung 27 11  
Palam 26 14

Delhi Palam Today 29°C A cool morning with shallow to moderate fog. A comfortable day with mainly sunny sky.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 29°C Weather will remain dry with cool morning and evening. Day would remain comfortable.

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THE HINDU

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IN BRIEF

Nursery admissions to commence today

NEW DELHI  
Nursery admission to over 1,700 private, unaided, recognised schools of Delhi is set to commence from Thursday after being delayed by over two months due to the pandemic. Although schools are yet to open, the Delhi government had announced last week the criteria for schools to conduct the admission process. The last date to fill in applications is March 4. The first and second list will be released on March 20 and March 25, respectively with the DoE aiming to complete the entire process by March 31.

## My victory belongs to all who spoke up: Ramani

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Following a Delhi court's verdict acquitting her in a defamation case filed by former Union Minister M.J. Akbar, journalist Priya Ramani said she felt vindicated on behalf of all women who have ever spoken up against sexual harassment at the workplace.

She said the verdict would inspire more women to speak up against sexual harassment at the workplace.

"Sexual harassment at the workplace has got the attention it deserves, despite the fact that it was me, the victim, who had to stand up in court as the accused. I believe my victory will inspire more women to speak up about sexual harassment at the workplace. I also hope it will deter powerful men from attempting to intimidate victims by taking them to court in false cases," said Ms. Ramani.

Thanking the court for its verdict and lawyer Rebecca John and her team, Ms. Ramani said, "I thank my lawyers, Rebecca John and her team, who believed in

## Tablighi case: LOCs for 35 foreigners to be removed

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

## Cong. councillor from Malka Ganj joins AAP

Guddi Devi will continue as councillor'

Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday ordered the removal of Look Out Circulars that had been issued against 35 foreign nationals in connection with the Tablighi Jamaat case.

The Crime Branch was probing a case in which the foreign nationals, among others, had congregated at the Nizamuddin Markaz in March 2020 in violation of COVID-19 rules.

The police had claimed that the event led to the spread of the virus.

# Have digital footprints of those involved in 'toolkit' case: police

They have identified three persons; 'plan was to amplify farmers' protest'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi police team investigating the 'toolkit' case on Wednesday claimed they have digital footprints of all the persons involved in the case and alleged that their aim was to create unrest in the country on Republic Day.

Providing background, a senior police officer who chose not to be named claimed that the plan failed miserably because police showed maximum restraint and added that the alleged plan to create a 'toolkit' to amplify the farmers' protest was started from January 3 onwards.

A senior police officer alleged that Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF) founder Mo Dhaliwal's close aide Pu-

The role of PJF and Sikhs For Justice group is under the scanner. Their plan of massive riots in Delhi failed miserably on Republic Day

POLICE OFFICER

Zoom app and put their thoughts and make strategies for farmers' protest," the officer said.

On January 9, they decided to work together and they started working on 'toolkit' and on January 21, Shantanu joined farmers' protest at the Tikri border, he alleged.

**Global Action Day**  
The police claim that the final version of 'toolkit' was prepared on January 23 and it was sent to Dhaliwal for approval. On January 26, PJF announced 'Global Day Action' with hashtag 'AskIndia-Why', said the officer.

"We have identified three persons, who were the part of the WhatsApp group. One of them is a member of the UK Chapter of Extinction Re-

bellion (XR) who along with Nikita and Shantanu drafted content between February 1 and 2 for a tweet storm planned for February 4 and 5. The role of PJF and Sikhs For Justice group is under the scanner. Their plan of massive riots in Delhi failed miserably on Republic Day," said the officer.

On February 3, Disha shared the 'toolkit' with Greta that had a plan how to proceed further. But Greta tweeted it mistakenly, the police alleged.

"We have digital footprints of every person involved in the conspiracy. We haven't got the order copy of Bombay court judgment. We will explore legal help before proceeding further," the officer added.

'Centre is unnecessarily linking Disha to Khalistan'

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

Protesting farmers at the Singhu border said the arrest of climate change activist Disha Ravi was wrong and there was no possibility of her to be linked to "Khalistan" or "Khalistani movement".

Gurjant Singh (67) from Moga said: "She is a south Indian girl. Why would she be concerned with Khalistan and the movement?

They're unnecessarily linking her to Khalistan", adding that the government, "from the very beginning" is trying to link the protest with Khalistan. "We are not and never associated with any such movement. We are only here for our rights".

Jaswant Singh said that the "government has reached a new low" by authorising arrests of young women like Ms. Ravi and activist Nodeep Kaur, who is also lodged in jail. "If we were Khalistanis and had weapons, why would we sit here peacefully? By arresting young women who are supporting the farmer's protest, they are trying to scare us but they don't know that our women are prepared to be arrested if that's what their plan is," he said.

**'Will favour us'**  
Some farmers said that the arrest, though wrong, will work in their favour. "With these arrests, they're bringing more attention towards us. Also, the UNO is watching everything. Even if we lose, we'll complete three months of protest within a few days and make a record," said a protester from Maharashtra.

## Over 15,000 vaccinated in the Capital

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A total of 15,337 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Wednesday and there were four adverse events following immunisation, said a government spokesperson.

Of the total beneficiaries, 3,633 healthcare workers received the first dose and 1,072 their second dose. Also, 10,632 front-line workers received the first dose of the vaccine.

Meanwhile, Delhi witnessed 134 new COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total cases to 6,37,315, according to a health bulletin.

## Chowk to be named after Rinku: North Delhi Mayor

'Proposal to be tabled by area councillor'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The incident was a fallout of Sharma's participation in a donation drive for the Ram temple.

"The North Delhi Municipal Corporation will name Mangolpuri chowk in the name of Rinku Sharma, for which a proposal will be tabled by the area councillor Raj Prakash," the Mayor was quoted as saying in a statement issued by his office.

A day earlier, BJP leader Kapil Mishra had met Sharma's family to provide financial assistance of ₹1 crore and alleged that the youth was targeted and killed for taking part in collection of donation for Ram temple construction in Ayodhya. The BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal have alleged that



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First Batch  
from 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2021

Second Batch  
from 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2021

011-45124612, 9958995830

#### Weekend Batches

Commencing  
from  
7<sup>th</sup> March, 2021

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### LIVE-ONLINE CLASSES

Medium : Hindi + English

Morning Batch from 18<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2021  
(8.30 AM - 11.30 AM)

8851176822, 9958995830

Medium : English

Evening Batch from 25<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2021  
(5.30 PM - 8.30 PM)

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Note : If covid condition does not improve, then access to live/online classes will be provided till resumption of offline classes.

**Corporate office:** 44-A/1, Kalu Sarai, Near Hauz Khas Metro Station, New Delhi - 110016  
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# NEXT IAS

- Well Planned Curriculum
- Current Based Approach
- Interactive Classrooms

## GS Foundation Course for CSE 2022

### Features:

- Senior, experienced and knowledgeable faculties.
- Comprehensive coverage of both Preliminary and Main exam syllabus.
- Systematic subject sequence and well-framed modules.
- Focus on conceptual clarity and current based approach.
- Well designed comprehensive study materials.
- Time bound and effective completion of syllabus.
- Personalized & dedicated Academic Coach for academic support and one-to-one doubt resolution.
- Mandatory weekly tests and discussions for Prelims and Mains.
- Answer writing practice for Mains.
- Classroom workbooks and discussions based on current pattern for each module.
- Weekly Current Affairs and newspaper analysis classes to integrate current based approach.

### LIVE-ONLINE CLASSES

1<sup>st</sup> Batch : 7<sup>th</sup> Jan'21 (9:30 AM - 12:30 PM)

Admission closed

2<sup>nd</sup> Batch :

25<sup>th</sup> Feb'21 (6:00 PM - 9:00 PM)

Admission open

### OFFLINE CLASSES

1<sup>st</sup> Batch : 25<sup>th</sup> Feb'21 (9:30 AM - 12:30 PM)

Admission closed

2<sup>nd</sup> Batch : 10<sup>th</sup> Mar'21 (6:00 PM - 9:00 PM)

Admission open

3<sup>rd</sup> Batch : 15<sup>th</sup> Mar'21 (9:30 AM - 12:30 PM)

Admission open

## Prelims Through Questions (PTQ) for CSE 2021

### Features:

- Live lectures by our core GS faculty team.
- Additional facility to watch recorded lectures (24x7).
- Coverage of most probable concepts/topics for Prelims 2021 through questions.
- Interactive classes with live query and doubt resolution.
- Focus on conceptual clarity and application of fundamental concepts.
- Systematic course structure as per Prelims 2021.
- Includes 50' hours lectures on Current Affairs topics of last one year.

### LIVE-ONLINE CLASSES

Course Duration : 150 Hours

Commencement Date : 4<sup>th</sup> Mar'21

### AREAS COVERED

- |               |                        |          |
|---------------|------------------------|----------|
| • History     | • Geography            | • Polity |
| • Environment | • Current Affairs      |          |
| • Economy     | • Science & Technology |          |

## Optional Foundation Course for CSE 2021 & 2022

### Economics

by Vibhas Jha Sir

### Mathematics

# Attempt being made to divide farmers, says Jayant Chaudhary

'Stir against farm laws not a protest by one caste but a movement of farmers'

ANUJ KUMAR  
GAZIABAD

Responding to the charge that the farmers' movement is being run by one community, Rashtriya Lok Dal vice-president Jayant Chaudhary said on Wednesday that it was an "attempt to divide farmers" on caste lines.

"I have been told a meeting was called by the Home Minister in Delhi where it was said that Jats are running the farmers' protest and they have to be set right. This language is against the voice of the Constitution," Mr. Chaudhary said.

Addressing the tenth farmers' panchayat in 15 days against the contentious farm laws, the RLD leader said it was not the protest of one caste, but the movement of farmers. "It is a matter of shame that after dividing us



Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Jayant Chaudhary addressing a 'Kisan Panchayat' in Mathura on Wednesday. ■ PTI

into religious lines, an attempt is being made to create fissures among farmers on the basis of caste, gotras, and khaps," he said.

Mr. Chaudhary, who knows MSP of most crops by heart, once again announced the official rates and asked farmers to say the actual prices they were getting. "It is a fight to save farmers

identity and you should identify those who are standing by you in this battle," he said.

#### Foreign funds

Mr. Chaudhary said the hand that farmers had lent to him, he would hold it tight. "The road ahead could be filled with obstacles, but we will take this movement forward," he said. "The govern-

ment is claiming that the protests are receiving funds from outside India. Has any of you received any such funds," the RLP leader asked farmers.

#### Support for activists

Speaking in favour of young activists and journalists, Mr. Chaudhary said those who were speaking on farmers' issues, the government was putting them behind bars. "Modiji came to power riding on the vote of the youth. Now, they are putting young activists in jail," he said.

He again appealed to the farmers that unless they render a "political blow" to the Bharatiya Janata Party, their movement would not be a success. "When their chair goes, they should have the word *kisan* on their lips," he urged.

## Bag with ₹1.4 cr. found inside train

Pantry staff spotted the unclaimed luggage and informed RPF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KANPUR

An unclaimed bag containing cash worth around ₹1.4 crore was found in the Swatantra Sangram Senani special train, a senior official said on Wednesday.

The recovery was made on Tuesday while the train was on its way to Jaynagar in Bihar from Delhi, said Deputy Chief Traffic Manager Hirman-sha Shekhar.

**DR.YSR Architecture & Fine Arts University**  
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Near Chalamaredy Pali, Kadapa-516002,YSR District,AP,www.yrsrau.ac.in  
**e-Procurement Tender Notification**  
Tender Notice No.: NIT\_00.04/YSRFAU/REG/E-Proc/RT / 2020-21 Date: 16.02.2021  
S.No. Description Tender ID  
1 Supply, Installation and Commissioning of the Desktops 376981  
The Bidders can view/download the Bid Document from [www.apeprocurement.gov.in](http://www.apeprocurement.gov.in) and also visit for details [www.yrsrau.ac.in](http://www.yrsrau.ac.in)

#### APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely **Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, was found on 13.02.2021 at 22:12 PM on KM Pole No. 4/28, 4/30 North Line Rly Near Welcome Metro Station.** In this regard DD No. 25A dated 13.02.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Old Delhi Railway Station. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

**Name: Unknown, Age: 30-35 Years, Height: 5'7", Complexion: Wheatish, Wearing: Red and White Jacket and Blue Jeans Pant.**

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

SHO  
Police Station, Old Delhi Railway Station  
Ph.: 011-23961522, 9250677138  
DP/61/RLY/2021

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, Traffic Engineering  
Cell, N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560002  
No.: EE/TEC/TEND/12/2020-21 Date: 16.02.2021

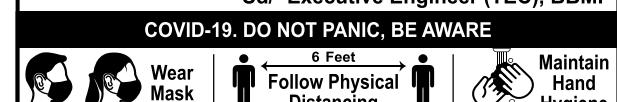
**TENDER NOTIFICATION**  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW POLICE SENTRY (POLICE CHOWKI) AGAINST COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENT RIGHTS ON BUILD, OPERATE AND TRANSFER (BOT) BASIS  
(Through e-Procurement only)

The Executive Engineer (Traffic Engineering Cell-Road Infrastructure), BBMP, Bengaluru on behalf of the Commissioner, BBMP invites bids in two covers (Technical & Financial Bids) from reputed National / International Firms / Agencies for Construction and Maintenance of New Police Sentry box (police chowki) against Commercial Advertisements using only the Full Color HD LED Display Screen / Scroller / Poly Carbonate Sheets or similar the size of the advertising area should not exceeding 15 Sqmtrs per unit with space sharing of 15% to BBMP, 15% to Traffic & 70% for commercial use on BOT Basis for a Concession period of 20 years for the following package works. In No way these screens will be used by BBMP or Traffic under their time slot for promotion of schemes of State Govt. (which is covered under advertising) all the commercial advertisements shall only be display in the time share of Bidder (with commercial considerations as decided by the bidder). The content shall be a non-video pictorial animated non audio format, with changing slides format, as not to disturb to general traffic movement on the roads.

No.	Package Number	Approximate No. of Locations per package	EMD, Rs. in Lakhs (as per RFP)
1	124 (Reserved for the SC/ST Beneficiaries and NGO's Administered by SC/ST)	25.00	

**Calendar of events:** (1) Downloading of new RFP Document from e-procurement from **18.02.2021**. (2) Date and Time of pre-bid meeting at the Office of the Chief Engineer (Road Infrastructure), BBMP Head Office, Annexe-3 Building, 4th Floor, N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560002: **24.02.2021, 3:00 p.m.** (3) Last date for submission of bid document: **04.03.2021, 4:00 p.m.** (4) Opening of Technical proposal: **05.03.2021, 4:30 p.m.** (5) Opening of Financial proposal: **Will be intimated later.** Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer (TEC), BBMP

**COVID-19. DO NOT PANIC, BE AWARE**



#### NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 19 Date 15.02.2021

Invitation of Tenders through e-Procurement system

Dy. Chief Material Manager, North Eastern Railway, Gorkhpur and on behalf of the President of India, invites tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items.

Complete description of the item and other condition are available on website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) & [www.tenders.gov.in](http://www.tenders.gov.in). Item no.: 1. Tender no. & due date: 10205620 Due on: 22-03-2021

Brief description of stores: Polymer Spring Pack (For One to One Replacement Kit of Rubber Spring Pack) Qty Required: 400 Nos. Earnest Money (Rs):- 66780/- 1. Above tenders are available on IREPS site ie [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) the firm desirous in participating against e-tender are advised to electronically regd. Themselves on the above website for which they would required to obtain class-III digital certificate (if already not obtain) from certifying agencies authorized under govt. of India IT Act, 2000. Manual offers will not be accepted. 2. Advertised tender and bulletin tenders of dy.cmm/depot office, NER are being opened through EPS (E-Procurement system) only. Firms desiring to participate in dy.cmm/depot. Tenders should obtain necessary digital certificate and get themselves registered with CRIS/ New Delhi, Necessary details in this regard can be obtained from the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. 3. In case of difference between English and Hindi version of the tender notice the English version shall prevail. 4. Head of allocation towards, S.D money is 00844517 & Earnest money is 00084506. 5. The tender cost & EMD will be accepted through On-Line payment on IREPS Portal only for the tender published on or after 01.09.2016 against all the Dy.CMM/depot /NER/GKP tenders except Global Tender.

Dy. Chief Material Manager/Depot CPRO/S-59 Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Do Not Smoke Bidi/Cigarette in train

In Madhya Pradesh's Anuppur, petrol price has soared to ₹99.90 per litre

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

After a continuous increase in the fuel rates for the last several days, the price of petrol on Wednesday crossed the ₹100 per litre mark in Rajasthan's Sriganganagar district.

The petrol and diesel prices in Sriganganagar soared to ₹100.13 and ₹92.13, respectively. In Anuppur of Madhya Pradesh, petrol is priced at 99.90 per litre and diesel at ₹90.35.

Rajasthan has one of the highest value added tax (VAT) rates on fuel among the big States in the country, despite the State government having reduced VAT on both petrol and diesel by

## Chargesheet filed against priest in Budaun rape case

Gang-rape charge dropped; aides accused of hiding evidence

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GAZIABAD

302 and 376 of the IPC while Vedram and Jaspal have been accused of hiding evidence under section 201 of the IPC.

The charge sheet was filed on the basis of forensic reports, mobile location of the accused at the time of the crime and CCTV footage of the Chandausi hospital where the accused took the victim after she allegedly fell into the well, he stated.

#### Strong evidence

"No possibility of gang-rape was found in the investigation, which revealed that the deceased did fall into the well. But it also found marks of resistance. There is strong forensic evidence of sexual assault against the priest and the case would be heard in a fast-track court," he observed.

On why the charges against the two aides were di-

luted, he said witnesses and call records corroborated that they reached the spot after the incident.

#### Compensation

The son-in-law of the deceased said they had yet to receive the full compensation amount and that he had received threats from unidentified persons in the village. "The SHO did visit the village and told people close to the priest that action would be taken against them if they indulge in any verbal or physical assault, but one doesn't know..." he stated.

Mr. Sharma said the compensation amount in such cases was released in instalments at the FIR, charge sheet, and conviction stages. "We are in the process of the second stage and we will ensure the security of the family," he added.

## Four held for unauthorised COVID-19 vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GAZIABAD

The Gautam Buddha Nagar Police on Wednesday arrested four persons in connection with unauthorised COVID-19 vaccination in Dadri town of the district.

On Tuesday, four persons were detained after a team of the district health department raided Gopal Pathology Lab after it was ascertained that 18 people were vaccinated with the unauthorised vaccine at the camp. The premises were sealed, and more than 200 vials were seized.

At present, only two vaccines: Covishield and Covaxin are approved for use in India.

**'No permission taken'**  
Deepak Ohri, Chief Medical Officer, Gautam Buddha Nagar described it as a "fraud" exercise. "No permission was taken from the district health department for the camp. When we came to know about a vaccination drive being conducted in Dadri through social media, I sent a team to look into the matter."

Dr. Ohri said those who were conducting the exercise claimed that they were doing the third phase clinical trial of the vaccine developed by Zydus Cadila Healthcare Limited on behalf of Flores Hospital Gaziabab. "Vaccination and clinical trial are two different things and for both clear SOPs have been laid out. It was a fraud. The lab was unregistered. We are looking into the role of Flores Hospital," he said.

Rajveer Singh Chauhan, SHO Dadri, said an FIR has been registered under section 420 of the IPC. "We have arrested four persons who were 'vaccinating' people," he said.

## Aspirational districts gear up for children's nutrition

Fortified rice to be given in midday meal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAIPUR

The five aspirational districts in Rajasthan have geared up to improve nutritional status of children with the distribution of fortified rice through midday meal scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). The initiative will be launched from April this year.

Fortified rice will be supplied from the godowns of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) with the estimates of 4,551 metric tonnes for midday meal scheme and 77,736 metric tonnes for ICDS.

The five aspirational districts selected in the State for the ICDS. The initiative will be launched from April this year.

**Pregnancy care**  
Some other districts in the State are likely to be included in the next two phases of the programme. An online pregnancy and child care system is already operative in the aspirational districts, for which the development partners, such as UNICEF and UNFPA, are rendering technical assistance.

## No alliance with INPT, says Tripura royal scion

'Recognise idea of Greater Tipraland'

SYED SAJJAD ALI  
AGARTALA

Tripura royal scion Pradyot Kishore Debarman on Wednesday dismissed reports that his party, the Tripura Indigenous People's Regional Alliance (TIPRA), had forged an alliance with the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT) for the upcoming elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous district Council (TTAACD).

INPT president Bijoy Hrangkhlaw recently claimed that they had reached an electoral understanding with the TIPRA.

He said his demand was not aimed at hurting any community, but supporting the indigenous people of the State and establishing their rights.

#### NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

E-Procurement Tender Notice

Sr. Divisional Material Manager, North

Eastern Railway, Lucknow and on

behalf of the President of India,

invites tenders through e-procurement

system for the supply of the following

item and other conditions are available

on website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Description : Supply of Secondary

Cell Low Maintenance 2V/300 AH as

per specification no. IRS-S-88/2004

with latest amendment. Qty.: 600 Nos.

Earnest Money: ₹ 87,10/- Due Date:

10.03.2021. Note: Above Tender has been uploaded on the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

The firms, who desire to participate in e-tender are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a class III

Digital Signature Certificate Authority

licensed by CCA India. Manual offers against e-tenders will not be considered. For details, please visit the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

Sr. Div. Materials Manager

CPRO/S-57 Lucknow

About any passenger amenity complain

SMS on Mobile No. 09794845955

"DO NOT TRAVEL WITH INFLAMMABLE ARTICLE IN TRAIN"

#### SHRI RAM COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE &amp; AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Thursday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, interior Karnataka and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... -	29.2	15.0	Kozhikode	... -	33.6	24.1
Ahmedabad	-	32.5	14.2	Kurnool	... -	33.9	19.2
Aizawl	-	25.0	7.7	Lucknow	... -	29.4	11.7
Allahabad	-	29.5	13.0	Madurai	... -	33.4	22.7
Bengaluru	-	32.0	18.4	Mangalore	... -	34.0	23.0
Bhopal	-	29.5	15.8	Mumbai	... -	29.5	20.0
Bhubaneswar	-	32.8	19.4	Mysuru	... -	33.6	18.0
Chandigarh	-	27.0	9.7	New Delhi	... -	27.2	10.7
Chennai	-	30.5	22.2	Patna	... -	28.8	14.4
Coimbatore	-	32.6	22.6	Pond Blair	... -	30.5	24.8
Dehradun	-	26.8	9.0	Puducherry	... -	30.4	20.0
Gangtok	-	15.2	6.4	Pune	... -	31.6	17.1
Goa	-	31.9	21.7	Raipur	... -	33.6	16.4
Guwahati	-	27.2	12.6	Ranchi	... -	24.2	15.2
Hubballi	-	31.0	18.0	Shillong	... -	18.2	8.2
Hyderabad	-	32.0	18.0	Shimla	... -	16.5	3.8
Imphal	-	26.6	6.3	Srinagar	... -	14.8	-1.6
Jaipur	-	29.6	14.8	Thiruvananthapuram	... -	33.6	24.2
Kochi	-	31.8	24.4	Tiruchi	... -	32.4	21.8
Kohima	-	20.2	7.0	Vijayawada	... -	32.8	19.2
Kolkata	-	28.4	19.4	Visakhapatnam	... -	31.0	22.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	24	104	45	.135	.164	...
Bengaluru	.7	.35	.19	.106	.113	...
Chennai	10	.17	.44	.101	.89	...
Delhi	10	.86	.72	.373	.352	...
Hyderabad	.5	124	.50	.94	.138	...
Kolkata	32	.94	.50	.274	.173	...
Lucknow	11	.66	.60	.229	.241	...
Mumbai	.9	...	.10	.170	.127	...
Pune	...	.80	.27	.119	.107	...
Visakhapatnam	15	.57	.27	.130	.133	...

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 382 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 36.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

## Direct ACB to question Fadnavis in land grab case, activist urges court

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE  
City-based advocate Asim Sarode, on behalf of anti-corruption activist Anjali Damania, has submitted a note of argument in a special court seeking a direction to the Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to question former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in connection with a case of alleged land grab involving former Revenue Minister Eknath Khadse.

Ms. Damania has alleged in her submission before Judge S.R. Navandar as to whether Mr. Fadnavis, currently the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Leader of Opposition, had allegedly erased vital evidence of the minutes of a meeting chaired by Mr. Khadse, who was the then State Revenue Minister, in a bid to shield him.

She has further urged the court to direct the ACB to record statements of Mr. Khadse and his kin, as well

as those of IAS officers concerned who served in the Forest and Revenue Departments when Mr. Khadse was the minister. "Were minutes of a meeting chaired by Mr. Khadse erased [allegedly on Mr. Fadnavis' orders]? Was this done to protect a party member and shield him from corruption charges?" Ms. Damania said in her submission.

Mr. Sarode said that the whole process of the investigation conducted by the ACB was shoddy and as a result, its closure report was questionable.

"They have not bothered to follow the money and attempt to trace who deposited large sums of money in the accounts of Mr. Khadse, his wife Mandakini Khadse, and their son-in-law Girish Dayaram Chaudhary," Mr. Sarode told *The Hindu*.

Judge Navandar has posted his decision on Ms. Damania's submission for February 23.

## Alibaug court awards Nepali man life term for raping niece

RAINA ASSAINAR  
NAVI MUMBAI

Alibaug sessions court on Wednesday sentenced a Nepali man to life imprisonment for abducting his niece from Nepal, bringing her to Raigad, and raping her.

The convict, Prasade Manhare Kami (36), had abducted his 14-year-old niece from her school in Nepal on November 24, 2019. Kami came to Pune via bus and then boarded another bus to Murud and stayed in a hotel in Borli village. He also got a job in the kitchen of a hotel.

Meanwhile, the victim's father lodged a missing person's complaint in Nepal. Kami was arrested on December 2, 2019. The victim was kept in a shelter home till her father reached and

then she was produced before the Child Welfare Committee where she revealed that she was raped.

**TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT**  
**Mr. N SELVA KUMAR**  
**PH: 9820350726**  
**selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in**  
**THE HINDU**  
**India's National Newspaper**

## For how long will you collect toll on Mumbai-Pune Expressway, HC asks MSRDC

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) for how long motorists would pay the toll on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and G.S. Kulkarni was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) petition filed by advocate Pravin Wategaonkar and three others challenging the toll collection on the expressway. Mr. Wategaonkar

said that the collection of toll had been illegal since August 10, 2019, and sought an exemption from payment for light motor vehicles till the matter was heard.

The HC asked the advocate representing the MSRDC for how many more

years would it continue to collect the toll? "Is the government receiving its share of toll revenue?" the Bench asked.

The MSRDC advocate requested the court to give time to file a detailed reply. The HC adjourned the hear-

ing for two weeks.

The PIL said, "The Motor Vehicles Tax allows the government to collect toll only to recover the capital cost plus toll collection expenses. However, the actual cumulative toll revenue data of the Mumbai-Pune Expressway

for the last 15 years until July 31, 2019, is ₹ 6,773 crore, which is well in excess of ₹ 4,330 crore spent by the State government body. This reinforces the Comptroller and Auditor General assessment of irregularities in tendering."

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**RAILTEL CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED**

Our Company was incorporated as "RailTel Corporation of India Limited" on September 26, 2000, as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 1956, and the certificate of incorporation was issued by the Assistant Registrar of Companies, N.C.T. of Delhi and Haryana. Our Company received its certificate for commencement of business from the Deputy Registrar of Companies, N.C.T. of Delhi and Haryana on October 9, 2000. For details of changes in the registered office of our Company, see "History and Certain Corporate Matters" on page 146 of the red herring prospectus dated February 9, 2021, read along with the corrigendum dated February 11, 2021 (the "RHP"). Registered and Corporate Office: Plate - A, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Office Block, Tower-2, East Kidwai Nagar, South Delhi, New Delhi 110023, India. Contact Person: Jasmeet Singh Marwah, Company Secretary and Compliance Officer; Telephone: +91 11 2290 0600; E-mail: cs@raitelindia.com; Website: www.raitelindia.com; Corporate Identity Number: U64202DL2000GOI107905

### OUR PROMOTER: THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, ACTING THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING OF UP TO 87,153,369 EQUITY SHARES OF FACE VALUE OF ₹ 10 EACH ("EQUITY SHARES") OF RAILTEL CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED (OUR "COMPANY" OR THE "ISSUER") THROUGH AN OFFER FOR SALE BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, ACTING THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (THE "SELLING SHAREHOLDER"), FOR CASH AT A PRICE OF ₹ [•] PER EQUITY SHARE (INCLUDING A SHARE PREMIUM OF ₹ [•] PER EQUITY SHARE) (THE "OFFER PRICE"), AGGRGATING TO ₹ [•] MILLION (THE "OFFER"). UP TO 500,000 EQUITY SHARES MAY BE RESERVED FOR ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES (THE "EMPLOYEE RESERVATION PORTION"). THE OFFER LESS EMPLOYEE RESERVATION PORTION IS REFERRED TO AS THE NET OFFER. THE OFFER WILL COMPRIZE A NET OFFER OF UP TO 86,653,369 EQUITY SHARES AND THE EMPLOYEE RESERVATION PORTION OF UP TO 500,000 EQUITY SHARES.

### QIB Portion: Not more than 50% of the Net Offer

### Retail Portion: Not less than 35% of the Net Offer

### Non-Institutional Portion: Not less than 15% of the Net Offer

### Employee Reservation Portion: 500,000 Equity Shares

Price Band: ₹ 93 to ₹ 94 per Equity Share of face value of ₹ 10 each.

The Floor Price is 9.30 times the face value of the Equity Shares and the Cap Price is 9.40 times the face value of the Equity Shares.

Bids can be made for a minimum of 155 Equity Shares and in multiples of 155 Equity Shares thereafter.

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**UPI-Now available in ASBA for Retail Individual Bidders ("RIBs")\*\*.**

Investors are required to ensure that the bank account used for bidding is linked to their PAN.

UPI – Now available in ASBA for RIBs applying through Registered Brokers, DP's & RTAs. RIBs also have the option to submit the application directly to the ASBA Bank (SCSBs) or to use the facility of linked online trading, demat and bank account.

\*ASBA has to be availed by all the investors except anchor investors. UPI may be availed by RIBs.

For details on the ASBA and UPI process, please refer to the details given in ASBA Form and Abridged Prospectus and also please refer to the section "Offer Procedure" beginning on page 353 of the RHP. The process is also available on the website of Association of Investment Bankers of India ("AIB") and Stock Exchanges in the General Information Document. ASBA Forms can be downloaded from the websites of BSE Limited ("BSE") and National Stock Exchange of India Limited ("NSE"), and together with BSE, the "Stock Exchanges" and can be obtained from the list of banks that is displayed on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in.

\*List of banks supporting UPI is also available on the website of SEBI at www.sebi.gov.in. For the list of UPI Apps and Banks live on IPO, please refer to the link: www.sebi.gov.in. ICICI Bank Limited has been appointed as Sponsor Bank for the Offer, in accordance with the requirements of the SEBI Circular dated November 1, 2018. For related grievance investors may contact: ICICI Securities Limited - Mr. Shekher Asnani / Mr. Rupeesh Khan (+91 22 2288 2460) (raitel.ipo@icicisecurities.com); IDBI Capital Markets & Securities Limited - Mr. Indrajit Bhagat / Mr. Sumit Singh (+91 22 2217 1700) (raitel.ipo@idbicapital.com) or SBI Capital Markets Limited - Mr. Sambit Rath / Mr. Karan Savardekar (+91 22 2217 8300) (raitel.ipo@sbiCAPS.com). For UPI related queries, investors can contact NPCI at the toll free number: 18001201740 and Mail Id: ipo.upi@npci.org.in.

### Risks to Investors:

- The three Book Running Lead Managers associated with the Offer have handled 27 public offers in the past three years, out of which 12 issues closed below the offer price on listing date.
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## Slow on safety

The Madhya Pradesh bus crash shows that the accident pandemic is not waning

India's Road Safety Month, launched on January 18 as an extended form of the annual Road Safety Week for greater impact, has concluded with a bus accident in Madhya Pradesh that has claimed 51 lives. The victims, including many young people reportedly travelling to Satna and Rewa to take a government recruitment examination, were trapped within the bus as it plunged into a swollen canal. One of many ghastly mis-haps that have occurred after the COVID-19 lockdown, it lends grist to the view that the country, with the world's worst record on road safety, cannot get its act together any time soon. India has, according to the just-released World Bank-commissioned report, Traffic Crash Injuries and Disabilities, 1% of the world's vehicles but 11% of all road accident deaths; the Union Transport Ministry put the number of dead in 2019 at 1,51,113, and injured at 4,51,361. Those who suffer the most are from low income households, especially in rural areas, and women bear the long-term financial and psychological impact of the losses more. Such a cringe-worthy performance, affecting the fundamental right to life of the average citizen, should have led to intensive measures and a determined campaign to end the carnage, but the Centre and the States are evidently prepared to take only incremental steps. In the wake of this bus mishap, the immediate response has been to order a magisterial inquiry, which is no substitute for a technical investigation conducted by safety experts.

Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has actively campaigned for road safety, and the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act of 2019 has provisions that aim to bring about change. But most States have been lukewarm towards hard steps to bring order to the roads, viewing zero tolerance rule enforcement through the lens of populism. This is reflected in the spate of accidents on India's highways, which witnessed 61% of deaths from just 5% of all accidents, as per 2019 data. The Centre must now set a timeline to operationalise the National Road Safety Board, for which draft rules were circulated in December last year, to lay down engineering standards and complaints procedures that will help citizens hold States to account. Transport departments continue to take an indulgent view of rule violations. Political parties and others fix illegal flag poles and spears on car bonnets and metal contraptions to SUV bumpers, which are deadly in an accident. Even with high political will – and there is no evidence this is present in all the States – ending the “silent pandemic” of accidents will need education, civil society cooperation and professional policing. Meeting the SDGs on transport and reduced road deaths and injuries will need actions that go beyond pious declarations.

## An ambiguous levy

The proposed tax on PF incomes has its logic, but operational details need a revisit

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has stressed that Budget 2021-22 raises resources to push the economy without increased taxation. However, one change to the income tax law proposed in the Finance Bill, 2021, has triggered anxieties for the salaried class: withdrawing tax exemption on interest income accrued into Provident Fund accounts arising out of employee contributions exceeding ₹2.5 lakh ‘in a previous year in that fund,’ on or after April 1, 2021. The rationale – some employees are contributing huge amounts into their PF accounts and getting tax-free incomes. Subsequently, the Revenue Department has pointed out the tax will only affect a small group of ‘high net-worth individuals’ (HNIs); the 100 largest employees’ PF (EPF) accounts had a combined balance of over ₹2,000 crore. It can be no one’s case that a social security scheme for formal sector workers should become an investment haven for the well-heeled corporate top brass. However, the threshold proposed to exclude the so-called HNIs appears low, as it would end up partially taxing PF income for even those putting away ₹21,000 a month towards their retirement – hardly a typical HNI given it may take the saver decades to attain a one crore rupee PF balance. The threshold also does not tie in with the ₹7.5 lakh limit set in last year’s Budget for employers’ contributions into the EPF, National Pension System (NPS) or other superannuation funds (rules for which are yet to be notified).

This is not the first time this government had tried to tax PF savings, citing its abuse by the rich. In the 2016-17 Budget, it proposed to tax 60% of EPF balances at the time of withdrawal, but backtracked after a backlash. Now, it has covered even government employees’ contributions into the GPF, but left NPS investments over ₹2.5 lakh a year untouched. Tax treatment inequity between India’s limited retirement savings instruments aside, employees and employers have some serious doubts on the implementation. The words ‘in a previous year’, for one, suggest this will be a type of retroactive tax – taxing future income even on past years’ contributions of over ₹2.5 lakh. It is also not clear when and how the tax is to be paid – at retirement or each year that the PF rate is announced. The CBST chief has said employees should include such income in their annual tax returns, which may work for GPF members whose interest rate is announced every quarter, but not for EPF accounts as interest rates are declared late and credited even later. Finally, this may not be smart timing for a government looking to lean on huge borrowings to dent large inflows into EPF – most of its corpus is captively deployed in government bonds. While the goal of targeting HNIs using the PF savings to avoid taxation is laudable, the Centre should consider recalibrating the arithmetic and operational details of this tax.

# The poor state of the Indian state

The pandemic has revealed its chronic inability and systemic weakness to take care of the poorest citizens



ARUN MAIRA

**T**wo new books reveal stark weaknesses of the Indian state in serving India's poorer citizens. The first, *Locking Down the Poor: The Pandemic and India's Moral Centre* by Harsh Mander, records the plight of millions who lost incomes and shelter, and food and medical care too, in a harsh lockdown to create a sanitised corridor for better-off Indians during the pandemic. “Every system is perfectly designed to produce the results it is presently producing”, said Donella Meadows, a dozen of systems thinking. The second, *Despite the State: Why India Lets Its People Down and How They Cope* by M. Rajshekhar, is an incisive examination of the systems of the Indian state before the lockdown. These books explain how the weakness of the Indian state to care for its poorer citizens is not a failure of the present National Democratic Alliance government only, nor of the previous United Progressive Alliance government. The weakness is systemic.

### The pillars needed

Strong states, according to political and social historians, are founded on three pillars. They are built with support from the people; they have a strong administrative machinery to provide stability and deliver public services, and they have the managerial ability to shape and implement change.

Strong support of the people is essential. Merit election by a majority is not sufficient. Historically, as Francis Fukuyama points out in

*The Origins of Political Order*, builders of strong states have bound people around shared identity: ethnic, racial, or religious; Aryan, Han Chinese, Japanese, Muslim, Catholic Christian. The peoples' identity is not formed by legal constitutions. Strong leaders who unite people around their shared identity are even given liberty by the people to change constitutional structures because they trust their leaders do it for the sake of citizens. Thus, dictators emerge loved by the people.

Confirming this thesis, Michael Cook points out, in *Ancient Religions, Modern Politics*, that builders of the Indian state have a difficult problem. It is hard to unite Indians around a shared ethnic or religious identity because, in addition to the diversity among India's races and religions, there are entrenched caste divisions even within the Hindu religion of the majority. If Indians must be united to support a strong state, it must be around a modern, inclusive idea of India, as the Constitution imagined. The present ruling dispensation, while trying to force a majoritarian identity, is dividing Indians and weakening the state.

### Indian bureaucracy's role

Fukuyama and other historians have highlighted the role that professional civil services have played in the formation of strong states, in Han China, the Ottoman empire, France, and Japan. India inherited the ‘iron frame’ of civil services from Britain. It was designed to provide stability and compliance with rules: it was not equipped to shape change, the third requirement of a good developmental state. Therefore, there are demands for its reform. Even the Prime Minister has complained that bureaucrats seem not to care for the country's progress



as much as entrepreneurs do.

Simultaneous management of both change and stability is necessary for the evolution of good states and societies. Unmanaged change can cause chaos, while too little change entrenches the established system. This was the essence of the ‘great debate’ in the 18th century between Edmund Burke, the leader of the conservative movement in Britain, and Thomas Paine, a thought leader of the French and American revolutions. It was also the ‘birth of Right and Left’ in politics, according to Yuval Levin in his eponymous book, *The Great Debate*.

The great debate, about stability versus change for good governance, evolved into new arguments in the 20th century:

capitalism versus socialism; and markets versus governments. By the end of the century, capitalism and markets were positioned in the public imagination as the prime movers of economic growth, and socialists and governments as retarders of progress. Capitalists took on the mantle of ‘wealth creators’, relegating governments to the role of ‘redistributors’. A popular slogan that wealth must be created before it can be redistributed leads to the conclusion that there should be less government when countries

are poor, and more freedom for large, private, wealth creators. Moreover, with the logic that governments are stodgy, even public services such as health and education are handed over to private enterprises.

The logic of economics is not the same as the logic of society. Mancur Olson, author of *Power and Prosperity: Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships*, says that privatisation of government fits with ‘efforts of economists to extend their model of rational, utility-maximising behavior into the political realm and to see politics as nothing more than an extension of economics’. The ideology of private is good and public is bad requires that public servants should think like private sector managers – committed to growing the pie – and not think like socialists concerned about the condition of the people who are waiting for wealth to trickle down to them. To assist them, consultants from the private sector are brought inside government to help the state run more like a business corporation.

### Where the focus should be

Private corporations are not states designed for citizens. CEOs are not elected by employees, and they have the authority to hire and fire workers. Whereas leaders (even unelected ones) of states cannot lay off citizens to trim populations to fit the size of economies. The state must perform primarily for its poorest citizens for economic growth to be equitable and sustainable, and not for investors in corporations. Leaders of states must ensure that all citizens have opportunities to work and earn. They must also ensure that all citizens, even those who cannot afford it, have good health and education.

The ideology of private rather than public has moral consequences. The purposes of a private enterprise and the state are different. Private sector managers move from one competitor to another, like professional mercenaries, serving the interests of owners of corporations wherever in the world they may be. Whereas public servants, whose mission is to build their nations and states, are expected to devote their lives to the care of citizens in their own countries.

### GDP cannot be the scorecard

The pandemic has revealed the chronic inability of the Indian state to take care of its poorest citizens. The scorecard for the nation cannot be its GDP. Economic justice, environmental sustainability, and improvement of the dignity of all citizens must be measured too, and these must improve much faster. The present ‘top up the top’ model of India’s economic growth, with hopes of trickle down, is not delivering these.

India must build a strong and good state. This requires: political leaders who can unite all Indians into one India, whatever their religion, race, or caste; cadres of good public managers to build and run services for all citizens equitably; and business leaders who are not just wealth creators for themselves (distributing some of it in philanthropy), but creators of opportunities, very soon, for millions of Indians to earn and create wealth for themselves too.

Political leaders, administrators, and business leaders must work together, with a shared vision, to build an Indian state that is good for all citizens, especially the poorest. Time is running out.

Arun Maira is a former Member, Planning Commission

## Hitting the right notes with the health budget

The Union Budget has laid a strong foundation to increase the resilience of the health sector in the post-COVID-19 era



RAJIV KUMAR &  
URVASHI PRASAD

**H**ealth care has taken centre stage due to an unfortunate novel coronavirus pandemic that has devastated lives and livelihoods across the globe. Although India has performed relatively better in its COVID-19 management, even compared to countries with highly developed health systems, the impact of the outbreak on society and the economy is undeniable. Against this backdrop, the Union Budget 2021-22 was an eagerly awaited one and the announcements for the health sector, in particular, have been widely discussed.

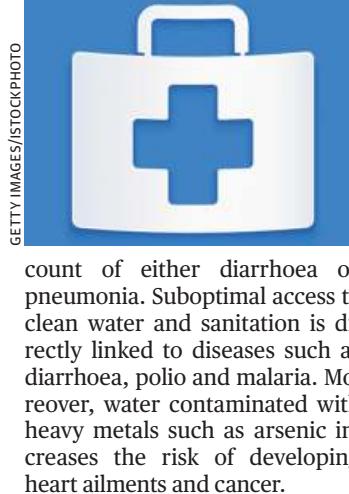
### Context of packages

It is important to view the Budget in the context of the various Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan packages announced by the Government of India, which also include several short-term and longer-term measures to strengthen the health sector. Production-Linked Incentive schemes have been announced to boost domestic manufacture of pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Mission COVID Suraksha has also been launched to promote the development and testing of indigenous vaccine candidates. At least 92 countries have approached India for a COVID-19 vaccine, thus bolstering the country's credentials as the vaccine

hub of the world. Further, to ensure food and nutrition security for the poor and the vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of India launched the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package for providing free foodgrains to 800 million beneficiaries. To facilitate access to subsidised grains across the country, the ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ scheme has been enabled in 32 States/Union Territories covering 690 million beneficiaries.

With respect to the “padding” of the health Budget, with allocations for water, sanitation, nutrition and clean air, as pointed out by some commentators, it is important to appreciate that the presentation of a combined ‘health and well-being’ budget, which sets the tone for greater integration of these areas, is in fact a welcome step. The National Health Policy (NHP), 2017, highlights the close links between health, water and sanitation. This year’s Economic Survey too recognises that improvements in access to bare necessities such as water, sanitation and housing are strongly correlated with progress in health indicators.

**Good water, vaccine coverage**  
The substantive allocation for the newly launched Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) is especially commendable as access to adequate, good quality water supply has major positive externalities for the health sector. A report released by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2019 suggested that nearly one out of every 100 Indian children does not live to celebrate their fifth birthday on ac-



count of either diarrhoea or pneumonia. Suboptimal access to clean water and sanitation is directly linked to diseases such as diarrhoea, polio and malaria. Moreover, water contaminated with heavy metals such as arsenic increases the risk of developing heart ailments and cancer.

Another important public health-related announcement in Budget 2021 was the government’s decision to expand the coverage of the pneumococcal vaccine across the country. Pneumococcal pneumonia is a major killer of children under the age of five years. Once universalised, this indigenously developed vaccine could save up to 50,000 lives annually. The Finance Minister has also made a special allocation of ₹35,000 crore for the COVID-19 vaccine in 2021-22, which could be increased if required. India has already delivered over eight million doses of the vaccine to health-care and frontline workers thus far – the fastest vaccination drive in the world.

The priority accorded to capital expenditure through the Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana (PMANSBY), a flagship scheme launched by the government in late 2018 as part of the Ayushman Bharat initiative. Despite being a relatively new scheme, the Economic Survey estimates a 20% decline in the infant mortality rate between 2015-16 and 2019-20 in States that adopted PM-JAY, compared to a 12% decline in States that did not.

It is important, therefore, to persist with this highly ambitious scheme and accelerate its roll-out as the absorptive and governance capacity of States improve.

Another point of discussion in relation to the health Budget is the stagnant allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), a flagshipscheme launched by the government in late 2018 as part of the Ayushman Bharat initiative. Despite being a relatively new scheme, the Economic Survey estimates a 20% decline in the infant mortality rate between 2015-16 and 2019-20 in States that adopted PM-JAY, compared to a 12% decline in States that did not.

It is important, therefore, to persist with this highly ambitious scheme and accelerate its roll-out as the absorptive and governance capacity of States improve.

### Promoting ayurveda

A less talked about aspect of the health Budget is the nearly 40% hike for the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH). The pandemic has catalysed a behavioural shift in favour of preventive care, holistic health and well-

ness. There is considerable potential for promoting ayurveda and yoga as well as integrative health-care approaches in the post-COVID-19 scenario, especially for stress reduction and the management of chronic diseases.

### States must act too

Undoubtedly the budgetary allocation for health needs to be ramped up over time. We also have to ensure adequate funds for critical and closely-linked sectors such as nutrition, water and sanitation. The onus of increasing health spending, however, does not lie with the Centre alone but also with the States also. In fact, as elucidated in the National Health Accounts 2017, 66% of spending on health care in India is done by States. It is imperative, therefore, that States increase expenditure on health to at least 8% of their budget by 2022 as recommended by the National Health Policy (NHP), 2017 and the Fifteenth Finance Commission.

The health sector has found a prominent place in the government’s agenda over the last few years, with the implementation of a series of well-thought-out and carefully sequenced reforms. While much remains to be done, the Union Budget 2021-22 has laid a strong foundation to increase the resilience of the sector in the post-COVID-19 era and achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

Rajiv Kumar is Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog and Urvashi Prasad is Public Policy Specialist, NITI Aayog. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Rocketing fuel prices

Fuel prices are rising day by day like an ISRO rocket launch. It is not just a worry for the Congress party but a worry for every citizen in India (Inside pages, “Remove ‘Modi tax’ on petroleum, says Cong.”, February 17). It is true that COVID-19 has played havoc with the economy, but at the same time, people have been badly affected. Even after the unlocking, people still face distress. In such a situation, rising fuel prices are a cruel blow. If there is a line of thought within the government that by increasing fuel prices there will be cut in consumption, in turn

saving foreign exchange, it is a misconception and unwise as fuel is an essential commodity.

J.P. REDDY,  
Nalgonda, Telangana

### LG's exit

Kiran Bedi's recall as Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry was long overdue (Page 1, “Kiran Bedi removed as Puducherry L-G”, February 17). The Constitution is loud and clear. The LG is expected to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers but she did everything apart from that. If this was allowed to go on for long, it would have undermined the value of

elected democracy and the role of the Council of Ministers. Long ago, C.N. Annadurai wondered whether there was the need for a Governor; Ms. Bedi has proved that he was not far from being right.

A Governor playing an advisory role is far different from a Governor playing a superior role, which is not contemplated under the Constitution. Here, it is a constitutional recall of a Governor who failed to adhere to constitutional values. It also exemplifies that it is not advisable to appoint bureaucrats and defeated election candidates as Governors. With Ms. Bedi's recall, Raj

Nivas, Puducherry, needs a fresh coat of paint.

N.G.R. PRASAD,  
Chennai

■ Right from the day of her appointment to the day of her removal, Ms. Bedi exhibited only a confrontational attitude and animosity towards the elected government and did everything that made one believe that she was not a constitutional head but an active member of the Bharatiya Janata Party. With her autocratic and arrogant moves, she has only done more damage to the BJP in Puducherry.

THARCIUS S. FERNANDO,  
Chennai

■ The forced demission of Ms. Bedi spells welcome relief for the Chief Minister and the people of Puducherry who were tired of the political tamasha. The case makes me recall the strained relationship between then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Jayalalithaa and Governor Marri Channa Reddy. There ought to be a cordial relationship between the Chief Minister and the Governor.

MANI NATARAJAN,  
Chennai

‘Cow science’ exam  
As a college student, I find it quite disturbing that the University Grants Commission should actively

promote such a brazenly ideological project (“UGC asks universities to encourage students to write ‘cow science’ examination”, February 16). The study material includes claims that cow dung is used as protection against radiation in nuclear centres in India and Russia. The cow is indeed a totem in Indian culture – nobody denies this. But to have it promoted as a “science” by a body instituted to maintain standards of higher education would make those very standards suspect.

# Redefining the exit plan for COVID-19

An ever-evolving virus and socioeconomic disparities render the goal of elimination infeasible



GIRIDHARA R. BABU

After reeling under the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic for over a year, the world is now waiting for some respite. "How is the pandemic going to end?" is the question on everyone's mind. But the end to the pandemic will not be instantaneous, like an absolute full stop to the replication of the virus. In fact, there may not be an end to the virus at all. The virus is evolving to cohabit with humans, and this can include a range of possibilities, from the virus becoming less lethal, more infectious to it becoming virulent. Nonetheless, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is likely to remain alive and around.

There has been a reduction in the incidence, severity, and mortality related to COVID-19 locally in some countries, including India, which meets the definition of what is termed as "control", by Walter R. Dowdle, a former deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

However, while the world is trying to come to terms with cohabiting with the virus, a recent article published in *The Lancet* and some well-intentioned experts are pushing the envelope by advocating an "elimination strategy", otherwise known as the zero-COVID-19 strategy, wherein replication of the virus is reduced to a bare minimum and no new cases occur in a defined geographical area. The strategy has three elements – rapid reduction in the number of infections to zero, creation of virus-free green zones, and prompt outbreak management when new cases occur occasionally.

Rich countries have found a shortcut for the elimination strategy – to vaccinate every citizen in the country. The plan is well-suited for geographically isolated countries that can afford strict border control measures, such as New Zealand. Even there, the goal of zero COVID-19 cases is elusive since the virus continues to be in circulation in other countries. Firstly, the risk of infection from elsewhere, and thus outbreaks,



The goal of complete elimination of COVID-19 may divert funds and focus from other disease control and health programmes. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

would always be imminent. Secondly, there has to be universal coverage of vaccines with consistent upgrades, as the pace of vaccine development may not match the new variants' emergence. Thirdly, a zero-COVID-19 strategy will worsen global health inequities by creating green zones of free travel among richer countries, thus alienating poorer nations.

**Experience with other diseases**  
A quick look at the gains in eliminating other diseases does not offer an optimistic scope for COVID-19. Even though elimination programmes for measles and neonatal tetanus have been ongoing for more than 20 years now, the goals have not been completely realised. Polio, eradicated from southeast Asia, is still endemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Maternal and neonatal tetanus, which has an 80% to 100% case fatality rate, caused deaths of nearly 25,000 newborns in 2018. Despite the global efforts to vaccinate children over the last few decades, these preventable diseases still remain major public health challenges in the developing world.

So far, there is no empirical evidence to suggest how eliminating the SARS-CoV-2 virus is feasible in the

near term. Nearly 90% of 100 immunologists surveyed by the science journal *Nature* think that the virus will become endemic, i.e., some regions will see a constant presence of COVID-19. The level of endemicity depends on how the world reduces inequities of all kinds, including access to vaccines, and how well public health measures, such as containment, are followed.

We need pragmatic measures for the realistic goal of saving lives. This calls for ensuring that disease control measures are implemented globally and ramping up vaccine coverage for vulnerable people. In addition to meticulous review at the country and regional level, vaccine coverage for the vulnerable population across the globe is an immediate necessity. The world needs to increase the current pace of vaccination 4.3 times by vaccinating 6.4 million persons per day, compared to the current rate of 1.46 million per day, to cover just 30% of the vulnerable population with a single dose in a year. If there is a clear resolve, this is feasible. This needs to be enabled by mapping the elderly and persons with comorbidities on a priority basis and vaccinating them.

So long as disease control is neglected in even a few parts of the

world, every other part is at risk of importing infections due to free travel. Without these necessary life-saving measures in every country, the developed world, too, is not immune. Instead of isolated strategies for a few countries, what is needed is a global leadership and resources to vaccinate the vulnerable population and strengthen epidemiological and genomic surveillance for COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the flaws in our preparedness and inefficient public health systems that lead to disproportionately high morbidity and mortality among the poor and the vulnerable. The pandemic has also reversed the gains made in programmes like tuberculosis control, caused economic hardships, worsened inequalities, and pushed the poor towards the brink of catastrophe. We cannot let our focused efforts against COVID-19 ruin the progress made in other disease control programmes and our commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is also essential to resume pursuing the agenda of Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

## A recalibrated strategy

Global elimination of COVID-19 in the immediate term is a tricky goal – the zero-COVID-19 strategy comes with zero evidence of feasibility, seeks luxury that few countries can afford, does not reflect field realities, and, if adopted, may result in diverting most of our attention, funds, and time. Excessive focus on one virus in select countries will only worsen the poor global preparedness to fight other pandemics in future or tackle the devastating burden of non-communicable diseases.

For global health, every idea must be assessed based on its merit while ensuring that there is maximisation of benefits for people across the world. At this stage of the pandemic, the goal of elimination will divert focus and steer the world in a different direction altogether. A pragmatic goal of controlling COVID-19, not elimination, combined with a renewed emphasis on UHC can restore and rejuvenate an ailing healthcare system and bolster our progress towards realistic goals.

Giridhara R. Babu is Professor and head, Lifecourse Epidemiology, at the Indian Institute of Public Health, PHFI, Bengaluru.

# Money vs. happiness

Subjective well-being and income are intricately linked



RAGHAB GAIHA & VANIS S. KULKARNI

The question whether the rich are more satisfied with their lives is often taken for granted, even though surveys, like the Gallup World Poll, show that the relationship between subjective well-being and income is often weak, except in low-income countries in Africa and South Asia. Researcher Daniel Kahneman and his collaborators, for example, report that the correlation between household income and reported life satisfaction or happiness with life typically ranges from 0.15 to 0.30. There are a few plausible reasons. First, growth in income mostly has a transitory effect on individuals' reported life satisfaction, as they adapt to material goods. Second, relative income, rather than the level of income, affects well-being – earning more or less than others looms larger than how much one earns. Third, though average life satisfaction in countries tends to rise with GDP per capita at low levels of income, there is little increase in life satisfaction once GDP per capita exceeds \$10,000 (in purchasing power parity). This article studies the relationships between subjective well-being, which is narrowly defined to focus on economic well-being in India, and variants of income, based on the only panel survey in India Human Development Survey (IHDS).

Why do we need a new measure of well-being when there is already a widely used, objective welfare measure based on per capita income? There are several reasons. The first stems from the distinction between decision utility and experienced utility. In the standard approach to measure well-being, ordinal preferences are inferred from the observations of decisions made supposedly by rational (utility maximising) agents. The object derived is decision utility. In contrast, recent advances in psychology, sociology, behavioural economics and happiness economics suggest that decision utility is unlikely to illuminate the utility associated with different experiences – hence the emphasis on measures that focus more directly on experienced utility, notably using subjective well-being (SWB) responses.

We draw upon the two rounds of the IHDS for 2005 and 2012. An important feature of IHDS is that it collected data on SWB. The question asked was: compared to seven years ago, would you say your household is economically doing the same, better or worse today? So, the focus of this SWB is narrow. But as it is based on self-reports, it con-

notes a broader view that is influenced by several factors other than income, assets, and employment, like age, health, caste, etc.

There is a positive relationship between SWB and per capita expenditure (a proxy for per capita income, which is frequently underestimated and underreported): the higher the expenditure in 2005, the greater was the SWB in 2012. The priority of expenditure, in time, rules out reverse causation from high SWB to high expenditure, i.e., higher well-being could also be associated with better performance resulting in higher expenditure. High expenditure is associated with a decent standard of living, good schooling of children, and financial security. As India's comparable GDP per capita in 2003 (PPP) was \$2,270, well below the threshold of \$10,000, it is consistent with extant evidence.

## Aspirations and achievements

In order to capture the gap between aspirations and achievements, we have analysed the relationship between SWB and ratio of per capita expenditure of a household to the highest per capita expenditure in the primary sampling unit. Although this is a crude approximation to relative deprivation, we get a negative relationship between SWB and this ratio. In other words, the larger the gap, the greater is the sense of resentment and frustration, and the lower is the SWB.

The larger the proportionate increase in per capita expenditure between 2005 and 2012, the greater is the SWB. To illustrate this, we construct three terciles of expenditure in 2005: the first representing extremely poor, the second the middle class, and the third the rich. If the proportionate increase in per capita expenditure is highest among the extremely poor and lowest among the rich, the higher will be the SWB of the extremely poor. This is indeed the case.

This provides important policy insights. One is that in a lower-middle-income country like India, growth of expenditure or income is significant. However, the widening of the gap between aspirations and achievements or between the highest expenditure/income of a reference group and actual expenditure/income of a household reflects resentment, frustration and loss of subjective well-being. So, taxing the rich and enabling the extremely poor to benefit more from economic opportunities can enhance well-being. In conclusion, objective welfare and subjective well-being measures together are far more useful than either on its own.

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## A growing rights crisis in Lanka

The UNHRC must take strict action against the gross abuse of human rights by Sri Lanka

MEENAKSHI GANGULY

Indian leaders have committed to supporting the rights of minority Tamils in Sri Lanka to "live with equity, equality, justice, peace and dignity". In pledges to the United Nations, the Indian government has also vowed to uphold global human rights.

These commitments have become crucial. The human rights situation in Sri Lanka has worsened since Gotabaya Rajapaksa became President in 2019. At its next session starting February 22, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) will face a crucial test in taking action for protecting vulnerable Sri Lankans and upholding international law. India, as a council member, will have a key role.

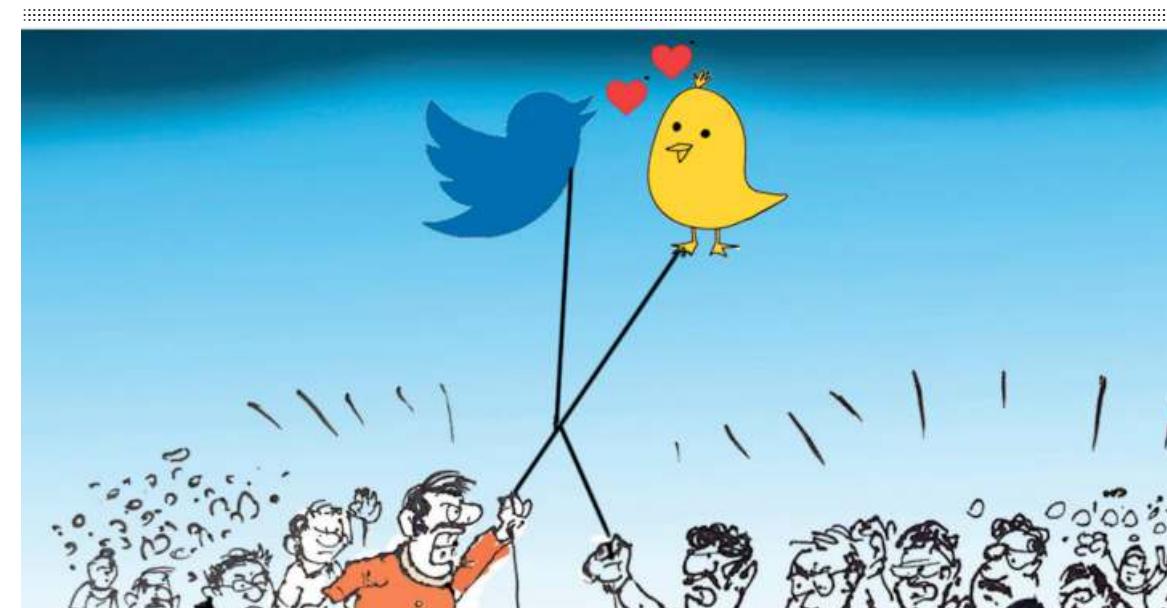
Rajapaksa was the defence secretary in the government led by his brother Mahinda from 2005 to 2015, a period marked by particularly egregious human rights abuses. Critics of the government were murdered, tortured, and forcibly made to disappear. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed in the civil war which ended in 2009 between government forces and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), with both sides responsible for numerous war crimes. In the final months of the war, the armed forces indiscriminately shelled civilians and summarily executed suspected LTTE fighters.

**Loss of accountability**  
The Rajapaksa government has shown outright disdain for accountability. In September last year, Sri Lanka told the Human Rights Council that allegations against senior military officers are "unacceptable" and without "substantive evidence". Last March, Rajapaksa pardoned former army sergeant Sunil Ratnayake, who killed eight Tamil civilians, including children. In October, the government amended the Constitution to remove constraints on political interference in Sri Lanka's courts.

**Renewed fears**  
When Mahinda Rajapaksa lost the 2015 presidential election, there was hope for change. There was greater freedom of expression. The repressive and heavily militarised situation in Tamil-majority areas began to improve. The new government supported a consensus resolution at the Human Rights Council that offered victims of abuses and their families truth, justice, and reconciliation.

But now, fear has returned. Tamil communities in the north and the east fear increasing abuses. Since last year, singing the national anthem in Tamil has been dropped from Independence Day celebrations. The religious rights of minorities are under attack, including interference with Hindu temples.

In January, the authorities bull-



## DATA POINT

### On the recovery track

Data on railway freight volumes act as an early indicator for where the economy is headed. For instance, the movement of cement and steel helps gauge the growth in the construction sector. Coal movement is a good proxy for electricity and industrial demand. In January 2021, the cumulative railway freight movement contracted by 1.05% year-on-year (y-o-y), compared to the contraction of 35% in April 2020. The pace of contraction has slowed and freight volume is within striking distance of pre-COVID-19 levels. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan and Suman Sen



**NEAR ZERO MARK** | The y-o-y % growth of cumulative freight movement ■ contracted by only 1.05% as of January 2021, suggesting a healthy recovery

**STEELING UP** | The y-o-y contraction in raw material supply ■, coal supply ■■ and iron ore supply ■■ to steel plants

consistently reduced from 39%, 39% and 32% in April 2020 to 6.7%, 7.9% and 2.3%, respectively, in Jan. 2021. Freight volume of finished steel ■■ from companies grew by 0.25% in Jan. 2021, recording the first positive growth after March 2020

**CEMENT AUGMENT** | Freight volume of cement ■■ grew by 2.3% y-o-y in Jan. 2021, recording the first positive growth after over a year. The pace of contraction reduced for transport of petroleum products ■■ and coal for powerhouses ■■, but they are yet to post positive growth

**GRAIN TRAIN** | Freight volume of food grains ■■ consistently posted record y-o-y growth during all post-pandemic months. This is primarily due to the government's schemes to distribute extra food grains to people during the lockdown

**Y-o-y growth (%)**

Jan. 2020 Apr. 2020 July 2020 Oct. 2020 Jan. 2021

-0.27 -35.3 -1.05

-5 -10 -15 -20 -25 -30 -35 -40

-3.6 +135.5 +77.3

+0.25 +2.3 -6.7 -7.9

-14.3

-5 -10 -15 -20 -25 -30 -35 -40

-3.6 +135.5 +77.3

+0.25 +2.3 -6.7 -7.9

-14.3

-5 -10 -15 -20 -25 -30 -35 -40

-3.6 +135.5 +77.3

+0.25 +2.3 -6.7 -7.9

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+0.25 +2.3 -6.7 -7.9

-14.3

FROM PAGE ONE

## Case against Priya Ramani dismissed

"It was me the victim who had to stand up in the court as an accused. I thank everyone who stood by me, especially my witness Ghazala Wahab who came to the court and testified on my behalf," Ms. Ramani told reporters.

Mr. Akbar had in his criminal defamation complaint claimed that Ms. Ramani's tweet and her article accusing him of sexual harassment were defamatory, and lowered his reputation. He also said that Ms. Ramani didn't produce any evidence to prove her story.

However, Ms. Ramani pleaded that truth was her defence in relation to the allegations of sexual harassment against Mr. Akbar. She said her tweet and subsequent article alleging Mr. Akbar of sexual harassment during his previous role as newspaper editor was made in "good faith" and for public good.

### Right of dignity

The court agreed with Ms. Ramani. "The woman cannot be punished for raising voice against the sex abuse on the pretext of criminal complaint of defamation as the right of reputation cannot be protected at the cost of the right of life and dignity of a woman as guaranteed in the Constitution,"

## Nikita Jacob gets 3-week transit anticipatory bail

Mr. Desai, representing Ms. Jacob, had urged the court to look at the limited purpose of granting transit anticipatory bail as the NBW was issued by the Tis Hazari court. He said they (Delhi Police) had raided Ms. Jacob's house and seized electronic devices.

He contended that she was an advocate of this court and an environment enthusiast.

Ms. Jacob had filed her plea through advocate Sanjukta Dey on Monday that mentioned that she had not received a copy of the complaint or the FIR, if filed by any authority, and when she tried to procure one, it was denied to her. On February 11, cyber cell unit personnel, accompanied by a constable from the Vanrai police station, came to her house

the court said.

Judge Pandey also noted the submission made by Ms. Ramani that many victims opt not to lodge complaint of sexual harassment considering their social status, powerful position of the abusers, and to avoid social stigma attached to the sexual harassment.

"Most of the women who suffer abuse do not speak up about it or against it for simple reason 'the shame' or the social stigma attached to the sexual harassment and abuse," the court said. The court, in its 91-page judgment, highlighted that, "Sometimes the victims themselves do not understand what is happening to them or what is happening to them is wrong." The court acknowledged that the #MeToo movement provided a platform to the women sexually harassed to break their silence and Ms. Ramani was one of such women.

"The attack on the character of sex abuser or offender by the sex abuse victim is the reaction of self defence after the mental trauma suffered by the victim regarding the shame attached with the crime committed against her," it said. At the height of the #MeToo movement in 2018, Ms. Ramani accused Mr. Akbar of sexual harassment.

### Plea had challenged 69% reservation

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Centre has told the Supreme Court that it has no role in the choices made by the Tamil Nadu government

with regard to the provision of reservation for specific castes or communities in State government jobs and admissions.

The Centre was responding to a petition challenging the constitutionality of the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and of Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act of 1993, which provides 69% reservation in the State.

The petitioner, Dinesh B., contended that the Tamil Nadu Legislature acted "outside its competence" by identifying and classifying socially

and educationally backward classes (SEBCs), that too far in excess of the 50% limit on quota laid down by a nine-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in its judgment in the *Indira Sawhney* case.

The Centre, however, decided to adopt a hands-off approach on the issue.

"The inclusion or exclusion of any caste/community in the State List of SEBCs is the subject matter of the State government, and the Government of India has no role in the matter," the Centre said in a 32-page affidavit.

It referred to the Constitution (One hundred and second Amendment) Act of 2018, which details the difference in the procedure for inclusion or exclusion of castes and communities in the State List for SEBCs and the Central List.

**T.N. seeks time**

The case came up for hearing before a Bench, led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, on Wednesday. Tamil Nadu sought time to file a response. The case

has been adjourned to February 25.

The court agreed to hear

rate State Lists of SEBCs for providing reservation for recruitment to State services or admissions in State government educational institutions.

The castes or communities included in such State Lists may differ from those included in the Central List," the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment explained in the affidavit.

Under the newly-inserted Article 342A of the Constitution (One hundred and second Amendment) Act of 2018, the President notifies the SEBCs in a State after consultation with the Governor. On the other hand, the Parliament includes or excludes SEBCs from the Central List.

### Charges of corrupt practices were not proved, says court

MOHAMED IMRANULLAH S.  
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Tuesday dismissed an election petition filed against the victory of former Union Minister P. Chidambaram from Sivaganga parliamentary constituency in May 2009.

Justice Pushpa Sathyarayana rejected the petition pending in the court for nearly 12 years after holding that the charges of corrupt practices were not proved. The case had been filed by the then AIADMK candidate R.S. Rajakannappan who joined the DMK recently.

The petitioner had lost to

Mr. Chidambaram in the 2009 election by a margin of 3,354 votes and then filed the case accusing the returned candidate of having manipulated the vote counting process.

He alleged that the Returning Officer had illegally added the votes secured by him in the Alangudi Assembly segment into the kitty of Mr. Chidambaram. If such illegality had not occurred, the petitioner was confident of having won the seat by a margin of 7,034 votes.

He claimed that AIADMK cadres had agitated against the illegal decision right at

the counting centre but they were beaten up by the police.

The petitioner had also challenged the election of Mr. Chidambaram on the ground of bribing of voters.

However, during the course of a full-fledged trial, Mr. Chidambaram entered the witness box and stoutly denied all allegations levelled against him and termed them to be a figment of imagination of the petitioner.

He also stood his ground during elaborate cross examination by the counsel for the petitioner.

## Court mulls fresh probe into killing of suspected Maoist

Jaleel was shot dead at a resort in Wayanad in 2019

STAFF REPORTER  
KALPETTA

The Wayanad district and sessions court has ordered the District Collector to submit a report on the possibilities of a fresh magisterial probe into the death of C.P. Jaleel, a suspected Maoist, in the wake of a petition filed by his brother C.P. Rasheed.

Jaleel was shot dead at a private resort at Vythiri in the district on March 6, 2019 in an alleged police encounter.

ter. While considering the petition, the court directed the Collector to submit the report before March 1.

Mr. Rasheed said in his petition that the magisterial report was an arbitrary one, giving a clean chit to the police and the Thunderbolt commandos who had participated in the encounter.

"The procedure adopted and the findings reached in the inquiry by the District Magistrate are incorrect, ille-

gal, and improper. The relatives of Jaleel were not allowed to be present at the inquiry," Mr. Rasheed said.

Also, the report was contrary to ballistic and forensic findings.

According to recent forensic and ballistic reports, all cartridges used for firing were from service rifles and not from a smooth-bore breech loading gun allegedly found on Jaleel's body, Mr. Rasheed said.

## Kumaraswamy opposes 'unauthorised' collection for temple

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

A day after alleging that those raising funds for Ram temple at Ayodhya were marking those who do and do not pay, the former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on Wednesday said that in the name of god too many unauthorised people were collecting mon-

ey and there was no transparency or accountability in the process.

Addressing a press conference, he described this as religious corruption and said the government should take responsibility for the collection drive.

Mr. Kumaraswamy asked what was the guarantee that the money being collected

from the streets will actually reach the Vishwa Hindu Parishad for construction of the temple. He said the government was responsible for "monitoring the collection drive". "How do you account the money that is collected on streets?" he asked.

In this country, NGOs raising funds are accountable to the government. The

donation drive could have been done online. These days everyone has a bank account, including accounts opened under Jan Dhan scheme ... This could have prevented sticking labels on homes. Don't you require guidelines for donation collection? There are no identity cards and you do not know who they are. What I

have suggested to them is to have transparency in collection. Have I insulted Lord Rama? It is you who have misused Rama," he hit back.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa advised those criticising the fund collection to keep silent since building of the temple is as per the Supreme Court direction.

'Bhagyalakshmi temple came into existence after merger of Hyderabad'

SYED MOHAMMED  
HYDERABAD

The Bhagyalakshmi temple abutting the Charminar 'came into existence' after the merger of Hyderabad State with the Union of India, and there are no records of the *chilla* (a small shrine) at the monument, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has stated.

The ASI was responding to

a Right to Information query filed by YouRTI.in, a portal which helps individuals and activists obtain information by means of the RTI Act.

"The Bhagyalakshmi temple came into existence after taking over of Hyderabad by the Govt. of India adjacent to South Eastern minaret of the Centrally Protected Monument. No records are available in this office about the

*chilla* adjacent to Charminar," the ASI response reads. In its response, the ASI stated that the Charminar was declared a Centrally protected monument under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904.

## No records of *chilla* adjacent to Charminar, says ASI



A file photo of Charminar in Hyderabad.

## Karnataka strict on vaccine protocols'

No adverse event from Covaxin use

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Karnataka has not been using Covaxin for those on immunosuppressants as this is one of the contraindications mentioned in the factsheet released by Bharat Biotech, the company that has developed the vaccine, said Arundathi Chandrashekhar, State Mission Director, National Health Mission.

However, T.N. has objected to the tagging of this case with that of the Maharashtra reservation law or similar laws of any other State. Senior advocate Shekhar Naiphade, appearing for Tamil Nadu, said the State's case should be heard separately.

"India is an amalgam of States with varied population, size, history, culture and social fabric. The circumstances and facts prevailing in Tamil Nadu are not the same or similar to any other State. Factual variations contributing to the grant of reservation need to be reckoned with differently for different States while deciding the question on its validity," Tamil Nadu said in a recent affidavit.

Of the total 1,66,240 doses of Covaxin the State had received, 6,600 doses had

been opened for use so far. Of this, 5,905 doses had actually been utilised. The remaining had gone waste.

### Vaccination for elderly

The State will begin vaccination for those with comorbidities, those above 50 years of age, and persons below 50 years with comorbidities by March first week. The State is planning to wind up vaccination of healthcare and frontline workers by February 20, the official said.

"However, we are awaiting guidelines from the Centre on preparing the list of this section of the population," she added.

### Vaccine hesitancy

Faced with a 50% vaccine hesitancy among healthcare and frontline workers, the State government is contemplating not bearing the treatment expenses of those who refuse to get vaccinated.

### IN BRIEF



HC to hear challenge against burial law

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court will take up on February 18 a petition filed by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church challenging the Kerala Right to Burial of Corpse in Christian (Malankara Orthodox-Jacobite) Cemeteries Act, 2020. The Act mandates burial of members of Jacobite faction families in the Orthodox-controlled cemeteries where their ancestors are laid to rest.

### Fulfilled Constitutional responsibilities, says L-G

PUDUCHERRY

Outgoing Lt.-Governor Kiran Bedi on Wednesday said whatever she did during her stint in Puducherry was "a sacred duty, fulfilling my Constitutional and moral responsibilities".

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the decision was political. It was aimed at depriving Opposition parties of ammunition to target the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the run-up to the Assembly elections.

The Opposition gave false hope to the youth by lying that the government could revive obsolete PSC rank lists, he alleged. Some anguished youth, misled by Opposition plots, staged

"funeral processions" in front of the Secretariat believing the government had done them injustice.

Mr. Vijayan asked the youth not to fall prey to the intrigues of those who seek to wager their future to reap political advantage.

The government had opened new avenues of employment for youth via the PSC. The Cabinet had created 3,051 posts in various departments. Mr. Vijayan pegged the number of permanent posts made by the LDF government at 30,000. The government had employed more than 50,000 people during its term, including temporary employees, he said.

### I-T searches at hospitals, medical colleges

BENGALURU

Officials of the Income Tax Department on Wednesday conducted searches in several cities across Karnataka, including Bengaluru, for suspected tax evasions by big private hospitals and medical colleges. They were accompanied by Enforcement Directorate officials.

### TTD finalises dates for 'Kalyanamastu' relaunch

TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has finally approved the dates for the relaunch of 'Kalyanamastu' - a mass wedding programme aimed at benefiting the poor. The four-member committee of pundits handed over the 'lagna patrika' on Wednesday to TTD Executive Officer.

Over 36,000 couples are estimated to have benefited of the programme before it was shelved.

"As per the AMASR Act 1958, Rules 1959, AMSR Act, 2010 (Amendment and Validation) the construction of temple adjacent to the south eastern minar of the Charminar has considered by the Archaeological Survey of India as an unauthorised construction."

"Had timely action been taken while dealing with religious structures in monuments, the situation would have been different. Political and communal mileage would not have been drawn from them," he said.

## Congress sweeps Punjab municipal elections

The municipal elections were held across Punjab on February 14, which saw a voter turnout of 71.39%. The results were announced on Wednesday.

According to an official statement, the Indian National Congress won 271 wards of the total 351 of the seven municipal corporations – Abohar, Batala, Kapurthal, Hoshiarpur, Pathankot, Moga and Bathinda and by-election to one ward in Amritsar.

The SAD secured 33 wards, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) 9, the BJP 20 and Independents 18. The result of Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar, the eighth municipal corporation, will be declared on February 18, as the State Election Commission had directed re-polling in two wards. The swing in favour of the Congress in

## More financial powers for senior officers

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Cabinet on Wednesday approved enhanced delegation of financial powers for capital procurement to senior officers below the rank of Vice-Chief of armed forces, a Defence Ministry statement said.

Under the Other Capital Procurement Procedure of Defence Acquisition Procedure-2020, financial powers up to ₹100 crore have been delegated to Army Commanders and equivalent of other services and regional Commanders, Coast Guard; and powers up to ₹200 crore have been delegated to Deputy Chief of Army Staff (CD &S), Master General Sustenance, Chief of Material, Air Officer Maintenance, Deputy Chief, Integrated Defence Staff and additional director general of Coast Guard.

The Cabinet also approved enhanced financial powers in the Make-I category under which funding up to 70% of the prototype cost is available for development of equipment.

## Probing data of Nikita: police

They have seized two laptops and a mobile phone of Mumbai-based advocate

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday said they were examining over 100 GB of data retrieved from gadgets of Mumbai-based advocate Nikita Jacob, an accused in the toolkit document case. The police had visited her Goregaon residence on February 11 and seized two of her laptops and one mobile phone.

The police said the data revealed that the toolkit had been referred to as "comms package", which, according to investigators, meant communication package. "It has been found that several applications were used for communication – including Telegram, Signal, Proton, and Cyberghost."

### To amplify movement'

A senior police officer said Ms. Jacob got climate change activist Disha Ravi involved in creating the toolkit because she knew her to be a well-known climate activist and also close to Greta Thunberg who could help them amplify their movement or voices. "They basically want-



**Against the arrest:** NSUI activists protesting against the arrest of Disha Ravi in New Delhi on Wednesday. • AFP

ed to approach Greta through Ms. Ravi. It has also been found that Ms. Jacob was operating the e-mail account of Poetic Justice Foundation," the officer said.

Sources said Ms. Jacob was in touch with U.S. activist Pieter Friedrich and had conversations with him. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Manishi Chandra said Mr. Friedrich had been on their radar since 2005. His name – in the tool-

kit – appeared alongside all the social media handles to follow, including fact-checking websites, "left wing" news websites. The officer said the conversation was about the use of VPN (Virtual Private Network).

The police have sought details from WhatsApp regarding members on the group created allegedly by Ms. Ravi which she is accused of deleting later. Details have also been sought

from Zoom regarding a call which was organised on January 11 and was attended by Ms. Jacob and another accused Shantanu Muluk, a Beed native and an engineer-cum-activist. The police said that while going through the mobile phone data of Ms. Jacob, they had found two more names, Shubham and Thilak, who were also the part of the 70-member WhatsApp group that was formed to amplify the toolkit.

### SFJ video

In a related development, the banned group "Sikhs for Justice" released a three-minute video on YouTube in support of Ms. Ravi, actor Deep Sidhu, Ms. Jacob, and activist Nodeep Kaur.

All but Ms. Jacob are lodged in jail in different cases related to the farmers' protest.

Police sources said on Tuesday that while no link between the SFJ and "pro-Khalistani" group the Poetic Justice Foundation had been found so far, they were probing if there was any.

They hope it will force the government to break deadlock



**On the move:** Protesters arriving from Ludhiana at the Singhu border in Delhi on Tuesday. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

lands and then communicate with passengers. They will also provide water, milk and tea to the passengers," said Bharatiya Kisan Union-Tikait leader Rakesh Tikait, on the eve of the protest.

In a statement, the SKM alleged that "goons" from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad had attacked a peaceful protest that was being organised by a farmers' group called the All India Krushak Khet Mazdoor Sangathan in Muzaffarpur on Wednesday.

"I appeal to everyone to maintain peace," said Arun Kumar, DGP of the RPF.

(With PTI inputs)

## Women lawyers, activists hail verdict

They term it a watershed moment

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Leading women lawyers and activists on Wednesday welcomed a Delhi court's judgment acquitting journalist Priya Ramani in a defamation case filed by former Union Minister M.J. Akbar.

Speaker to mediapersons outside the court, senior advocate Rebecca John, who was also Ms. Ramani's lawyer, said: "I think probably this is the most important case of my career."

Congratulating Ms. John and Ms. Ramani for "fighting the good and very tough fight for all women", senior lawyer Vrinda Grover on social media said, "MJ Akbar tried to use the law of criminal defamation to silence women. Women's truth has won in court today. This is a historic moment in the struggle for equality at the workplace."

Actor Simi Garewal also took to Twitter to congratulate Ms. Ramani. "...looking at past history, I was skeptical that justice would be served. But thank you judge Ravindra Kumar Pandey for respecting a woman's right...something Akbar may be oblivious about..." she said.

Lawyer Karuna Nundy said the judgment would set an important precedent.



Journalist Priya Ramani with her lawyer Rebecca John. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ta Bhandare tweeted: "Truth prevails. What a resounding victory for India's women, for all who spoke up and continue to do so. For Priya Ramani for refusing to be intimidated and giving courage to so many more who will continue to speak up."

Actor Simi Garewal also took to Twitter to congratulate Ms. Ramani. "...looking at past history, I was skeptical that justice would be served. But thank you judge Ravindra Kumar Pandey for respecting a woman's right...something Akbar may be oblivious about..." she said.

Soon after the judgment was passed, social media was flooded with congratulatory messages.

Senior journalist Namita

## Pangong disengagement will be completed in 2 or 3 days: official

Much of the withdrawal from friction areas is completed: official

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

The disengagement between Indian and Chinese troops on the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake) would be completed in two or three days, a government official said on Wednesday, stating that much of the withdrawal on both the banks had been completed.

Majority of de-induction of troops from the frontline had been completed, and most of the personnel now left there are those involved in logistics and movement, the official said, adding that it was quite a humongous task given the scale of the build-up and the stocking that had been undertaken.

### No tanks

On the south bank, all tanks and mechanised elements have moved out. There are also no tanks on the north bank.

Tents, bunkers and other positions have been cleared in most areas, a second official said, adding that the cleaning up and the ground restoration work would take a few more days.

Latest satellite images released by Maxar Technologies of several areas of Pangong Tso show a stark difference on the



**After the thaw:** Deployments are removed at Finger 5, at Pangong Tso, in this February 16 satellite image provided by Maxar. • REUTERS

ground, with the massive build-up and armaments now been cleared.

### Constant communication

There is constant communication between the local commanders to ensure that the process continues smoothly, and joint verification is on.

For now there is a moratorium on patrolling in these areas by both sides as per the agreement.

The resumption of patrolling would be worked out subsequently through diplomatic and

military talks. The official said new patrolling guidelines would have to be worked out by both sides in the backdrop of recent developments to ensure that such instances do not occur again. There is a lot of distrust that has to be addressed, the official added.

With quick progress in the disengagement at Pangong lake, both sides are also gearing up for the next round of Corps Commander talks, which will take place as soon as the disengagement is complete, as stipulated in the agreement.

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT NABARD & RURAL ROADS CIRCLE, SALEM - 1. TENDER NOTICE

### E-Tender No. : SJVN/CHO/EC/CD/Open Access/2021

Online bids (E-tender) on Domestic Competitive Bidding (DCB) are invited on behalf of SJVN Ltd. for hiring of Services from Firms for arranging of Land, connectivity, Open Access & PPA for at least 25 years for setting up of Grid connected Solar Power Project of capacity upto1000 MW Pan India under Open Access Scheme.

For details, visit websites [www.sjvn.nic.in](http://www.sjvn.nic.in), <https://sjvn.abcprocure.com> and [www.eprocure.gov.in](http://www.eprocure.gov.in). Last date for bid submission is 03.03.2021 (1300 Hrs).

For and on behalf of SJVN Ltd. GM (Electrical Contracts Deptt)

SJVN Corporate Headquarters, Shanan, Shimla (H.P.)

E-mail: [elect.contracts@sjvn.nic.in](mailto:elect.contracts@sjvn.nic.in)

Further corrigendum & addendum will be published only on websites

Adv. No. 19/2021 Government of India

Public Enterprises Selection Board

invites applications for the post of

**Director (Technical)**

in

Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Ltd

Last date of receipt of applications in

PESB is by 15.00 hours

on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2021

For details login to website

<http://www.pesb.gov.in>

NOTICE INVITING TENDER		
Tender No.	Material Description	Due Date
202113 005152	Upgradation of Oracle E-Business Suite from version 12.1.3 to 12.2.10 and database from version 12.C to 19.C	10.03.2021
202113 005274	Filler Grade Precipitated Calcium Carbonate (in Jumbo Bags)	06.03.2021
202113 004649	Pigment Dyes for PM/C No. 1,2&3 a) Violet Dye b) Blue Dye	12.03.2021
Email <a href="mailto:202113005152_purchase.inst@tnpl.co.in">202113005152_purchase.inst@tnpl.co.in</a> <a href="mailto:20213005274_4649_purchase.rawmat@tnpl.co.in">20213005274_4649_purchase.rawmat@tnpl.co.in</a>		General Terms & conditions, Specifications, Qty., Tender Fee, EMD are available in Tender document at our websites: <a href="http://www.tnpl.com/">www.tnpl.com/</a> <a href="http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in">www.tenders.tn.gov.in</a>
DIPR/1167/Tender/2021		TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT NABARD & RURAL ROADS CIRCLE, SALEM - 1. TENDER NOTICE	
Tender Notice No.26 / 2020-21 / SDO / Dated : 16.02.2021.	For and on behalf of Governor of Tamilnadu, percentage tender through online only will be received upto 22.03.2021 - 11.00 hours (a.m) by the Superintending Engineer (H) NABARD and Rural Roads Salem Circle for the work of Reconstruction of High level Bridge at Km 6/10 of Pothanur - Singanallur road under NABARD Scheme RIDF XXII - 2020-21 pertaining Coimbatore (H) NABARD & Rural Roads Division.
	Details of works, approximate value of works, EMD, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from the Government web site <a href="http://tntriders.gov.in">http://tntriders.gov.in</a> . If any changes / Corrections etc in the tender, it will be published on the above website(s). SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H) NABARD AND RURAL ROADS CIRCLE, SALEM-1.
DIPR/1223/TENDER/2021	

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT NABARD & RURAL ROADS CIRCLE, SALEM - 1. TENDER NOTICE	
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DIPR/1223/TENDER/2021	

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## Many Bengali TV and film stars join BJP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

A host of actors of Bengali cinema and television industry joined the BJP on Wednesday in the presence of national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and vice-president Mukul Roy. Yash Dasgupta, Papi Adhikari and Soumili Ghosh Biswas were among them.

"Politics is about change and if you want to change the system, you need to be a part of it. The BJP has always given the youth a chance and has placed their faith in them. It is the youth that can bring about a change," said Mr. Dasgupta, a film star. Actor Anjana Basu, who had joined the BJP months ago, alleged that she had faced discrimination in the industry due to her support for the BJP. "One of my serials was taken off air and no producer has the courage to hire me for work since then. Such kind of things must end," she said.

## Cong. veteran Satish Sharma passes away

He had served as Petroleum Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Veteran Congress leader and former Union Minister Captain Satish Sharma passed away, party's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala informed on Wednesday.

"Deeply saddened at the demise of Capt. Satish Sharma, former Union Minister. Capt. Sharma epitomised dedication and loyalty. Condolences to the family and friends," Mr. Surjewala tweeted late on Wednesday evening.

News agency ANI in a tweet reported that the 73-year-old Congress leader passed away in Goa.

A former Union Petroleum Minister (1993-1996) in the P.V. Narasimha Rao government, Capt. Sharma was known to be a long-time Gandhi family loyalist and a personal friend of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

Capt. Sharma, a former airline pilot, had represented the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in 1991 after

## Envoy visit J&K amid cheers, protests

Govt. showcases 'deepening democracy'; senior regional party leaders not invited for discussions

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR



Status review: The envoys visiting the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar on Wednesday. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

The J&K government showcased "deepening democracy" by visiting 24 foreign diplomats, who arrived on a two-day tour of the Union Territory (UT) on Wednesday amid a spontaneous shutdown in Srinagar and alleged detention of recently elected National Conference (NC) district council members in Budgam.

Welcomed by women singing traditional Kashmiri songs and showering petals on them, the team of diplomats from different continents, headed by European Union (EU) Ambassador Ugo Astuto, started the tour by attending a "Block Divas" function at a college at Magam in Budgam. The diplomats were apprised by District Development Council (DDC) chairman Nazir Ahmad Khan of "the positive measures" taken by the Centre post August 5, 2019, when the Centre ended the special constitutional position of J&K.

During this visit, the main focus of the envoys, who are coming to J&K for the fourth time in the past 18 months, was to hear from the elected representatives of the urban local bodies, block development councils and DDC heads in Srinagar.

Elected DDC chairpersons associated with the NC, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the Peoples Conference (PC) also interacted with the envoys. No invitation was extended to any senior party leaders such as Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti or Sajad Lone.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

Unidentified militants opened fire upon 22-year-old Akash Mehra, a civilian and the son of the owner of the noted eatery Krishna Dhaba, in Srinagar on Wednesday evening, less than 3 km from the venue

where the visiting diplomats held meetings during the day.

The police said the militants fired from a pistol. "Two empty cartridges were recovered from the spot," the police said. A case has been registered, and investigation is on.

ment etc. now," an envoy was quoted as saying during the interaction.

Meanwhile, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, who addressed a rally in Handwara, said, "Instead of meeting selected groups, the envoys should meet the common people."

The Hurriyat, headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, urged the visiting 24 foreign diplomats to "push for a dialogue" on the Kashmir issue.

A spontaneous shutdown was observed in Srinagar. The city's main commercial hubs remained closed.

The letter said that traffic

## Sikh pilgrims denied permission to visit Pak.

Home Ministry cites threat to safety

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

on the India-Pakistan International Border remained suspended since March 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Case count**

"While the pandemic continues to persist, it is pertinent to note that Pakistan has so far recorded over half a million cases, with 10,000-plus deaths due to COVID. Considering the capacity of the health infrastructure in Pakistan, it is not advisable for a large group of our citizens to visit Pakistan for a week during pandemic," it said.

It added that the Ministry had not accorded permission to the group for crossing over to Pakistan, which was mandatory in the wake of the suspension of traffic between the two countries due to the pandemic.

According to a 1974 bilateral protocol with Pakistan, four Sikh *jatthas* visit important gurdwaras in Pakistan every year.

## Govt. denies link between Char Dham project, floods

Supreme Court asks it to file a response in two weeks

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday denied in the Supreme Court any link between the Char Dham road-widening project in Uttarakhand and the recent flash floods in the Rishiganga valley.

The denial, before a Bench led by Justice Rohinton Nariman, came from Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal, in response to a communication from a high-powered committee (HPC) chairperson Ravi Chopra, connecting the tragedy with the Char Dham project.

The court asked the government to file a response in two weeks.

The 899-km-long project that connects the shrines of Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath in Garhwal Himalayas is under the Supreme Court's scanner after NGO Citizens for Green Doon raised environmental concerns over the cutting of trees and harm to the fragile



Himalayan ecology by the widening of the existing mountain roads.

The HPC was formed to be the eyes and ears of the Supreme Court on the project. However, it had not been unanimous in its views.

### Centre's view

In January, the government supported a majority view within the committee favouring the need to broaden the Himalayan feeder roads to the Indo-China border to facilitate troop movement.

The Ministry of Defence, in an affidavit in court, had

said it was unfortunate that three of the HPC members gave a minority view to reconsider a December 15, 2020 circular of the Ministry of Road and Transport and Highways, which fixed the carriageway width of the feeder roads at seven metre with a paved shoulder spanning 1.5 metre on either side.

The minority view had said the December 15 circular needed a rethink, considering its "long-term impacts on the fragile Himalayan terrain and sensitive ecosystem".

The Centre, in its affidavit, said it was "unfortunate" that the HPC members, who were in the minority, had given such an opinion "notwithstanding the security of the country and the need of the defence forces to resist possible external aggression". An earlier affidavit of the government said a double lane road with a width of 7 to 7.5 metre was necessary to meet the Army's requirements.

The bus driver has been detained, said the police.

## Toll in M.P. bus mishap rises to 51

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BHOPAL/REWA/SIDHI

The death toll in the bus accident in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district has gone up to 51 with the recovery of four more bodies on Wednesday, officials said.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also left from Bhopal to visit the accident spot in Sidhi.

On Tuesday, bodies of 47 people, including 20 women and two children, were recovered after the packed private bus skidded off the road and plunged into a water-filled canal in Sidhi.

"We are building an anti-CAA memorial in Guwahati. I request every Assamese to share gamosas with your anti-CAA message on it and send it to us," Kaliabor MP and former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi's son, Gaurav Gogoi, said at a party meeting in north-eastern Assam's Bihupuria town.

Mr. Gogoi is the chairman of the Congress Manifesto Committee.

Congress workers have also been asked to visit every household and collect such gamosas or woven scarf-towels.

"We have our ears on ground and we expect the party to collect them which will be displayed at the up-



coming memorial," State Congress president Ripun Bora said, asserting that the sacrifices to save "Assamese pride" will not be forgotten.

"The CAA will be rooted out," he said.

Pradyut Bordoloi, Naogaon MP and chairman of the Congress Campaign Committee, said each gamosa donor can have his or her name on it besides the message.

The CAA seeks to provide citizenship to non-Muslims who allegedly fled religious persecution in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan and took refuge in India till December 31, 2014.

## ISL dictionary with 10,000 terms released

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

From names of banks, political parties, websites and apps to fast food dishes like pani puri and momos, the third edition of the digital Indian Sign Language dictionary launched on Wednesday included 10,000 terms across six categories.

The dictionary, prepared by the Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre under the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, includes terms of daily use, academic, legal and administrative, medical, technical and agricultural terms, SJE Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot said releasing the dictionary virtually.

Available as a Google document and videos on YouTube, the dictionary includes the sign, the English term and pictures wherever relevant, a Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities statement said. The dictionary also includes terms used in different regions, including momos from Dehradun, bandit from Munger, Bihar, and tug of war from Haryana. Arranged marriage, break-up and live-in relationship also find a mention. The first edition was launched in March 2018 with 3,000 terms.

Additionally it was noted that India had supplied COVID-19 vaccine to 13 coun-

## Self-registration for COVID-19 vaccine soon: Health Ministry

New version of CO-Win digital app is ready for launch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Version 2.0 of the CO-Win digital app for self registration of COVID-19 vaccine beneficiaries is ready and will be launched soon, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday. Plans to involve private sector healthcare facilities in a significant way in the ongoing vaccination drive was also under way, it said.

"This will enable registration of the population in the 50 yrs+ category for COVID vaccination, which is the third population priority group after healthcare workers and front line workers that are presently taking the vaccine," said the Ministry in its release issued following a high-level meeting chaired by P.K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

The meeting reviewed the progress of the COVID-19 vaccination drive in detail, and said that 68.3% of all healthcare workers had been administered the first dose and 37.6% of eligible healthcare workers the second dose.

Among frontline workers, 28.2% had been administered the first dose.

Additionally it was noted that India had supplied CO-

19 vaccine to 14 countries (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Maldives, Nepal, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Oman, Afghanistan, Barbados and Dominica).

It added that a total of 91,86,757 vaccination doses had been administered till 6 p.m. on Wednesday.

tries as grants through the Ministry of External Affairs. These countries are Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Mauritius, the Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Oman, Afghanistan, Barbados and Dominica. Also the vaccine had been supplied to 14 countries (Bangladesh, Myanmar,

## SC to hear petition filed by Jamiat

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind after it submitted that a spate of laws across several States that criminalise religious conversion through marriage have become a source of harassment of Muslim youths.

"Why do you need to be heard?" Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde asked advocate Ejaz Maqbool, for the Jamiat.

"A large number of Muslims are being harassed all across the country," Mr. Maqbool replied. The Bench permitted the Jamiat to intervene in the case. The court also allowed NGO Citizens for Justice and Peace to amend its plea and include the Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2019 and the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Ordinance, 2020 in the list of statutes under challenge.

In an earlier hearing, the Bench did not stay the implementation of the U.P. Prohibition Of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, and the Utarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018, despite fervent pleas made by petitioners that "rampaging mobs are lifting off people in the middle of wedding ceremonies.

## 'Social media issues come under Centre'

Govt. files reply in Supreme Court

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Centre was responding to a petition filed by senior Facebook official Ajit Mohan against his summons by the Committee to testify about any role played by social media platforms in the events leading up to the Delhi riots in February last year.

Mr. Mehta said Parliament has already passed the Information Technology Act which deals with social media intermediaries.

"Offences pertaining to social media intermediaries are statutorily defined by Parliament. The field is occupied by a Central Act," he said. The court will continue to hear the case next week.

## Nagaland Assembly forms 7-member panel

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The committee are Toshi Wungtung and Neiba Kroun of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP), Pangnu Phom and Jacob Zhimomi of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Chotisu Sazo and Imkong L. Imchen of the Naga People's Front (NPF) and Tongpang Ozukum, an independent.

Several rounds of talks have, however, failed to yield a solution to the political problem. The MLAs who are part of

## Cabinet nod for changes in juvenile law

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a slew of amendments to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, empowering the District Magistrates (DM) to issue adoption orders as well as monitor the implementation of the law.

The amendments are aimed at "strengthening Child Protection set-up to ensure best interest of children," according to a press statement.

These include empowering the DMs and the additional DMs to monitor the functioning of agencies responsible for implementing the JJ Act.

The District Child Protection Units will function under the DMs.

Before someone sets up a shelter home for children and sends their proposal for registration under the JJ Act to the State, a DM will have to assess their capacity and conduct a background check, Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said at a press briefing.

A DM could also independently evaluate the functioning of the Child Welfare Committee, Special Juvenile Protection Units and registered childcare institutes, the Minister stated.



Nutritious dinners, long walks in the jungle and relaxing massages... You may not be able to take a holiday this year, but fortunately the elephants can. Live vicariously at the retreat for temple elephants at Thekkampatti in Mettupalayam

■ K JESHI

Lakshmi is unstoppable. She sways her body to the beat of Tamil songs on the radio.

Swarnavalli basks in the sun drying her freshly shampooed hair, while Sengalamal, who became an Internet sensation for her famous bob-cut, is mud bathing. The oldest, Kasthuri, contently chews on *koothal panai*, a variety of palm leaves from Kerala.

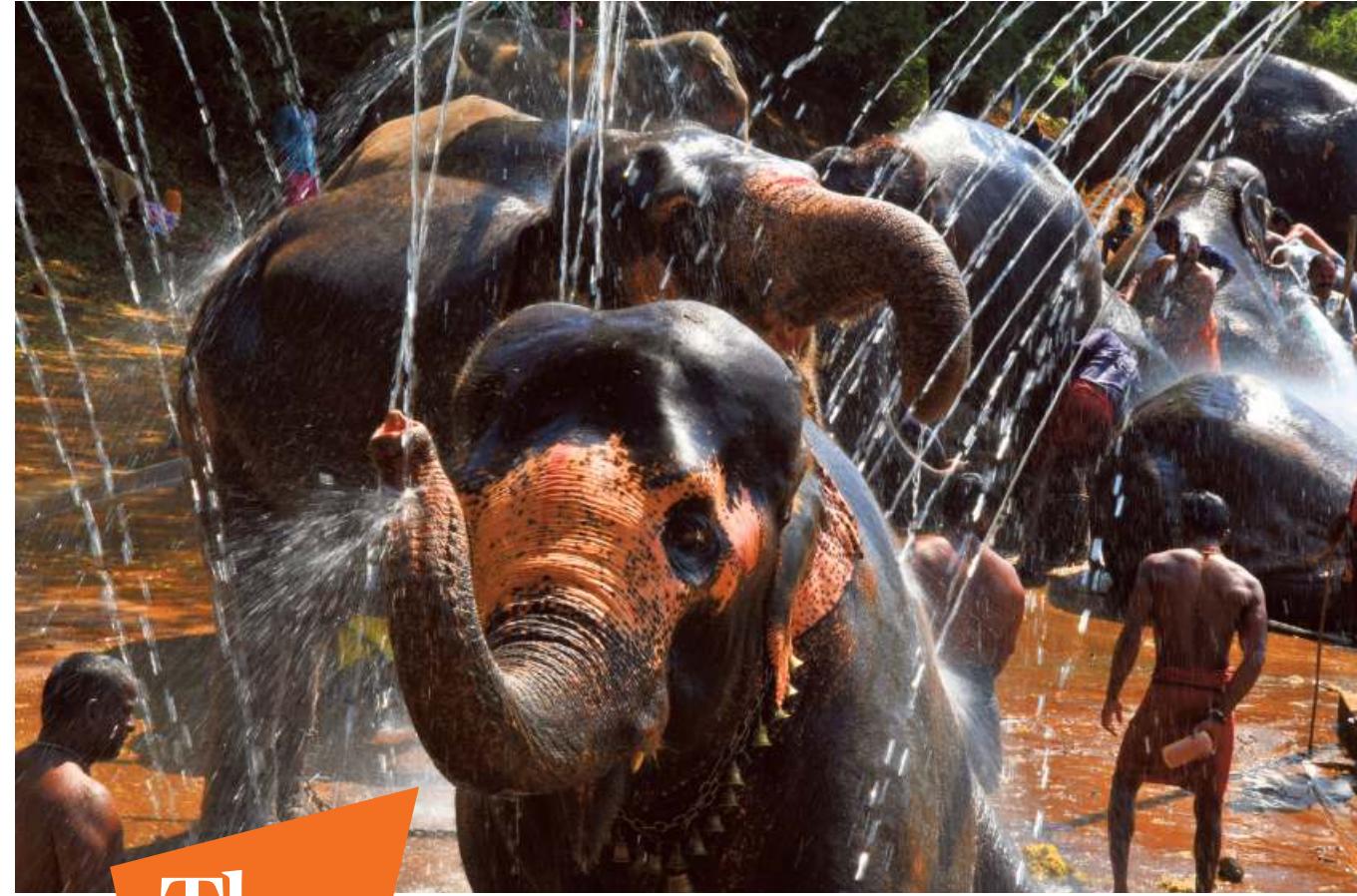
It is a busy morning at the nine-acre rejuvenation camp at Thekkampatti, located along the banks of the Bhavani in Mettupalayam, 50 kilometres from Coimbatore. Twenty-six elephants from 23 temples and three mutts across Tamil Nadu and Puducherry are camped here for a 48-day retreat, organised by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HRC) Trust. A circuit of CCD cameras track the movement of elephants at the camp while a solar-fence and eight watch towers are in place to prevent wild animals from entering the premises.

At the camp, the jumbos receive 24/7 monitoring by veterinarians and a nutrient-rich diet including varieties of fodder that includes green grass, coconut fronds, and rice balls packed with protein-rich horse gram and yellow moong.

"Healthcare makes a difference to their overall well-being," says T Saravanan, who is walking his elephant Swarnavalli after her bath. "Along with carrot, beetroot, dates, watermelon and sugarcane, we also give *chyawanprash*, *ashta choornam* and other vitamin mixes to boost their energy levels," he adds.

**Where friends meet again**  
Besides nutritious food and long walks in the jungle, the camp is also about forging friendships that last a lifetime.

Swarnavalli who is from Swarnakaleeswarar temple in Sivaganga district has found a friend



All rejuvenated  
Elephants at the Thekkampatti camp are bathed; decorated; and treated to fodder including bowls of watermelon ■ PERIASAMY M

# The Jumbo jet set

in Parvathi from the Madurai Meenakshi temple.

"They enjoy each other's company during walking and bathing. These elephants are used to human presence. The place draws crowds who come to watch the camping activities," says Saravanan, adding, "We look forward to meeting mahouts. We chat up, laugh, and have a good time."

The animals rest in turns. Once the line-up of elephants walk back after a relaxing shower, Kumudhavalli heads to the bathing bay with her mahout A Karim Sait in tow.

"We scrub her clean for two to three hours and then pamper her with a relaxing bath," says Karim as he sprays water on her

body to start the ritual. Karim comes from a family who have been mahouts for three generations. He says, "Elephants have a lifespan of 120 years. At the camp they get special food like the *koothapanaai* leaves which is not available in Tamil Nadu. We are eager to learn about the routine of other temple elephants."

Open spaces and regular medical check-ups are a big draw, says Prasanth Sankarankutty who takes care of the 55-year-old Kasthuri from Palani. "The long walks in the mornings and evenings easily cover 10 kilometres and improve their blood circulation. I give her a head massage with oil to cool her down as their bodies generate a lot of heat. Every single elephant has an individual characteristic, like human beings," smiles Sankarankutty as he hops on to Kasthuri and starts dusting off mud from her head.

The camp is a reunion of sorts

for Lakshmi (the dancer) from Rengaambal temple in Thiruvannamalai who meets her niece Kumudhavalli from Vaithamaanidhi temple in Tiruchendur. "It's been an annual ritual for 13 years ever since the camp started. They were babies when we got them from Sonapur in Assam. Bonding with her sister takes her stress away and that's why you see her dancing and making merry," says M Rangan, 60, who has been a mahout for four decades.

"I spent my childhood at Srirangam. I was enthralled when I saw a procession of elephants. It is my love for the mammal that made me a mahout. Show them love, and they reciprocate."

As our walk ends, we catch Gandhimathi from Tirunelveli and Abayambigai from Mayiladuthurai engage in a friendly duel, mud bathing themselves and making trumpeting sounds. "They are thick friends," says M Ravikumar, caretaker of Kalyani from Perur temple in Coimbatore. "So are Kalyani and Ramalakshmi from Rameswaram. Every year at the camp, they stand next to each other. I have been with Kalyani from when she was eight. She is 28 now. It's like bringing up a baby. When you show them love, they are always kind," says Ravikumar as he gives her trunk a warm rub.

Redemption Room, an experiential horror-thriller theatre performance by New York-based Secret Theatre, is set to premiere in India



GOWRI S

It is not unusual to lose oneself in a particularly intriguing story, the kind where fictional characters become more familiar than one's own reality. These characters go on to become second nature and sometimes, you wish to strike a conversation with them, in real time. Powered by the pandemic and technology, this seems to be a plausible scenario now.

In an attempt to simulate an escape from reality by means of a story, theatre director Richard Crawford of New York-based Secret Theatre, has created an immersive theatre experience called *Redemption Room*, where participants get to interact with the characters. Dubbed an "online thriller experience", the virtual show lets viewers vote, judge and speak to the participants, from the time they purchase tickets. The narrative is solely drawn out by the viewer.

This is Secret Theatre's first outing in India; had it not been for the pandemic, the crew would have flown down for a physical performance this year, says Crawford, who started Secret Theatre a decade back in New York, in an attempt to stay away from the Broadway format.

"I wanted to create something a bit progressive, and inexpensive that the people who live in New York could go to, as opposed to tourists, and use interesting buildings in the

# Lights OUT

An evolving experience  
(Above) Richard Crawford

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

space? "The positive side of creating something like this, is that people across the world can tune in at their own pace. And, the fact that it is a horror thriller makes it more exciting. If you bought the tickets today, you can message the character and they will message you back. You will be able to see their picture and realise that it is a tangible person you are talking to. And, it [the narrative] is going to take a thriller twist which might be an escape that people need in the world right now," says Crawford.

While talking to the characters virtually, the spectator can ask them questions about what they can expect in the narrative and how they can be a part of it. There will also be instructions to fall back on. These interactions lead up to the day of the final show (a secret link will be sent with instructions to the individual), that Crawford says has "some spooky bits." To soak in the experience, spectators are also encouraged to set up their own spaces (cue: dimmed lights, candles and silence).

What's more? A Mumbai-based actor is present in *Redemption Room*. Crawford playfully refuses to divulge more information, lest it breaks the suspense.

Tickets to *Redemption Room* (₹1,400; February 25 to 28) can be bought at [www.bookmyshow.com](http://www.bookmyshow.com)

■

CM YK

# Museum of the masses

DakshinaChitra's LangFest 2021 celebrates Tamil and its facets while promoting young contemporary talent from the city

GOWRI S

How will live graffiti manifest on the walls of a museum? Will it be considered blasphemous, or welcomed as an interesting creative possibility? More so, when done to promote Tamil, one of the longest surviving classical languages of India.

The heritage museum on DakshinaChitra's sprawling grounds prepares to embrace Tamil for a weekend, in an attempt to familiarise the urban, contemporary crowd with its history and importance.

How do they do it? Through dance, theatre, music, literature and art. In the first edition of what aspires to be an annual affair, DakshinaChitra's LangFest 2021 also hopes to redefine the institution's image, from a static museum to an "indie talent-friendly" performance space.



All day long Panel discussions, open mics, theatre and live graffiti performances are part of the line-up ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

language, Tamil identity, and how the language manifests in cinema and technology, to theatre performances and workshops on Tamil calligraphy and live graffiti, the event features a little bit of everything. Scholars like Baba Chelladurai and S Raghuraman, film personalities like director Gautam Vasudev Menon, lyricist Madhan Karky and indie artistes like Tenma and Siennor, will feature.

Apart from the discussions are a host of theatre, live graffiti, music and folk arts performances: veteran actor Kalairani will perform *Song of Lowino*, adapted from a poem by Ugandan poet Okot P' Bitek, while Chennai-based graffiti writer Dibs 132 and the Aravani Art Project will showcase live graffiti. Indie musical acts by bands Othasevuru, Black Boys and The Siemnor Trio will follow.

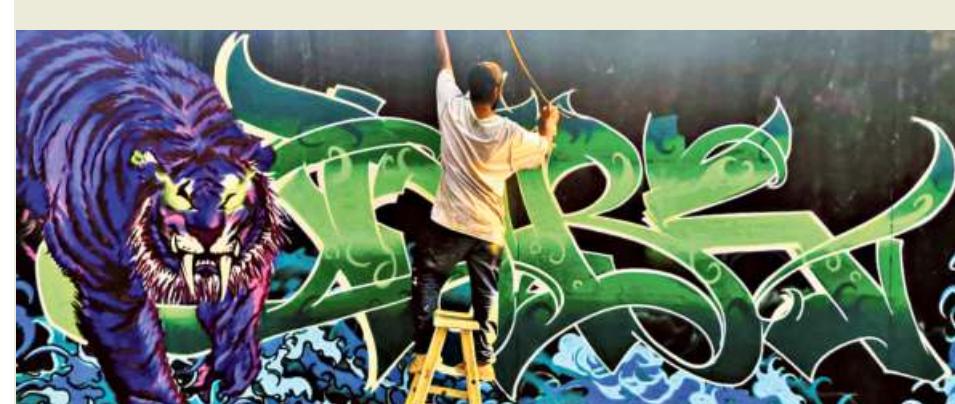
The line-up says the same: from panel discussions on the script and culture of the museum space.

"Chennaiites unite when they speak about Tamil. We are bringing in people who are enthusiastic about the language. We wanted to look at its past, present and future," says Ajay.

The line-up says the same: from panel discussions on the script and culture of the

"After 7 pm we are having open mics and jam sessions; BYOI (Bring Your Own Instrument) edition. We are facilitating the idea that anybody who wants to perform, can perform at DakshinaChitra," says Ajay.

*LangFest will be held on February 20 and 21 from 10 am to 9 pm at DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum, Muttrakadu. Entry is open to all.*



■ ND-NDE

Be it Swarovski, Versace, Guess or Gucci, these thrift stores — run by millennial and Gen Z entrepreneurs — can get you all these at a price that will not burn a hole in your pocket

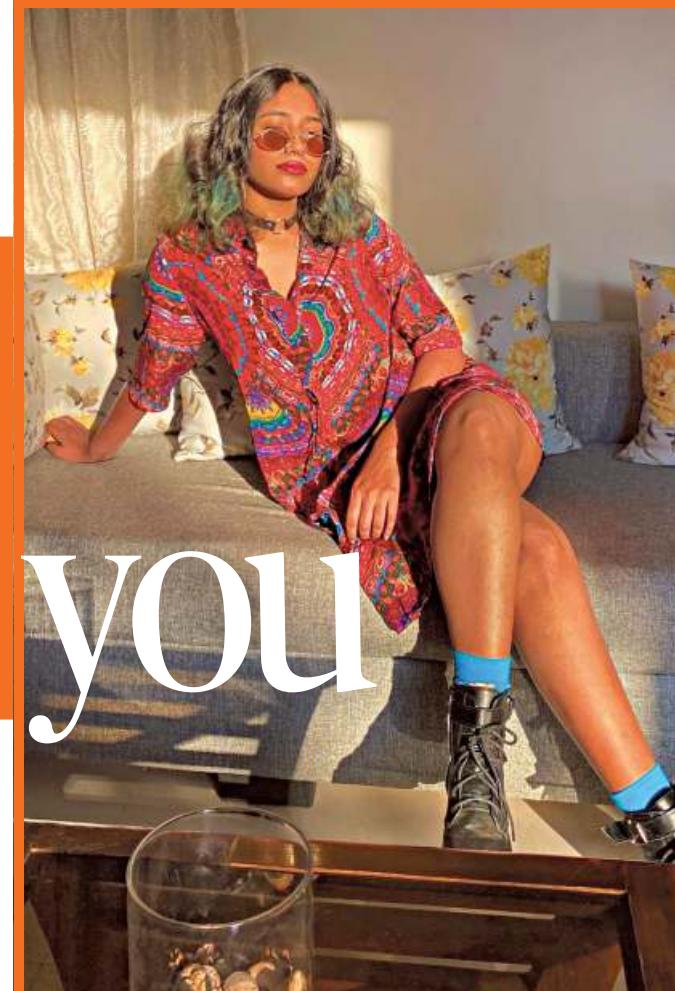
# The devil wears Prada, and so can you

AISHWARYA UPADHYE

Would you like a pair of Jimmy Choo's for the same price as a Zara handbag? Or add a ₹80,000 worth Giuseppe Zanotti Peep Toes to your wardrobe for ₹17,000? Or wear Tiffany & Co sunglasses that usually cost ₹25,000 for ₹8,000? And no, you don't need to scrounge around night markets, or scour the web for first copies. Instead, now experiment with designer-wear with a clear conscience, via Instagram thrift stores.

Globally, the resale market has been growing exponentially. A report by thredUp, one of world's largest fashion resale platforms, published in 2020, valued the resale market at \$28 billion (around ₹2 trillion) in 2019. This is expected to grow to \$64 billion by 2024. Though there are no official figures for India, a search for '#thriftindia' on Instagram throws up over 6.25 lakh posts and over 60 handles that deal with thrifting.

**Finding authentic resellers**  
In 2019, when Chennai-based graphic designer Sruti Ashok set up a pop-up store selling second-hand clothes in the backyard of a cafe, she thought it was a one-time thing. But the overwhelming response she received and the money raised for an NGO through the sales, made her want to turn it into a yearly affair. "However, in 2020, it was not possible to step out and set it



up, so I did what everyone was doing with their business; I took it online. What started as a one-off thing has transitioned into a business, merely because of the response that I have been getting," laughs Sruti.

Started in April 2020, her store, The Relove Closet, has gained over 5,000 followers. Though the store sells a variety of brands, it is well-known for selling high-end luxury brands at prices that are probably less than half their original rate. Versace, Swarovski, Chanel, Roberto Cavalli, Tiffany, Chloe, YSL, Giuseppe Zanotti, Jimmy Choo, Stella McCartney, name it and she has it.

"It started when a lady approached me to sell a few of her luxury products on my page and forward the proceedings to a charity that she supported. When we put out her bags and shoes, they sold out in two days. We weren't expecting such a response for the high-end brands, since they are more expensive than regular ones which we sell for ₹700 to ₹1,500. The luxury brands are priced between ₹3,000 and ₹50,000. Due to the increasing online base, I have been approached by several sellers from across India who either want to make money by selling their products or give to charity," says Sruti whose customer

**Clutch on** (Clockwise from left)  
Riya Rokade; a Bottega Veneta clutch from The Relove Closet; a jacket inspired from Picasso's paintings; a Louis Vuitton bag from Chichi\_n\_Co

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



years now. He is the man behind the Instagram account @Chichi\_n\_Co which sells luxury bags, shoes, T-shirts, and dresses.

"Thrift culture is quite popular in the Northeast. Physical thrift stores have been around since I was a child. So we know the process well and are aware which items to pick and which to ignore," says Jungshi, a 21-year-old college student. Every evening, he visits these stores to source luxury products.

Jungshi's store boasts a massive collection from Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs, MCM Worldwide, Kenzo, Givenchy, Guess and Balenciaga.

But how does one trust these to be authentic? "There is an elaborate process for that," says Jungshi, "The easiest way to check if a product is real is to look for its authentication certificate. If that is not found, one has to look for a code that is stamped in the insides of the bags or shoes which when run on the brand's website gives the date of manufacture, the country where it was manufactured. Some brands like Louis Vuitton have a website that helps you cross-check the date code which

is one way to determine if a bag is fake," he says.

This is when the educational background of Riya Rokade, a student of styling and mass communication, comes into use. Riya who runs the page, Vintage Laundry, sources her items from Mumbai-based second-hand product suppliers.

## Needle in a haystack

She picks through heaps and heaps of clothes. Once in every few days, she comes across items from luxury brands. Be it a pair of Ralph Lauren jeans or a Versace shirt, the heaps that suppliers source are a treasure trove. "Once I found a quirky jacket which was hand painted. It was only after I put it up for sale on my page, I realised they were all replicas of Picasso's paintings," exclaims Riya.

The Mumbai-based stylist launched The Vintage Laundry in Feb 2020 but had to shut it down for two months due to the lockdown. "I physically visit my suppliers and then curate the clothes, so it was not possible during the lockdown. Even after the restrictions were eased, I rationed my collection and put up only five clothes every week. Now we drop around 30 pieces every week," she says. Despite the bumpy start, Riya says that her venture is doing well, thanks to growing awareness about the harms of fast fashion.

"Most of the items that I put up are sold in two or three days. Colourful and quirky clothes work best for my account. The only time I had to struggle to sell clothes was when I put out an office-wear collection. Still working from home, people are in no mood to shop for office wear. Jumpsuits, flowing pants, sweatpants, baggy shirts work really well. The trends will change again once offices open up," she says.

And Riya is looking forward to that challenge.



## THIS WEEK IN INDIE

Homegrown genre-benders, foreign rockers and some good old disco make up the list of live gigs for this weekend

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

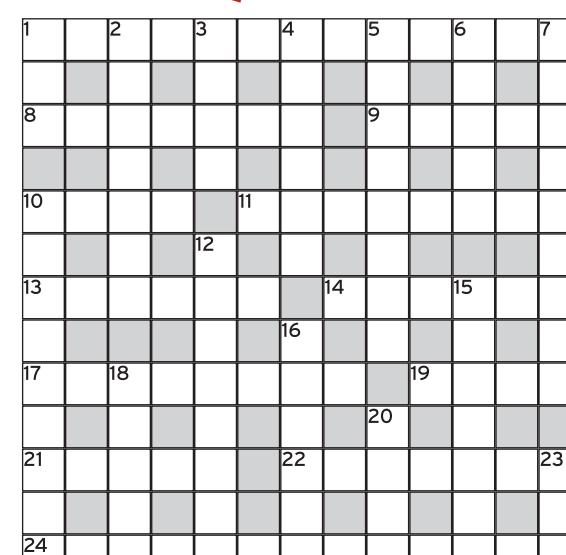
### Dynamite Disco Club

This disco music label has been hosting disco nights with contemporary talent in major Indian cities since 2018, and is making its Chennai debut with two artists who are worth checking out. Bengaluru-based Stalwart John, founder of Disco Music Club, hosts regular radio shows introducing the genre to audiences in India, the UK and the US, in addition to soul, funk and house music. New York and Chennai-based Vidur Grover has sets featuring deep, tech, funk, disco and hip-hop. The duo takes the console at Radio Room, Chennai, on February 19 from 8 pm onwards.

### Goan Dogs

The five-piece, UK-based band named itself after some canines the members met on a Goan holiday, and made friends with for life. The desert rock band has a polished Western vibe that oscillates between intense and breezy, and adding to the intrigue is the fact that frontman Luke St Leger often creates his own guitars. The band goes live on February 19 on The Louisiana's Facebook page, at 8 pm. Visit the page for more details.

### THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13400



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To play The Guardian Quick Crossword, Hindu Cryptic crossword, Sudoku & other puzzles online scan the QR code.

taking industrial action (6,3)

**10** Very disreputable (9)

**12** Queen Victoria's favourite prime minister, d. 1881 (8)

**15** Patterned flooring made with wooden blocks (7)

**16** Remove a blockage (6)

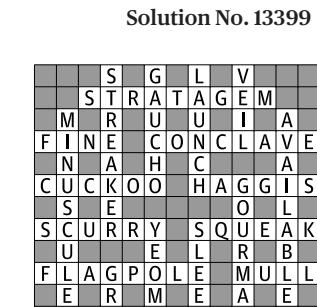
**20** Rotate – dance (5)

**21** Pitcher (4)

**23** Doll or teddy, say (3)

The solution will appear on February 25, 2021

Solution No. 13399



The Nilgiri Mountain Railway toy train is back in action after 10 months. We hop on board for a ride



The toy train crossing the bridge near Coonoor ■ THE HINDU



K JESHI

It makes a dramatic entry. Painted in blue, the train emerges from a backdrop of steam and smoke. Chugging towards me, it whistles before halting at platform Number 1 with a hiss.

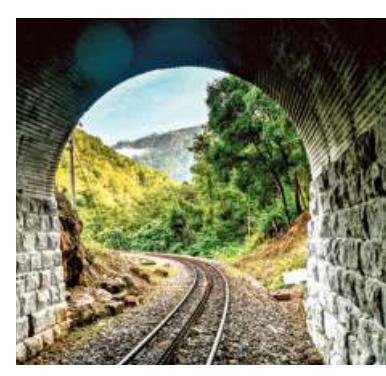
It is early in the morning, the air is nippy, and I am at Mettupalayam Railway Station, thrilled to ride on the Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR) toy train, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2005. The train services were suspended from March 2020 due to the pandemic; and restarted recently, after nearly 10 months.

"The first-ever trip of the train was on June 15, 1899. After nine years, on October 15, 1908, it got extended till Udhagamandalam," says K Natrajan, founder of Heritage Steam Chariot Trust. The train connects Mettupalayam with Udhagamandalam via Coonoor after passing through Kallar, Adderly, Runnymede, Wellington, Aravankadu, Ketti and Lovedale stations.

As the train starts moving in a slow rhythm, I sit back and enjoy the scenery unfolding outside my window. For the first five kilometres, it chugs along flat plains cutting through banana plantations, arecanut farms, and fields being readied for farming. A peacock shows off its plumage beside the track, unmindful of the steaming train trundling by.

At Kallar, the first station on the

# Stairway to heaven



cond steepest climb in the world. The rack and pinion extends up to 19 kilometres which is the longest in the world," explains Natrajan.

At Adderly, engineers refill the water tanks and I notice that the locomotive bears the name of Nilgiri flycatcher, an endemic bird that can be seen only in the Nilgiris.

"As the train is powered by steam locomotives between Mettupalayam and Coonoor, it halts at regular intervals, to refill water," says S Prasanna, Station Master. It uses 4,000 litres of water every five kilometres.

Workers, who conduct regular maintenance checks for the engine, tell me that the train crosses 250 bridges and passes through 16 tunnels. Each time we enter or emerge from a tunnel, passengers on board cheer loudly. When an Indian gaur shows up, striking a pose amidst the greenery, there are collective sighs all around. The signature whistling, steam and the rustic wooden coaches

with long windows take me back in time to the iconic film *Sadma* featuring Kamal Haasan and Sridevi, shot on this very train.

The stretch from Mettupalayam to Coonoor – the first 27 kilometres of the total 46 – trundles through deep valleys, thick forests with dense greenery, and by leafy walls covered in yellow, red, and orange wild flowers that are so close, you can reach out and pluck them.

As we near Runnymede, neatly trimmed green patches of tea plantations with towering silver oak trees take over. The place is so green, it tempts each of us to step down and soak up the view. A railing has been erected to mark the forest boundary and down below a stream gurgles. There are garden chairs for passengers to sit and stare. Natrajan points out that Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were immersed in the nearby wild stream, at the *sangamam* point of two rivers along the Runnymede.

At Coonoor, over sweet *masala chai*, onion samosas and *paruppu vada*, we bid goodbye to the oil-furnace-powered steam locomotive. It is detached and replaced by a diesel engine for the last leg of the journey from Coonoor to Udhagamandalam. Onward it goes through tea plantations, and the blue-green expanse of the Ooty lake. The air is cooler than before, and a whiff of eucalyptus hangs light.

### Across

**1** Very bad catcher (13)

**8** Sundry (7)

**9** General meaning (5)

**10** Average result (4)

**11** Class of university (3-5)

**13** Very sad (6)

**14** Opinions expressed in interviews with those in street (3,3)

**17** Shy (8)

**19** Very intimate get-together (4)

**21** Greyish-green (5)

**22** Claim brought to court (7)

**24** In a very good position! (7,6)

### Down

**1** Try (3)

**2** Small Greek restaurant (7)

**3** Deserve (4)

**4** Antenna (6)

**5** Memo pad (8)

**6** Weariness with life (5)

**7** Money for those



M N D N D E



## MARKET WATCH

	17-02-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51,704	-0.77
US Dollar	72.74	-0.07
Gold	46,102	-1.70
Brent oil	63.78	1.33

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	655.75	19.20
Asian Paints	2388.15	-62.10
Axis Bank	777.75	2.70
Bajaj Auto	4165.70	32.85
Bajaj Finserv	10185.65	-274.95
Bajaj Finance	5705.15	-55.10
Bharti Airtel	593.85	-0.10
BPCL	411.70	-6.25
Britannia Ind	3364.00	-25.45
Cipla	835.70	-12.65
Coal India	135.20	1.45
Divis Lab	3615.25	-71.25
Dr Reddys Lab	4600.55	-96.05
Eicher Motors	2695.50	-31.45
GAIL (India)	134.40	1.30
Grasim Ind	1238.45	-5.30
HCL Tech.	943.20	-9.10
HDFC	2805.35	-53.30
HDFC Bank	1586.50	-40.15
HDFC Life	703.10	7.75
Hero MotoCorp	3584.00	122.45
Hindalco	303.90	1.20
Hind Unilever	2163.90	-32.20
ICICI Bank	657.35	-1.00
IndusInd Bank	1033.20	-25.05
Infosys	1281.30	-9.10
Indian Oil Corp	95.00	-0.60
ITC	217.75	-0.50
JSW Steel	408.70	1.05
Kotak Bank	1989.45	-30.20
L&T	1548.35	-1.10
M&M	914.95	2.75
Maruti Suzuki	7503.20	-193.85
Nestle India Ltd.	16741.20	-476.05
NTPC	99.35	1.35
ONGC	102.25	-1.50
PowerGrid Corp	230.05	4.50
Reliance Ind	2083.25	23.75
SBI Life	877.15	5.15
State Bank	411.75	9.40
Shree Cement	28268.50	-328.90
Sun Pharma	621.25	-9.90
Tata Motors	330.15	0.95
Tata Steel	696.80	-2.40
TCS	3073.70	-35.70
Tech Mahindra	980.45	-6.35
Titan	1460.40	-11.45
UltraTech Cement	6419.20	-38.60
UPL	539.00	0.05
Wipro	430.20	-7.35

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.54	72.86
Euro	87.51	87.90
British Pound	100.52	101.00
Japanese Yen (100)	68.41	68.74
Chinese Yuan	11.23	11.28
Swiss Franc	81.01	81.39
Singapore Dollar	54.57	54.83
Canadian Dollar	57.10	57.36
Malaysian Ringgit	17.95	18.05

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## ALL increases clean energy sourcing to 60%

CHENNAI  
Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL) has increased the sourcing of clean energy to 60% for its countrywide operations from 32%. Currently, 75% of the energy consumption in Tamil Nadu and 60% throughout India is procured through the solar rooftop, solar ground mount and wind-based renewable energy, ALL said.

## Dr. Reddy's introduces anti-cancer drug in U.S.

HYDERABAD  
Dr. Reddy's Laboratories has unveiled Capecitabine Tablets, USP in the U.S. market. The drug is a therapeutic equivalent generic version of Xeloda (capecitabine) Tablets, used in the treatment of certain types of cancers. Xeloda is a trademark of Hoffmann-La Roche Inc.

## Cabinet approves PLI plan for telecom

Incremental output estimated at ₹2.4 lakh cr., MSMEs to get a leg up; 40,000 jobs may be created

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the production-linked incentive scheme for the telecom sector with an outlay of ₹12,195 crore over five years.

The scheme, which aims to make India a global hub for manufacturing telecom equipment, is expected to lead to an incremental production of about ₹2.4 lakh crore, with exports of about ₹2 lakh crore over five years and bring in investments of more than ₹3,000 crore.

"The implementation of PLI scheme in telecom manufacturing will start from April 1, 2021," said Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. "Many international players are keen to come to India. We will encourage them and also dom-



Raking it in: The scheme is expected to generate tax revenue of ₹17,000 crore from equipment making, says Prasad. ■ PTI

estic manufacturers," he added.

## Import dependence cut

The Minister added that the scheme was also likely to generate 40,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities and generate tax revenue of ₹17,000 crore from

telecom equipment manufacturing, including core transmission equipment, 4G/5G Next Generation Radio Access Network and wireless equipment, access and Customer Premises Equipment (CPE), Internet of Things (IoT) access devices, other wireless equipment

and enterprise equipment such as switches and routers.

According to an official release, the core 'component' of this scheme is to offset the import of telecom equipment worth more than ₹50,000 crore.

The Minister added that the approval for the scheme followed the success of PLI-scheme related to mobile and component manufacturing. Under this, ₹34,000 crore investment has been made by some of the top mobile companies, he said, adding that the government planned to bring similar incentives for laptops and tablet manufacturing.

For inclusion of MSMEs in the scheme, the minimum investment threshold has been kept at ₹10 crore, while for others it is ₹100 crore. For MSMEs, a 1% higher in-

centive is also proposed in the first three years.

"Once qualified, the investor will be incentivised up to 20 times of minimum investment threshold enabling them to utilise their unused capacity," the government said.

"With the telecom industry going through a very difficult phase, this move of the government would surely incentivise telecom service providers," who opt for equipment manufactured locally, thus saving on substantial costs relating to imports.

"While we need to wait and see as to whether there will be many takers for this scheme, surely it appears that these developments are on the right path towards self-sufficiency."

Tony Verghese, partner, J. Sagar Associates.

## Start-ups must create world-class products: PM

'Establish long-lasting institutions'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Start-ups in India should not focus only on valuations and exit strategies, but on creating institutions that will outlast this century and products that set the global benchmark on excellence, to help India become a global leader in technology, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday.

Speaking at the Nasscom Technology and Leadership Forum (NTLF), the Prime Minister told the leaders of the IT industry that while they had ensured that "our technology is more and more made in India, I urge that your solutions should also have the mark of Make

for India."

"So, I have a message for my start-up founders," said Mr. Modi. "Do not limit yourself to just valuations and exit strategies. Think how you can create institutions that will outlast this century," he added.

## RBI issues rules for home finance firms

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The RBI on Wednesday issued directives to housing finance companies (HFCs) on maintenance of liquidity coverage ratio, risk management, asset classification and loan-to-value ratio. It said the directions, took immediate effect and were aimed at protecting the interests of investors and depositors.

"All non-deposit taking HFCs with asset size of ₹100 crore and above and all deposit-taking HFCs shall pursue liquidity risk management, [adhering] to gap limits, making use of liquidity risk monitoring tools and adoption of stock approach to liquidity risk."

In a separate communiqué to stock exchanges, Bharti Airtel said its board, at a meeting held on Wednesday, had constituted a 'Special Committee of Directors' to consider and evaluate in detail 'various op-

## Bharti Airtel to buy out Warburg in DTH arm

Warburg arm to get ₹3,126 cr. for 20%

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Wednesday said it would acquire 20% stake in Bharti Telemedia, its DTH arm, from an affiliate of Warburg Pincus for ₹3,126 crore. The amount will be discharged via issuance of about 36.47 million equity shares of Bharti Airtel at a price of ₹600 per share and up to ₹1,037.80 crore in cash, the company said in a statement.

In a separate communiqué to stock exchanges, Bharti Airtel said its board, at a meeting held on Wednesday, had constituted a 'Special Committee of Directors' to consider and evaluate in detail 'various op-



tions for re-organisation of businesses and shareholding structure of the company' for possible 'unlocking of value for shareholders'.

A Warburg Pincus affiliate had, in December 2017, agreed to acquire a 20% equity stake in Bharti Telemedia.

## Don't permit Future Group meetings'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHENNAI

Amazon has approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) urging it not to allow convening of any meeting of Future Group's shareholders or creditors for approval of its proposed ₹24,713-crore deal with Reliance Industries.

Amazon had last week filed the application before the Mumbai bench of the NCLT. The NCLT has reserved the order over the scheme of arrangement that entails the consolidation of Future Group's retail and wholesale business and transferring them to Reliance Industries in the deal announced last year.

Amazon has approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) urging it not to allow convening of any meeting of Future Group's shareholders or creditors for approval of its proposed ₹24,713-crore deal with Reliance Industries.

## India headed for major recovery in ad spends'

Ad expenditure to rise 23.2%: GroupM

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

India is expected to see a 'major recovery' in advertisement expenditure in 2021 following the slump the sector saw last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In its report, 'This Year, Next Year' 2021, GroupM predicted that India's advertising investment would reach an estimated ₹80,123 crore this year. This represents a growth of 23.2%, for the calendar year 2021.

India is the second-fastest growing market among the top 10 and will be the sixth-largest contributor to incremental ad spends in 2021 globally. In 2020, "the pandemic affected media in-

## Union Budget's good ideas dogged by bad timing: Sen

'Privatisation, bad bank could hurt'

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The privatisation of public sector enterprises (PSEs) announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22 is a good idea coming at the wrong time, noted economist and former Chief Statistician of India Pronab Sen said on Wednesday, arguing that it may end up dampening growth prospects by crowding out fresh investments.

"For the first time, the word privatisation has been actively used in the Budget," Mr. Sen said. "I have absolutely no problems with privatisation but I do have a problem with the timing of privatisation," he added.

"At the end of the day, regardless of what is happening on the stock market, privatisation is best done when the economy is booming. It is a terrible idea when the economy is in a slump," he said during a discussion on the Budget's implications hosted by the PHD Chamber of Commerce.

"In this case, the intent is for the financial sector to set up a bad bank, offload their stressed assets and then the ARC will get around to disposing those assets off," he said.

"Think about what will happen – banks themselves will be taking a part of their current resources to fund the bad bank. All else aside, the funds they will have left available for industry's current demand are going to be further eroded. It's not a bad idea, I support it... but the timing is wrong," he said. "In economics, a good idea implemented at the wrong time is a bad idea," he summed up.

## SEBI eases public offer norms

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

SEBI on Wednesday approved a slew of proposals, including for relaxing minimum public offer norms.

Issuers

# Lights, camera, auction: 292 players to go under the hammer

Franchises, depending upon their requirement, will try to augment winnability by securing the right combinations

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

The IPL auction to be held here on Thursday carries with it several possibilities and combinations.

Actually, this would have been a full-fledged auction but for the addition of two more franchises to make IPL a 10-team event in 2022. In all, 292 players will be in the fray, including 128 foreigners.

How teams fill their holes will depend on the purse left with them and the slots available, particularly in the overseas section.

Champion Mumbai Indians has released two overseas pacemen, James Pattinson and Nathan Coulter-Nile.

#### Overseas paceman

It will surely be on the lookout for an overseas paceman. Among those in the fray are Jhye Richardson, the pacy Riley Meredith, Chris Morris, Jason Behrendorff and New Zealand's exciting find Kyle Jamieson.

Interestingly, among the

- Punjab Kings has the biggest purse available to spend – ₹53.20 crore
- Many franchises are likely to bid for Shakib
- It would be interesting to see how the domestic players fare

pacemen in the fray is left-arm Arjun Tendulkar.

There is also a possibility that Mumbai Indians could buy back Coulter-Nile, handy with the bat as well, at a lesser price; one of the strategies franchises adopt.

India's Umesh Yadav is also available. Domestic pacemen lend their side greater flexibility.

There are a number of explosive batsmen in the mix – Glenn Maxwell, Alex Hales and Jason Roy. Also in the auction are the formidable Steve Smith, released by Royals, and Dawid Malan, among the most successful batsmen in T20 cricket in recent times.

Different teams could be vying for star left-arm spinning all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan.

rent needs. For instance, Chennai Super Kings will be seeking an off-spinner after it released Harbhajan Singh.

CSK could go for Maxwell, the explosive batsman can also send down off-spin. Moeen Ali could also be in its radar. The Chennai franchise might also be eyeing K. Gowtham, a successful off-spinning all-rounder in domestic cricket, who has had his moments in the IPL.

Several teams could be vying for star left-arm spinning all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan.

#### Bigestt purse

Among the franchises, Punjab Kings has the maximum money available to spend – ₹53.20 crore. The franchise could shop extensively in the overseas market and could rope in Smith for stability in its middle-order.

Among the local cricketers in the fray are Shivam Dube, Sheldon Jackson, Mohammed Azharuddeen, Shahrkhan Khan, Vishnu Solanki, B. Aparajith and M. Siddharth.

Different teams have diffe-

**Auction gameplan** A look at how the teams are likely to approach the IPL mini-auction on Thursday:



**Delhi Capitals:**  
A quality third seamer and a back-up all-rounder for Marcus Stoinis will top its list despite a limited budget.

Purse available: ₹13.40 crore; Slots: 8 (Overseas 3)



**Kolkata Knight Riders:**  
Needs an opener after the Sunil Narine experiment didn't work in the UAE. A back-up for the injury-prone Andre Russell will also be high on its agenda.

Purse available: ₹10.75 cr; Slots: 8 (Overseas 2)



**Rajasthan Royals:**  
A dependable pacer to support Jofra Archer, more firepower in batting and a quality all-rounder will be Royals' focus. The void created by the release of Steve Smith and trading of Robin Uthappa also needs to be filled.

**Completed trade:**  
1 (Robin Uthappa to Chennai Super Kings)

**Purse available:** ₹37.85 crore; **Slots:** 9 (Overseas 3)

**Chennai Super Kings:** Has an overseas slot remaining and is likely to go for an opening batsman or all-rounder. With no off-spinner in its ranks, it will seek Indian options.

Purse available: ₹19.9 crore; Slots: 6 (Overseas 1)

**Punjab Kings (formerly Kings XI Punjab):** After struggling with its bowling in IPL-13, especially at the back-end of the innings, it will look for fast bowlers, both Indian and overseas, to shore up its attack.

Purse available: ₹53.20 crore; Slots: 9 (Overseas 5)



**Sunrisers Hyderabad:** Though it doesn't have too much money remaining, it will raise the pitch for a big-hitting batsman or an all-rounder.

Purse available: ₹10.75 cr; Slots: 3 (Overseas 1)



**Royal Challengers Bangalore:** Will be keen to address its biggest problem: lack of quality finishers in the middle-order. Having released Chris Morris and Moeen Ali, it will seek replacements for both. It will also search for an opener in the market after letting Aaron Finch go. **Completed trades:**

2 (Daniel Sams and Harshal Patel from Delhi Capitals)



**Mumbai Indians:** With its first-choice XI ready, it will look to bolster its bench-strength. It is likely to go all out for home talent Shivam Dube to boost its battery of big-hitting all-rounders.

Purse available: ₹15.35 cr; Slots: 7 (Overseas 4)



**IN THE FRAY**  
292 Number of players  
164 Indians  
125 Overseas  
3 players from Associate Nations

#### ON THE RADAR

**OVERSEAS:** Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith, Moeen Ali, Shakib Al Hasan, Mark Wood, Sam Billings, Liam Plunkett, Jason Roy (all ₹2 crore base price); Dawid Malan (₹1.5 crore), Mustafizur Rahman (₹1 crore); Kyle Jamieson, Chris Morris (₹75 lakh)

**INDIANS:** Harbhajan Singh, Kedar Jadhav (₹2 crore); Umesh Yadav (₹1 crore), Karun Nair, Piyush Chawla, Shivam Dube, Gurkeerat Mann (₹50 lakh)

**UNCAPPED:** Arjun Tendulkar, Lukman Meriwala, Sheldon Jackson, M. Shahrukh Khan, Mohammed Azharuddeen, M. Siddharth, Khrievitso Kense, K. Gowtham (₹20 lakh)

**PLAYERS TRADED:**  
Harshal Patel, Daniel Sams (DC to RCB), Robin Uthappa (RR to CSK)

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 3 P.M. | COMPILED BY AMOL KARHADKAR, S. DIPAK RAGAV, ASHWIN ACHAL AND P.K. AJITH KUMAR

#### IN BRIEF

**Harden and Harris bail Nets out**

PHOENIX

James Harden amassed 38 points and 11 assists and Joe Harris added 22 points as the short-handed Brooklyn Nets rallied from a 24-point deficit to win 128-124 against the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday.

**The results:** Toronto bt Milwaukee 124-113; LA Lakers bt Minnesota 112-104; New Orleans bt Memphis 144-113.

#### FC Goa gets back to winning ways

MARGAO

FC Goa returned to winning ways, after six consecutive draws, with a resounding 3-1 victory over Odisha FC in their Indian Super League encounter here on Wednesday.

**The result:** FC Goa 3 (Alberto Nogueira 18, Jorge Ortiz 26, Ivan Gonzalez 75) bt Odisha FC 1 (Diego Mauricio 30).

**Thursday's match:** CFC vs NEUFC.

#### Chauhan, Arora win

CHANDIGARH

Aditya Chauhan and Vanya Arora sailed to the boys' and girls' titles in the AITA Championship series junior tennis tournament at the CLTA Complex on Wednesday. **The results (finals):**  
**Under-16: Boys:** Aditya Chauhan bt Ekamjeet Singh Cheema 6-3, 6-0. **Girls:** Vanya Arora bt Rubani Kaur Sidhu 6-1, 6-2.

#### Inter-Ministry badminton

NEW DELHI

The inter-Ministry badminton tournament will be played at the AIIMS Gymkhana from March 1 to 12. Entries close on Feb. 19 with Ashwani Kumar, CCSCSB, Room No.316-A, Loknayak Bhawan, Khan Market, New Delhi-110003.

## Tsitsipas roars back to knock out Nadal

Muchova packs off Barty; Medvedev beats Rublev

#### AUSTRALIAN OPEN

REUTERS  
MELBOURNE

Rafael Nadal's bid for a record 21st Grand Slam title came crashing to a halt at the Australian Open on Wednesday as Stefanos Tsitsipas rose up to topple the Spaniard 3-6, 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-4, 7-5 and reach the semifinals.

World No. 2 Nadal had not lost a set coming into the evening clash at Rod Laver Arena and looked on target for a semifinal berth at Melbourne Park after roaring to a two-set lead over the Greek.



#### THE DAY IN NUMBERS

1 Only once before had Nadal lost a Grand Slam match after being two sets to love up – to Fognini, 2015 US Open, R3

2 Tsitsipas had beaten a top-10 player at a Major only once before – Federer, 2019 Australian Open, R16

4 The defeat was Rublev's fourth straight slam quarterfinal loss

4 All four of Barty's defeats at Majors since winning the 2019 French Open have come against players ranked outside the top-10

35 Number of consecutive sets Nadal had won at Grand Slam matches starting from the 2020 French Open first round till he lost the third set to Tsitsipas

311 After Nadal's loss, Djokovic will celebrate his 311th week as World No.1 on March 8, going past Federer's all-time record



#### THURSDAY'S PICKS

##### MEN

1-Djokovic vs Karatsev

##### WOMEN

3-Osaka vs 10-Serena

22-Brady vs 25-Muchova

I tried my best in every single moment... I think I stayed positive all the time during the match, fighting, and it was not enough. Sometimes it's enough, today was not enough

I started very nervously. I don't know what happened after the third set, I flew like a little bird. Everything worked

It's the first time I saw Andrei that tired. We always laugh about him, that he's like a battery, like Duracell or something. I actually managed to get him tired

Medvedev after beating compatriot Rublev

#### THE RESULTS

##### Quarterfinals

**Men:** 5-Stefanos Tsitsipas (Gre) bt 2-Rafael Nadal (Esp) 3-6, 2-6, 7-6(4), 6-4, 7-5.

4-Daniil Medvedev (Rus) bt 7-Andrey Rublev (Rus) 7-5, 6-3, 6-2.

**Women:** 25-Karolina Muchova (Cze) bt 1-Ashleigh Barty (Aus) 1-6, 6-3, 6-2.

22-Jennifer Brady (USA) bt Jessica Pegula (USA) 4-6, 6-2, 6-1.

#### Indian team for final two Tests

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

The National selectors have included pacer Umesh Yadav, subject to fitness, in place of Shardul Thakur, who has been released to join Mumbai's campaign in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, for the last two matches of the Test series against England.

**The squad:** Virat Kohli (Capt.), Ajinkya Rahane (Vice-Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, K.L. Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Wriddhiman Saha, R. Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, and Umesh Yadav (subject to fitness).

## Du Plessis retires from Tests, to focus on T20s

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
CAPE TOWN

Former South Africa captain Faf du Plessis retired from Test cricket on Wednesday after being denied the chance of a home farewell by Australia's decision to cancel next month's tour.

Du Plessis, who played 69 Tests, said in a statement on his Instagram account that it was time to "walk into a new chapter". He will concentrate on T20s, the 36-year-old batsman said, with World Cups in that format this year and next.



#### NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

##### M-10 Academy triumphs

M-10 Academy beat West Delhi Academy by 114 runs to win the RCC under-13 tournament.

**The scores:** M-10 Academy 214 in 37.3 overs (Vivaan Jindal 57, Madhur Yadav 42, Aryan Kumar 3/24, Udit Narain 3/34) bt WDA 100 in 29.5 overs (Saheb Wahi 3/18, Moksh Anand 3/34).

**Gyanti, RCC Club post wins**  
Ishan Negi 83 and Ritik Rajesh 70 n.o.; RCC Club 130 in 27 overs (Sarthak Pal 41, Ishmeet Singh 5/22) bt Harry Academy 59 in 21.3 overs (Yakshal Kumar 3/4, Shubham Kumar 2/7).

**Easy for Haryana Academy**  
A 234-run third-wicket stand between Kuldeep Dewatwal (154) and Avneesh Sudha (153) saw Haryana Academy beat Rann Star Club by 180 runs in the Niz Sports u-19 tournament.

**The scores:** Haryana Academy 355/4 in 40 overs (Kuldeep Dewatwal 154, Avneesh Sudha 153) bt RSC 175/3 in 36 overs (Keshav Dalal 3/21, Mohit Malik 3/22).

**Centuries for Yash, Arpit**  
Arpit Rana and Yash Dhull (Raghav Kumar 4/38).

slammed centuries as Bal Bhawan Academy beat Sporting Club by 102 runs in the Kiran Chopra memorial Under-18 tournament.

**The scores:</b**

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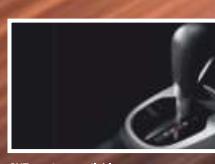
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