

**BYJU'S IAS**

Attend a FREE ONLINE WORKSHOP on
How to read the newspaper
for Civil Services Examination

Workshop Highlights

- The significance of newspaper reading for success
- What to read and what not to read from a newspaper
- How to make notes of newspaper articles
- Ideal time to devote to newspaper reading

Date: January 24, 2021 | Time: 11 AM

Register now <https://byjus.com/ias-workshop>

Outstanding performance by
BYJU'S students in UPSC CSE 2019

04 Ranks in Top 10 | 09 Ranks in Top 20 | 13 Ranks in Top 50 | 22 Ranks in Top 50



RANK 03



RANK 06



RANK 08



RANK 10

NEARBY**5,942 health workers vaccinated in Delhi**

NEW DELHI

On the fourth day of the vaccination drive in Delhi on Thursday, 5,942 healthcare workers were vaccinated, which is the highest so far. However, there were 24 adverse events following immunisation, a government spokesperson said.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

Respond to plea on Mirzapur, says SC

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre, Amazon Prime Video and Excel Entertainment Private Limited to respond to a plea against web series *Mirzapur* that says it has "completely tarnished" the image of the place by showing it as a "city of goons".

NEWS ▶ PAGE 9

Level Up IAS
Prelims Master Program (PMP) 2021
60 Days Program Covering Prelims Syllabus
Available Online Fee ₹10,000/-GST
8826486658. 8826496658

Decision on Rajiv case convict soon, SC told

T.N. Governor will take a call on Perarivalan in 3-4 days'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit will take a decision "as per the Constitution" in the next three or four days on a plea for release by A.G. Perarivalan, who is undergoing life imprisonment for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta orally informed the Supreme Court on Thursday.

Mr. Mehta, appearing for the Governor, made the submission before a three-judge Bench, led by Justice L. Narasimha Rao.

The court, however, noted in its short order that the "Solicitor-General submitted that the application filed by the petitioner [Perarivalan] under Article 161 of the Constitution of India shall be considered within four weeks from today. List this matter after four weeks".

Reacting to the variation, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan said Perariva-

Seeking mercy

A brief timeline of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case

Sept. 6, 2018: SC says Governor is at liberty to decide on the remission of Plea of **Perarivalan** "as deemed fit". The convicts – Nalini, T. Suthendrara alias Santhan, Sriharan alias Murugan (Nalini's husband), A.G. Perarivalan alias Arivu, Robert Payas, S. Jayakumar alias Jayakumaran, and Ravichandran alias Ravi – have been in jail for over 27 years

Jan. 21, 2020: SC directs govt. to file a report on the status of a plea for pardon filed by Perarivalan

Jan. 20, 2021: SC orally observes that the case of Perarivalan is "extraordinary" because the Governor has delayed a decision on the State's recommendation for years

alan's side was planning to mention the case in court for a clarification.

Mr. Mehta's submission came on the second day of hearing of a petition filed by Perarivalan, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan and advocate Prabu Ramasubramanian, highlighting the long delay by the Governor to decide on the Tamil Nadu Cabinet recommenda-

tion. Though the submission was made during the hearing of Perarivalan's case, the Cabinet had made the recommendation to remit the life sentences of seven convicts, including Perarivalan, on September 9, 2018. Additional Advocate-General of Tamil Nadu, Balaji Srinivasan, said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Biden begins dismantling Trump legacy

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN

The Biden presidency began with a flurry of activity, with the new President signing 17 executive orders, memos and directives on his first day in office, including on climate change, the pandemic, immigration and equality.

Shortly after being sworn in as the President on Wednesday, Joe Biden began dismantling significant parts of the legacy of his predecessor, Donald Trump, including by officially bringing America back into the Paris Climate Accord. He conveyed his intent to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres via a letter. Consequently, the U.S. would be back in the agreement on February 19, according to Mr. Guterres' spokesperson.

Mr. Biden stopped the U.S.'s withdrawal from the World Health Organization. In a letter to Mr. Guterres, he highlighted the "crucial" role it plays in combating COVID-19 and other health challenges.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

5 die in Serum Institute fire, vaccine facility safe

The victims were contractual labourers



Fire alarm: Workers moving out of the Serum Institute of India campus in Pune on Thursday. ▶ PTI

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

Five persons were killed in a fire that broke out on the fifth floor of an under-construction building of vaccine manufacturing major Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune's Manjari area on Thursday.

The deceased were contractual labourers – two hailing from Uttar Pradesh, two from Pune district and one from Bihar. According to sources, four others were evacuated from the building when the first blaze, said to be caused by an electrical fault, erupted around 2 p.m.

A second blaze, a relatively minor one, occurred at 7

p.m. on the third floor of the building. Both fires have been brought under control, fire officials said.

Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said the fire had not caused any harm to the Covishield vaccine storage facility located at a distance from the spot.

The deceased were contractual labourers – two hailing from Uttar Pradesh, two from Pune district and one from Bihar. According to sources, four others were evacuated from the building when the first blaze, said to be caused by an electrical fault, erupted around 2 p.m.

A second blaze, a relatively minor one, occurred at 7

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Farmers reject proposal to suspend laws for 18 months

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
VIKAS VASUDEVA

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH

Protesting farm unions on Thursday rejected the Centre's proposal to suspend the three farm reform laws for one-and-a-half years. They intend to continue their agitation until the laws are repealed, and a law guaranteeing minimum support price for crops is enacted.

The decision was taken after a five-hour meeting of the full general body of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, a joint front representing about 500 protesting groups, at the Singhu protest site on the Delhi-Haryana border in the evening. The unions will inform the government of their decision at the 11th round of talks with Central Ministers on Friday.

Later in the evening, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar met Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGES 3 & 9

Priyanka on U.P. Cong. calendar fuels speculation

Move raises question whether party is going to project her as its CM face

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

At a time when the Congress is going through a phase of uncertainty with regard to its central leadership, a 2021 calendar prepared by the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee has become a talking point.

Photographs of party general secretary in-charge of U.P. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have been put on every page of the calendar.

A page from the calendar showcasing Priyanka Gandhi. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ment ahead of next year's Assembly elections. Over 10 lakh copies of the calendar are going to be sent across the State.

An All India Congress Committee functionary, who

did not wish to be named, played it down by pointing out that a similar calendar with Rahul Gandhi's photos was prepared for Wayanad, the Congress leader's Lok Sabha constituency in Kerala.

Work highlighted Though the UPCC has not formally released the calendar, each of the 12 pages showcases Ms. Vadra's work: from hugging the mother of the Hathras rape and murder victim to reaching out to victims of violence in a land dispute in Sonbhadra to attending the birth anniversary celebrations of Sant Ravidas in Varanasi.

Ms. Vadra, who used to manage her mother Sonia Gandhi's constituency of Rae Bareli, joined full-time politics in January 2019, months before the Lok Sabha poll.

Appearing before a three-judge Bench led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, senior advocate Harish Salve, for Mr. Mohan, submitted his client heads the commercial office of an American compa-

FB official says he has right to remain silent

Ajit Mohan tells SC he doesn't want to be part of 'polarised debate' on Delhi riots

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Senior Facebook official Ajit Mohan told the Supreme Court on Thursday that he is well within his rights to remain silent and not be compelled by the Peace and Harmony Committee of the Delhi Legislative Assembly to be part of a "politically polarised debate" on the Delhi riots last year.

Appearing before a three-judge Bench led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, senior advocate Harish Salve, for Mr. Mohan, submitted his client heads the commercial office of an American compa-

ny in India. "I don't want to get in the middle of a politically polarised debate," he submitted for Mr. Mohan.

Mr. Salve clarified to the court that he cannot be compelled to appear before the committee even if he is exempted from taking oath.

'Conscientious decision' "It is a conscientious decision. You may criticise me for it. You give oath when you are testifying on facts... I do not wish to appear before the committee. It is a highly polarised political debate. I do not wish to be part of it. I am well within my right to re-

main silent," Mr. Salve emphasised.

Mr. Salve flagged his concerns about the mandate of the Committee, which includes recommending action against whom incriminating evidence for incitement of violence was prima facie found.

Mr. Salve said the Information Technology Act already deals with hate content on the Internet.

Mr. Mohan has accused the Assembly of threatening him with "breach of privilege" if he did not appear before the Committee to testify.

Mr. Salve said the case

highlighted several pertinent questions of law, which includes whether the privileges of the Legislative Assembly of the NCT of Delhi would comprise the power to compel the appearance of non-members.

He said there was no such privilege to summon third parties. "If they have the power to compel appearance, how will it be reconciled with the right to privacy, free speech, and expression, which include the right to silence," Mr. Salve submitted.

He said cooperative federalism did not include the power to do anything.

Palatial mansion of U.P.'s fugitive don demolished

Baddo carries a bounty of ₹2.5 lakh

ANUJ KUMAR

MEERUT

A palatial mansion of Uttar Pradesh's most wanted fugitive don Badan Singh Baddo was razed by the Meerut Development Authority on Thursday. Baddo carries a bounty of ₹2.5 lakh on his head and is wanted in more than 30 cases of murder, extortion and illegal supply of weapons.

Police teams from four police stations, a battalion of Provincial Armed Constabulary and three dozen officials of the MDA were pressed into service as three bulldozers brought the mansion down. Senior police officers remained at the site to ensure law and order as Baddo had got a temple built just behind his house in the narrow lane that connects his mansion to the plot where the house that his father built stood.

The demolition came after a commissioner court set aside the petition of his sister-in-law, Kuldeep Kaur. While Ms. Kaur contended that she bought the bungalow in 2003, the court said she could not provide any map or documentary evi-

Badan Baddo's bungalow being razed in Meerut. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dence to prove her claim. Additional SP Krishna Kumar Bishnoi said he came to the conclusion within 15 days that Baddo had an illegal house in Panjabipura but the Nagar Nigam and the MDA took time in paperwork.

"We figured out that the house tax that Baddo was claiming to pay for the building was actually for the adjacent plot, 8/9 Beripura, where the house built by his father existed. The mansion was built on 1096 Panjabipura. There's no record of it with the MDA, Nagar Nigam, and electricity department," said Mr. Bishnoi.

VISION IAS INSPIRING INNOVATION

LIVE/ONLINE Classes Available www.visionias.in

Heartiest Congratulations To All Successful Candidates

7 IN TOP 10 SELECTIONS IN CSE 2019 from various programs of VISION IAS

FOUNDATION COURSE GENERAL STUDIES PRELIMS CUM MAINS 2022

Hindi माध्यम में भी उपलब्ध

To know more, get FREE Counseling or Register

UPSC GS MAINS 2020 ANALYSIS & INSIGHT

Paper 1 & Paper 2 22 & 23 Jan | 11 AM Live Online on VisionIAS YouTube Channel and VisionIAS Android/IOS App

ALL INDIA GS PRELIMS OPEN MOCK TEST-1

24 JANUARY Register @ www.visionias.in/opentest

DELIJA JAIN PRAKASH VERMA VISHAKHA YADAV GANESH K BASKAR ABHISHEK SARAF RAVI JAIN YOU CAN BE NEXT

PREPARATION UNINTERRUPTED Organize all your lectures and study material effectively & access them from anywhere, anytime.

LIVE / ONLINE cum Offline classes

English Medium 12 Jan 5 PM 11 Feb 5 PM

Hindi माध्यम 21 January | 5 PM

DELHI • HEAD OFFICE: Apsara Arcade, Karol Bagh | CONTACT: 8468022022, 9019066066

JAIPUR 9001949244 PUNE 8007500096 HYDERABAD 9000104133 AHMEDABAD 9909474070 LUCKNOW 8468022022 CHANDIGARH 8468022022 GUWAHATI 8468022022

JATIN VERMA'S IAS ACADEMY admissions@vias.com

88829-32364

www.jatinverma.org

IN BRIEF

Delhi, Gurugram record 'poor' air quality: CPCB
NEW DELHI
The air quality of Delhi and Gurugram was in 'poor' category and Noida's was in 'very poor' category on Thursday, said CPCB data. Delhi's air quality is expected to improve in the coming days. SAFAR.

Air quality of Delhi-NCR	
Delhi	296
Ghaziabad	326
Noida	306
Good	Satisfactory
0-50	51-100
Poor	Very poor
201-300	301-400
>401	Severe
AIR QUALITY INDEX AT 4 P.M. YESTERDAY (AVERAGE OF PAST 24 HOURS) [SOURCE: CPCB]	

SFI, AISF demand reopening of campuses
NEW DELHI
The Students' Federation of India (SFI) and the All India Students' Association (AISA) on Thursday protested outside the MHRD and the UGC, respectively, demanding the reopening of college campuses, disbursal of scholarships and an end to digital divide.

Man arrested for bid to kill woman in Delhi

He suspected she had killed his sister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
A 26-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly trying to kill a woman in south-east Delhi's Badarpur, the police said on Thursday. They said the man suspected that the woman and her family had poisoned his sister in 2018, leading to her death.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) R.P. Meena said that the accused has been identified as Shivam alias Shibbu, a resident of Moladband Extension.

The police said that on January 16, they received an information that a woman had sustained a bullet inju-

5,942 health workers vaccinated, 24 adverse events reported in Delhi

Number of people vaccinated was around 73% of the target for the day

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

On the fourth day of vaccination in Delhi on Thursday, a total of 5,942 healthcare workers were vaccinated, which is the highest number so far. However, there were 24 adverse events following immunisation (AEFI), the Delhi government spokesperson said.

The number of people vaccinated on Thursday was about 73.3% of the target of 8,100 for the day. On the first day of the vaccination on January 16, 4,319 healthcare workers were vaccinated. On Monday, the figure was 3,598 and it was 4,936 on Tuesday.

Of the 24 AEFI on Thursday, 22 were "minor" cases while there were two cases of hospitalisation.

Delhi uses both vaccines



Delhi has been using both Covaxin and Covishield vaccines from the first day of vaccination. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

for COVID-19, Covaxin and Covishield, from the first day. Of the 24 AEFI, 22 were from using Covishield and two from Covaxin. While the 22 cases from using Covishield were minor, the two cases from Covaxin were hospitalised.

There are a total of 81 vaccination sites in the city and each has a list of about 100 beneficiaries to be vaccinated every day. Initially, only healthcare workers, whose names were on the list, were allowed to get the vaccination.

On Tuesday, the Central government allowed people who are not on the list, but have been registered on the

CoWIN platform earlier, to be vaccinated. This is one of the major reasons for the increase in numbers, according to officials.

Creating awareness

"Today, 100 healthcare workers were vaccinated in our hospital. We have been counselling our staffers for the last two to three days. A 10-member team has been working on this and telling our staffers that the vaccine is safe and there are no problems," Suresh Kumar, Medical Director of Lok Nayak Hospital told *The Hindu*.

Multiple Delhi government officials said that they have directed heads of hospitals in their districts to request senior doctors to get the vaccine shots to motivate the staffers.

Delhi reports 227 new virus cases, 8 deaths

81,550 tests were done in 24 hours

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Delhi witnessed 227 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases in the city to 6,33,276, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Thursday.

COVID-19

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,33,276	10,782
227	8

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

The positivity rate of COVID-19 cases was 0.28% on Thursday and the overall positivity till now is 6.24%, as per the bulletin.

Containment zones

There were 2,107 containment zones in Delhi as on Thursday.

Out of the total 9,103 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the national capital, 8,099 beds were vacant.

DMRC Phase-IV tunnelling drive begins

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation began the first tunnelling drive on the upcoming Phase-IV network on a 1.4-km stretch between Vikaspuri and Krishnakunj Extension on Thursday.

The tunnelling began from Vikaspuri in continuation of the Magenta Line tunnel, which was constructed for the currently operational Botanical Garden-Janakpuri West corridor, officials said.

DMRC spokesperson Anuj Dayal said: "Two parallel circular tunnels for up and down movement will be constructed on this stretch, which is part of the 2.2-km-long underground section from Janakpuri West to Keshupur. The lowering and assembling process of this 73-metre machine began in October last year."

Man arrested for bid to kill woman in Delhi

He suspected she had killed his sister

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI
A 26-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly trying to kill a woman in south-east Delhi's Badarpur, the police said on Thursday. They said the man suspected that the woman and her family had poisoned his sister in 2018, leading to her death.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East) R.P. Meena said that the accused has been identified as Shivam alias Shibbu, a resident of Moladband Extension.

The police said that on January 16, they received an information that a woman had sustained a bullet inju-

HC raps authorities over dues to civic body workers

'Delhi govt., municipal bodies do not care about poor employees and pensioners'

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday pulled up the authorities for not paying salaries and pensions to employees of the civic bodies here, saying that the Delhi government and the municipal corporations "do not care about the poor employees and retired pensioners at all".

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli directed the Delhi government to transfer back to the civic bodies the amount recovered or adjusted from them against their outstanding loans within two weeks.

"In our view, the deduction of loan made by the Delhi government in these cir-



cumstances is not called for, particularly when the recovery of loan by the civic bodies had been in consideration for the last over three years," the High Court said.

During the hearing, Justice Sanghi said: "I can't tell you how disgusted we are with all of you [Delhi government and civic bodies]. You are behaving completely irrespon-

sibly and do not care about the poor employees and retired pensioners at all."

The court also wondered why the authorities would not pay the *safai karamcharis*. If they do not come for work from tomorrow, let us see how your houses and hospitals are cleaned then, the Bench remarked, adding: "We are ashamed of you and your leaders... the way you are behaving."

The court was hearing various petitions relating to non-payment of salaries of employees and pensioners by the three municipal corporations of Delhi.

The court also questioned as to how the Delhi government had money for huge

advertisements in newspapers regularly during the pandemic and warned it of an inquiry and audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

Ads during pandemic

"How much have you spent on advertisements during the pandemic... we want to know. We will order an inquiry and order by the CAG," it said.

The court ordered the Delhi government to file an affidavit on the amount, which, according to it, is liable to be paid to the civic bodies. It also directed the corporations to file respective affidavits disclosing their expenditures since April 2020. The police rushed to the spot

Man held for stealing jewellery worth ₹20 cr.

He stole from his employer's showroom

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

and found that most of the ornaments on the ground floor were missing and the locks of the drawers were broken. They found that the accused had entered from the third floor.

CCTV footage of the showroom showed a person stealing the jewellery. Rahman was on leave on January 10. "He was traced to Karol Bagh and nabbed. The stolen jewellery and ₹23,000 were recovered from him," DCP (South-East) Rajendra Prasad Meena said. He told the police that he had been allegedly harassed by his colleagues and to teach them a lesson, he planned the theft.

REPUBLIC DAY 2021

HELP US SERVE YOU BETTER

Invites to the Republic Day 2021 function at the Rajpath are requested not to bring the following prohibited items:

आमंत्रित अतिथियों से अनुरोध है कि राजपथ पर गणतंत्र दिवस 2021 के समारोह में निम्नलिखित प्रतिबंधित वस्तुएं साथ में न लाएँ:

Entry strictly through invitation card/ticket only.
प्रवेश सिर्फ आमंत्रण पत्र/टिकट के द्वारा ही होगा।

Prohibited Items	
	Particulars / विवरण
	Eatables खाने-पीने की चीजें
	Bag, Briefcase थैला, ब्रीफकेस
	Radio, Transistor, Tape Recorder, CD, DVD, MP3 Players रेडियो, ट्रांजिस्टर, टेपरिकॉर्डर, सीडी, डिस्केटर, एमपी3 प्लेयर
	Camera, Binocular, Handycam कैमरा, दूरबीन, हैण्डीकैम
	Thermos Flasks, Water Bottles, Cans थर्मस फ्लैक्स, जल बोतल, कैन
	Inflammable Items, Match Boxes ज्वलनशील पदार्थ, दिवासलाई आई-पैड, आई-पोड, पाम टाप/लैपटॉप, कम्प्यूटर, पावर बैटरी
	Various Electronic Gadgets, Devices e. g. I-Pad, I-Pod, Palm Top/Laptop, Computer, Tablets, Power Bank etc.

विभिन्न इलैक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों जैसे आई-पैड, आई-पोड, पाम टाप/लैपटॉप, कम्प्यूटर, पावर बैटरी लैनिंग विल्डरिंग के साथ भेजना न हो।

Any unidentified object, if noticed, may be brought to the notice of the nearest Security Personnel.
यदि, कोई लावारिस वस्तु दिखाई दे, तो निकटतम सुरक्षाकर्मी के नोटिस में लाएं।

Please co-operate with the police for searching/frisking.
कृपया तलाशी देने में पुलिस के साथ सहयोग करें।

Please be alert to your surroundings.
कृपया अपने आस पास नजर रखें।

Keeping in mind the threat of Covid-19, don't forget to wear face mask/cover and maintain Social Distancing.
कोविड-19 के खतरे को ध्यान में रखते हुए फेस मास्क/कवर पहनना और दूसरों से उचित दूरी बनाए रखना भूलें।

E-mail to CP, Delhi at: cp.snsrivastava@delhipolice.gov.in | Write to: CP, Delhi at P.O. Box. No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

DP/9264/2021

YOU CAN BE... OUR EYES & EARS

DELHI POLICE
SHANTI SEWA NYAYA

YOU CAN BE... OUR EYES & EARS

AS WE FIGHT CRIME & TERRORISM

JOIN THE DELHI POLICE "EYES & EARS" SCHEME
CALL 1090 TO REPORT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS

YOUR IDENTITY WILL BE KEPT SECRET

E-mail to CP, Delhi at: cp.snsrivastava@delhipolice.gov.in
Write to CP, Delhi at P.O. Box No. 171, GPO, New Delhi

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

DP/9265/2021

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning & hail likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh and Muzaffarabad. Dense/very dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Bihar

CITY **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN** **CITY** **RAIN** **MAX** **MIN**

Agartala	...-23.6	17.1	Kozhikode	...-33.8	24.8
Ahmedabad	-30.4	14.0	Kurnool	-34.2	19.5
Aizawl	6	18.0	Lucknow	-22.7	9.2
Allahabad	-23.9	8.5	Madurai	-32.4	23.8
Bengaluru	-31.1	17.0	Mangalore	-33.9	21.0
Bhopal	-27.6	9.6	Mumbai	-30.8	18.2
Bhubaneswar	-29.8	20.2	Mysuru	-32.2	17.8
Chandigarh	-21.2	8.6	New Delhi	-22.8	7.4
Chennai	-31.9	24.1	Patna	-21.5	9.8
Coimbatore	-31.3	22.0	Port Blair	-31.4	22.6
Dehradun	-20.8	-	Puducherry	-32.2	16.1
Gangtok	-10.7	5.8	Pune	-31.2	15.4
Goa	-33.0	21.2	Raipur	-25.6	9.8
Guwahati	-19.9	15.0	Ranchi	-14.2	4.9
Hubballi	-31.0	17.0	Shillong	-16.4	5.8
Hyderabad	-32.6	16.7	Shimla	-16.4	5.8
Imphal	-5.8	21.6	Srinagar	-9.0	7.5
Jaipur	-26.0	11.0	Thiruvananthapuram	-32.3	24.8
Kochi	-32.0	24.4	Tiruchi	-32.3	22.6
Kohima	-15.6	4.0	Vijayawada	-33.2	20.0
Kolkata	-27.0	14.6	Visakhapatnam	-29.5	22.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES **SO₂** **NO_x** **CO** **PM_{2.5}** **PM₁₀** **CODE**

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	22	95	56	.187	170	■■■■■
Bengaluru	5	63	24	.96	.99	■■■■■
Chennai	-14	29	116	.104	104	■■■■■
Delhi	-7	295	19	.315	.177	■■■■■
Hyderabad	.8	57	14	.119	.127	■■■■■
Kolkata	43	23	45	.335	.229	■■■■■
Lucknow	12	57	59	.299	.254	■■■■■
Mumbai	49	120	32	.241	.201	■■■■■
Pune	-118	49	81	.80	.80	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	20	.70	44	.203	.151	■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)
SO₂: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_x: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM_{2.5} & PM₁₀: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Deferment of new laws not part of demand: farmers

Protesters claim Central government offering suspension as a tool to appease them ahead of Punjab Assembly polls in 2022

SHINJINI GHOSH NEW DELHI

The farmers at the Singhu border, while rejecting the Centre's proposal of suspending the three controversial farm laws for 18 months, said the deferment was not their demand and reiterated a full repeal.

The protesters from Delhi's neighbouring States have been at the city's borders for nearly two months now, demanding a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price and a repeal of the three agriculture laws brought in by the Centre.

Several protesters on Thursday alleged that the proposal to suspend the laws for a certain period of time was the government's tool to appease the farmers ahead of Punjab Assembly polls in 2022.

Daljit Singh, 61, from Pun-



Farmers protesting at the Singhu border in Delhi on Thursday.
■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

jab's Patiala, on Wednesday, said: "Almost three decades ago, a similar protest had taken place in Punjab that lasted for a month. It has taken these many years for such a large movement to take place. It is not easy to gather

tens of thousands of people. By proposing things like deferment of the implementation of the laws, the government is simply hoping that people would calm down. The Centre also has to keep in mind the upcoming

elections."

Stating that the government was "wary" of the proposed tractor rally on Republic Day, Mr. Singh said: "They [government] are worried about the rally. This is not just a small movement. Often political leaders have no clue about what farming actually entails and instead they end up making policies for profit only. Every five years, they come to us with folded hands, asking for votes. After the elections, they make the citizens fold their hands and beg to them for basic rights."

Gurjeet Singh, another farmer from Patiala said: "What will the government do in 18 months? If this proposal is accepted then the scenario will end up being the same after one and a half years. We are not going to go back... the government has

to accept our demands."

Several farmers like Sikander Singh from Punjab's Moga district, were of the opinion that "one could not depend on what the government is saying."

"The government and the Prime Minister say a lot of things but we all know how much truth there is. How can we suddenly accept this proposal of deferment by 18 months? We cannot accept anything apart from the laws being repealed," he said.

Tractors on the way

The agitating farmers also said thousands of tractors were on their way to the national capital for the upcoming Republic Day parade.

Amritpal Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Rajgarh village, said, "We reached the Singhu border on Thursday

and on our way, we saw thousands of tractors on their way to the border. Each village is sending 10 tractors each at least and they are even bringing reinforcements including ration."

Many of the farmers, who have been at the Singhu border since the first day of the protest, said even if the farm unions accepted the government's proposal, those who had assembled for the agitation were not ready to leave without the laws being repealed.

Sukhjeet Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Patiala district said, "We will fight for our rights before dying. What began on November 26 as a march to Delhi will culminate with thousands participating in the parade on January 26," said Mr. Singh.

Talks with police fail, farmers stay firm on tractor rally route

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

Even on the second day, the meeting between the police and farmer unions regarding the proposed tractor rally on January 26 remained inconclusive.

JCP (Northern Range) S.S. Yadav coordinated the meeting held at Mantram Resort near the Singhu border on Thursday.

The farmers said the police officers had tried to convince them to hold the rally on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway instead of the Outer Ring Road but in vain.

A farmer leader said: "The government wants us to take out our rally outside Delhi but we won't. No deci-

sion was taken in today's [Thursday] meeting."

An officer said they have proposed a shorter route inside Delhi for farmers' tractor rally but they want to go on their proposed route on Outer Ring Road.

The meeting was also attended by Special Commissioner (Law and Order-Western Zone) Sanjay Singh, Special Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) Dependra Pathak and other senior officers from Delhi, Haryana and U.P. police.

A similar meeting was held on Wednesday between the union leaders and officers of Delhi, U.P. and Haryana police at Vigyan Bhawan to discuss the route of the proposed rally on Jan. 26.

Advisory for full dress rehearsal

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police on Thursday issued an advisory in place to ensure smooth conduct of full dress rehearsal on Saturday for January 26.

The rehearsal will start at 9.50 a.m. on Saturday from Vijay Chowk and proceed to the National Stadium, they said. Traffic movement on certain roads leading to the parade's route will be restricted and no traffic will be allowed on Vijay Chowk from 6 p.m. on Saturday, said JCP (Traffic) Manish Kumar Agarwal.

NEETU SINGH Geography

- Mapping Classes
- Optional Online
- GS - Modules

8 FEB

DIRECTION Ultimate Learning Ex. Pvt Ltd.
14A/103, WEA, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-05
PH : 011-25719862/872 (M) 9810382305

भारतीय प्रबंध संस्थान शिलांग

Indian Institute of Management Shillong

IIM Shillong invites application to the following programmes:

1. PGPEX - Managing Business in Emerging Economy: Full time One Year residential programme for participants willing to gain experiential learning.
2. MBA (Working Executives): 2 year weekend hybrid mode programme for participants desiring a professional education.

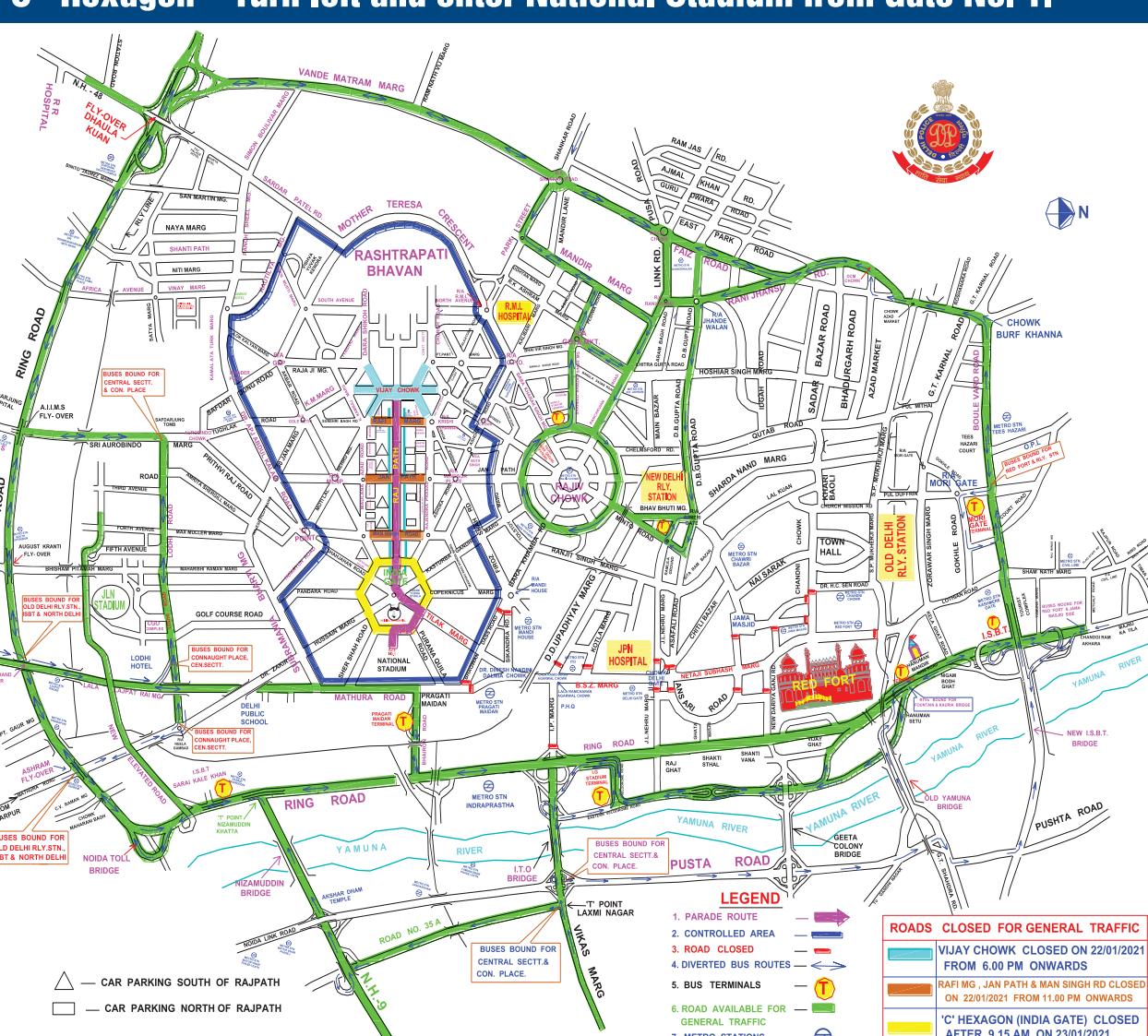
Last date for Online application is 31st January 2021.

For detailed programme information please visit our website www.iimshillong.ac.in

TRAFFIC ADVISORY FOR REPUBLIC DAY FULL DRESS REHEARSAL ON 23RD JANUARY, 2021



ROUTE OF PARADE: Vijay Chowk ▷ Rajpath ▷ Amar Jawan Jyoti ▷ India Gate ▷ R/A Princess Palace ▷ T/L Tilak Marg Radial Road ▷ Turn right on "C" Hexagon ▷ Turn left and enter National Stadium from Gate No. 1.



INSTRUCTIONS TO GENERAL PUBLIC

- In case, any unidentified object or suspicious person is seen, information must be conveyed to the nearest policeman on duty.
- Flying of sub conventional aerial platforms like para-giders, para motors, hang gliders, UAVs, UASs, microlight aircrafts, remotely piloted aircrafts, hot air balloons, small size powered aircrafts, quadcopters or para jumping from aircraft etc., are prohibited over the jurisdiction of National Capital Territory of Delhi from 20.01.2021 up to 15.02.2021 (both days inclusive).
- General public and motorists are requested to keep patience, observe traffic rules & road discipline and follow directions of traffic personnel deployed at all intersections. People are requested to plan their journey in advance and keep sufficient time in hand to avoid inconvenience.

Be a Traffic Sentinel

Download App from



24 HOURS TRAFFIC HELPLINE 011-25844444/1095

TO SHARE INFORMATION CALL 1090

FOR IMMEDIATE POLICE HELP CALL 112

In connection with the Republic Day Celebrations-2021, there will be a Full Dress Rehearsal on 23rd January 2021. The Parade rehearsal will start at 09.50 AM on 23.01.2021 from Vijay Chowk & will proceed to National Stadium. There would be elaborate traffic arrangements and restrictions in place for smooth conduct of the Parade along the route.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS

In order to facilitate smooth passage of the Parade, movement of traffic on certain roads leading to the route of the Parade will be restricted as under:

- (1) No traffic will be allowed on Vijay Chowk from 06.00 PM on 22nd Jan, 2021 till Parade is over.
- (2) No cross traffic will be allowed on Rajpath intersections from 11.00 PM of 22nd Jan, 2021 at Rafi Marg, Janpath, Man Singh Road till Parade is over.

From East Delhi: Boulevard Road via ISBT Bridge - Rani Jhansi Flyover - R/A Jhandewalan - D-B. Gupta Road - Sheela Cinema Road - Paharganj Bridge and reach New Delhi Rly. Station.

Though there will be no restriction for people from North Delhi going towards New Delhi Railway Station or Old Delhi Railway Station yet it is advised that they plan their journey in advance and take sufficient extra time to reach their destination to avoid possible delay.

SUGGESTED ROUTES

If the journey is unavoidable, the road users are advised to take following routes:

For New Delhi Railway Station:

- Ring Road - Ashram Chowk - Sarai

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE:
www.thehinduads.com
011-43579738 • 43579797

EDUCATIONAL

Geography (Optional)

by AJAY RAJ SINGH

Classroom Batch Begins from 23rd Jan.

Time: 10:00 AM
Class Begins From Basics
Admission Open

Geographia IAS Institute

Address - A-1, Dherpur, Main Bus Stand, Near Nirankari Colony Ph. : 9958218172.

IAS '21
ANTHROVAID SIR'S Exclusive
Live Online Batch for IAS '21
Starting Shortly

Only the Candidates Confident
of Prelims '21 Should Join!

For Details Pl. Visit: www.vaidics.com

Ph: 0-9311337737, 0-9999946748

EDUCATIONAL

IAS

Qualify Prelims 2021 Easily

We provide Study Material for coming Prelims 2021 exam.
Expert and Professional Course
Prepared Exactly according to
Changing Trend of this Exam
Score: 82 Ques in Prelims 2020

No Need to read any other Book
For Serious IAS Aspirants !

Download 200 Pages PDF Free

BestCurrentAffairs.com

PHONE 9463838383

Odisha BJP stages farmers' rally to protest halt in paddy procurement

Farmers facing crisis due to nexus between State govt. and millers'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

BHUBANESWAR
The Odisha unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday staged a massive protest at Sambalpur, a western Odisha town, demanding immediate procurement of paddy stocks lying at different market yards.

The State BJP summoned almost all its MPs and MLAs to participate in the farmers' rally, and besieged the office of the Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC) at Sambalpur.

Farmers from 37 Assembly segments participated in the demonstration to protest non-procurement of paddy, and slashing of a small portion of paddy from every packet by procurement agencies.

Bijaypal Singh Tomar, co-in-charge of the Odisha BJP, and

State chief Sameer Mohanty, led the agitation. They said, "Farmers remained neglected for long under the Congress rule and they were deprived of their share of benefits. Farmers continue to languish even under the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) regime. Farmers are facing crisis due to the unholy nexus between the government and millers."

'Man-made crisis'

"A farmer in Bargh district died of cardiac arrest. Due to the incompetent State government, hundreds of paddy packets have been lying in market yards across the State. The crisis is fully man-made," said Mr. Mohanty.

He demanded that the government should immediately do away with its token system, and purchase at the rate of 13 quintals

of paddy for one acre of non-irrigated land and 19 quintals per acre of irrigated land.

BJP workers tussled with police personnel deployed to keep law and order outside the RDC's office. Later, the police took BJP leaders into custody.

'We won't leave'

"We will not leave Sambalpur until the State government takes the decision to resume procurement at different market yards. The government must also ensure that paddy procurement is resumed smoothly," said Suresh Pujari, Bargh MP.

Ranendra Pratap Swain, State Food Supplies Minister, had said the procurement of paddy was affected due to non-release of subsidy to the tune of ₹6,039 crore by the Centre.

Campaign in Rajasthan for audit of village cooperatives

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR
As part of steps to strengthen the cooperative sector, a campaign has been launched in Rajasthan to clear the backlog and carry out audit of the accounts of village service cooperative societies to enable them to obtain loans from banks. The exercise will be completed by January 31.

Cooperatives Registrar Muktanand Agrawal said here on Thursday that the instances of loans being disbursed to cooperative socie-

ties without the completion of audit had come to light in the past with the "apprehensions about financial irregularities". The campaign will ensure transparency in the process of release of loans.

The managing directors of central cooperative banks have been asked to check the completion of accounts. Mr. Agrawal said action under the Rajasthan Cooperative Societies Act, 2001, would be initiated against the village cooperative societies not getting their audit done for a long time.

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

Mr. N SELVA KUMAR

PH: 9820350726

selvakumar.n@thehindu.co.in

THE HINDU
India's National Newspaper

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय, पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो

ई-प्रौक्षुप्ति सूचना
(एसटीबीटी०१ आधारित अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा). (द्वितीय कॉल)

दिनांक- 20.01.2021

1.	कार्य का नाम	पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो जिलासर्कार "झुमरी - नवाझी-हेमो पथ (MDR-073 पर) के ओर निर्माण में इंगिरा नदी एवं 12वें निर्माण में अश्रुतों नदी पर उच्च सरीरी पुल निर्माण (झुमरी पथ निर्माण सहित) कार्य वर्ष 2020-2021"
2.	प्राकालित राशि (रुपये में)	12,95,66,744.00 (वार्ष करोड़ रुपयावाले लाख डियासठ हजार रुपयावाले लाख रुपये मात्र)
3.	कार्य पूर्ण होने की अंधिकारी	पन्दर (15) माह।
4.	वेबसाइट पर निविदा प्रकाशन होने की तिथि एवं समय	27.01.2021, 12.00 बजे दोपहर।
5.	बिड प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	05.02.2021, 12.00 बजे दोपहर तक।
6.	प्री बिड बैठक की तिथि एवं समय	N.A.
7.	निविदा आमंत्रित करने वाले कार्यालय का नाम एवं पता	कार्यालय, कार्यपालक अभियंता, पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो
8.	प्रोक्षुप्ति प्रदातिकारी का संपर्क वंशांग	06542-265569
9.	ई-प्रौक्षुप्ति सूचना का लिंक वेबसाइट	0651-2401010

पर देखा जा सकता है। कार्यपालक अभियंता, पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो

PR 239812 (Road)20-21#D पथ निर्माण विभाग, पथ प्रमण्डल, बोकारो

Administration of Union Territory of Chandigarh (Electricity Wing of Engineering Department)

CORRIGENDUM

FOR
SELECTION OF BIDDER FOR PURCHASE OF ONE HUNDRED PERCENT (100%) SHARES IN DISTRIBUTION COMPANY RESPONSIBLE FOR DISTRIBUTION AND RETAIL SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY AND HAVING DISTRIBUTION LICENSE IN THE UNION TERRITORY OF CHANDIGARH

The following amendments in dates are issued on notice inviting Tender published on dated 15.01.2021:

1. Cost of RFP Documents	INR 5,00,000.00 + GST
2. Bid-Security	INR 10,00,00,000.00 in the form of Bank Guarantee as per RFP
3. Bank Details	Account Name: EXEC ENG ELECTY (OP) DIVN NO. 2, CHD Account Number: 0000038677374645 IFSC Code: SBIN000628
4. GST details	GST Number: 04PTLE10623E1D6
5. Sale of RFP	Start Date: 10.11.2020 End Date: 01.02.2021
6. Date of second pre-bid meeting	22.01.2021 at 11.00 AM Venue: Conference Hall, Ground Floor, UT Secretariat, Deluxe Building, Sector-9D, UT Chandigarh-160009 Authorization: Contact person designated at the time of purchase of RFP may email the list of participants to elop2-chd@nic.in. Alternatively, the Participants may carry an authorization letter.
7. Last date of bid submission (same as notified earlier)	08.02.2021, 4.00 P.M.

Note: The other terms and conditions of RFP shall remain the same.

The bidders who have already attended the earlier pre-bid meeting on 1.12.2020 may like to attend the pre-bid meeting at their discretion if any new point is to be raised. Advance submission of queries is mandatory before the pre-bid meeting.

Bidders are advised to visit <http://chdengineering.gov.in/pages/privatisation.html> from time to time to keep themselves updated.

Executive Engineer
Electricity OP Division No. 2
Industrial Area Phase 1
Union Territory of Chandigarh
Phone- 0172-2655331
Email: elop2-chd@nic.in

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA CORRIGENDUM					
SR. NO.	NAME OF BOARD CORP./AUTH	OLD REFERENCE/NIT NO.	NATURE OF CORRIGENDUM	WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH	NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS/EMAIL
1	UHBVN	NIT NO. 291/P&D/ 2020-21 (BID NO. B-632)	CORRIGENDUM- V SYSTEM STRENGTHENING OF 11 KV LINES WITH BIFURCATION/TRIFURCATION OF OVERLOADED FEEDERS UNDER OPERATION CIRCLE UHBVN, KAITHAL ON TURNKEY BASIS. CLOSING DATE: 01.02.2021 OPENING DATE: 02.02.2021	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019143 xend2@uhbvn.org.in
2	UHBVN	NIT NO. 290/P&D/ 2020-21 (BID NO. B-631)	CORRIGENDUM- V SYSTEM STRENGTHENING OF 11 KV LINES WITH BIFURCATION/TRIFURCATION OF OVERLOADED FEEDERS UNDER OPERATION CIRCLE UHBVN, KARNAL ON TURNKEY BASIS. CLOSING DATE: 01.02.2021 OPENING DATE: 02.02.2021	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019143 xend2@uhbvn.org.in
3	UHBVN	NIT NO. 301/P&D/ 2020-21 (BID NO. B-642)	CORRIGENDUM- III SYSTEM STRENGTHENING OF 11 KV LINES WITH BIFURCATION/TRIFURCATION OF OVERLOADED FEEDERS UNDER OPERATION CIRCLE UHBVN, SONIPAT ON TURNKEY BASIS. CLOSING DATE: 01.02.2021 OPENING DATE: 02.02.2021	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019143 xend2@uhbvn.org.in
4	UHBVN	NIT NO. 300/P&D/ 2020-21 (BID NO. B-641)	CORRIGENDUM- III SYSTEM STRENGTHENING OF 11 KV LINES WITH BIFURCATION/TRIFURCATION OF OVERLOADED FEEDERS UNDER OPERATION CIRCLE UHBVN, AMBALA ON TURNKEY BASIS. CLOSING DATE: 01.02.2021 OPENING DATE: 02.02.2021	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019143 xend2@uhbvn.org.in
5	UHBVN	304/P&D/ 2020 (BID NO. B-645)	CORRIGENDUM- III DATE OF CLOSING OF E-TENDER: 01.02.2021 (17:00 HRS.) DATE OF OPENING OF E-TENDER: 01.02.2021 (17:00 HRS.) DATE OF CLOSING OF E-TENDER: 01.02.2021 (17:00 HRS.) DATE OF OPENING OF PART- I: 02.02.2021 (13:00 HRS.)	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019145 xend3@uhbvn.org.in
6	UHBVN	303/P&D/ 2020 (BID NO. B-644)	CORRIGENDUM- III DATE OF CLOSING OF E-TENDER: 01.02.2021 (17:00 HRS.) DATE OF OPENING OF PART- I: 02.02.2021 (13:00 HRS.)	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019146 xend3@uhbvn.org.in
7	UHBVN	NIT NO. 302/P&D/ 2020-21 (BID NO. B-643)	CORRIGENDUM- III SYSTEM STRENGTHENING OF 11 KV LINES WITH BIFURCATION/TRIFURCATION OF OVERLOADED FEEDERS UNDER OPERATION CIRCLE UHBVN, ROHTAK ON TURNKEY BASIS. CLOSING DATE: 01.02.2021 OPENING DATE: 02.02.2021	www.uhbvn.org.in	01723019143 xend2@uhbvn.org.in

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION KINDLY VISIT : www.haryanaeprocurement.gov.in or www.etenders.hry.nic.in

Samvad 13/2021/140/1502/I/1997

Public Awareness Bulletin - 13				
Three Tier Grievance Redressal Structure				
Consumer Grievance / Complaint like: New Connection, Temporary Connection, Load Enhancement, Load Reduction, Permanent Disconnection, Reconnection, Shifting of Meter and Service line, Name Change, Category Change, Billing, Reading of Meter, Metering Problems (Faulty/Burnt/Slow/Fast/Stolen), No Current/failure of power supply, Voltage fluctuation, Load shedding/scheduled outages, Non-working of Street Light, Reporting of theft of electricity/ Unauthorized Use of Electricity.				
TIER - I DISCOMS				
Channels for registration of complaint				
DISCOM	BRPL	BYPL	TPDDL	NDMC
24x7 Toll Free No	19123/39999707	19122/39999808	19124/ 1800-208-9124	19121/011-49993555
Customer Care Centers	(Mon-Fri 09:30AM to 05:30PM & Sat- 09:30 AM to 01:00PM)			
Discom's Website	www.bsesdelhi.com	www.bsesdelhi.com	https://tatapower-ddl.com	https://www.ndmc.gov.in
Mobile App	BSES APP	BSES APP	TPDDL Connect	NDMC311
Official Email ID for Filing Complaint	<a href="mailto:brpl			



American healing

Biden must build on bipartisan goodwill to further his agenda of a more perfect Union

After one of the most contentious elections and presidential transitions in recent history, it was a relatively scaled-back inauguration ceremony that finally placed 46th President of the U.S. Joe Biden in the Oval Office. The devastating human and economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with deep partisan rancour and the bitter aftertaste of the Capitol building attack earlier this month, meant that Inauguration Day was less a flamboyant extravaganza than a quiet celebration of multicultural America reasserting itself. There could have been no greater symbol of that assertion than the swearing-in of Kamala Harris, his running mate of Indian and African descent, as Vice-President – the first woman ever to hold that position. Mr. Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, chose to not attend the event, making him only the fourth President to do so. Nevertheless, bipartisan goodwill was present on the dais before the Capitol building, as Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts administered the oath of office to Mr. Biden, including former Vice-President Mike Pence, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, and former President George W. Bush. It was bipartisanship and societal healing that appeared to be the theme of Mr. Biden's speech, as he vowed to unite all Americans to fight the foes they faced, of "Anger, resentment, hatred. Extremism, lawlessness, violence. Disease, joblessness, hopelessness". To the world, he committed to lead "by the power of our example".

It was a demonstration of not only power but political intent when, on his first day in office, Mr. Biden expediently reversed a range of Trump-era actions by issuing 17 executive orders and directives to cancel the U.S.'s exit from the Paris Climate Agreement and WHO, include non-citizens in the census count, protect immigrants under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme from heightened risk of deportation, revoke the "Remain in Mexico" policy, halt construction of the infamous southern border wall and end the egregious "Muslim ban". While these decisive actions may have felt like a balm to Democrats, he would do well to remember, as he goes about dismantling the Trump legacy, that 74 million people voted for his opponent, and Mr. Trump has encouraged them to believe that the election was stolen. If the Capitol building attack was an indication of the unhinged rage seething below the ostensibly peaceful transfer of power, it may not be long before the America of economically disenchanted white privilege again rears its head in a manner that today's political victors find unsavoury. The fact that the White House, Senate and House of Representatives are now firmly in the grip of Democrats should not be cause for giving up on bipartisan moderation. Or else Mr. Biden's search for a more perfect Union may take longer.

Privacy and surveillance

Data localisation is not the only approach towards protecting data privacy

Following an exodus of its users from its messaging service, WhatsApp, to apps such as Signal and Telegram, which promise more privacy options, the Facebook-owned service might have been forced to postpone the date for users to accept its new privacy policy terms to May 15. In just days after the earlier announcement by WhatsApp, Signal has emerged as the leading app on "app-stores" as Indian users signalled their discomfort with the former's data sharing policies. WhatsApp, with 459 million users, had emerged as the leading communications application for most Indians. What has caused patrons discomfort is WhatsApp's ability to seamlessly share user metadata and mobile information with its parent company and social media behemoth, Facebook. Facebook Inc., which also owns Instagram, has sought to integrate the offerings from WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook, with the former acting also as a tool that secures payments for services and ads posted on the latter two applications, beyond its primary use as a messaging service.

This integration of three large consumption products is a means to monetise their everyday use by consumers and considering the fact that Facebook's revenue model uses data on its platform to allow advertisers to target ads towards users, the algorithms would benefit from the WhatsApp data as well. Such data transfer from WhatsApp to Facebook is not possible in regions such as the EU, where data protection laws have stringent restrictions on storage and transfer of user data. This regionally differential treatment has attracted the attention of the Ministry of Electronics and IT, which has sent WhatsApp a series of queries, including on why Indian users would be sharing information with Facebook, unlike in Europe. The onus is also on the Indian government to quickly take up the legislation for robust data protection, that aligns with the recommendations of the Srikrishna Committee, which tried to address concerns about online data privacy in line with the 2018 Puttaswamy judgment. The draft Bill proposed by the government in 2019 diluted some of the provisions, for example, by limiting data localisation in proposing that only sensitive personal data needed to be mirrored in the country, and not all personal data as mandated by the committee. But data localisation as proposed by the committee may not necessarily lead to better data privacy, as it carries the possibility of domestic surveillance over Indian citizens. Privacy is better addressed by stronger contractual conditions on data sharing and better security tools being adopted by the applications that secure user data. The proposed Bill has some of these features, similar to Europe's General Data Protection Regulation, but it also requires stronger checks on state surveillance before it is passed.

Defending liberty against political prosecution

Courts need to recognise selective prosecution as a threshold constitutional defence against the abuse of state power



G. MOHAN GOPAL

One of the oldest, most pernicious and widespread forms of abuse of state power in India involves the police and enforcement agencies selectively targeting political and ideological opponents of the ruling dispensation to interrogate, humiliate, harass, arrest, torture and imprison them, ostensibly on grounds unrelated to their ideology or politics, while sparing comparably placed supporters and friends of rulers of the day.

As a recent example, the November 27, 2020 Supreme Court judgment granting TV anchor Arnab Goswami bail says, not without considerable irony that of the personality involved (<https://bit.ly/2XXTILO>), "The specific case of the appellant [Arnab Goswami] is that he has been targeted because his opinions on his television channel are unpalatable to authority." Scores of others are currently so targeted. Many, not as fortunate as Mr. Goswami to be quickly bailed out by the top court, are languishing in prison in inhuman conditions. Is this use of state power legally permissible? Is there no escape for victims of such abuse of state power? Is their only remedy bringing an action for wrongful prosecution years later – if they are acquitted and after suffering through many years of process as punishment? Or is there a legal remedy for nipping this evil in the bud, at the very outset, to protect the life and liberty of the accused?

Separating two legal issues
The problem is that the illegality involved in this type of prosecution is not self evident. At first

glance, the prosecution appears legally kosher – acting on information about legal infractions, the police pursue the accused as per law. The illegality becomes plain when two legal questions are clearly distinguished and separated: first, the legality of the exercise of prosecutorial discretion in the selection of the accused for being investigated and prosecuted; and second, the merits of the criminal case filed against them. The two are independent legal issues and should not be wrongly conflated.

Selective prosecution
On the first question, the applicable legal standard is that while the police and prosecutors in common law jurisdictions enjoy vast discretion in deciding who they may pursue and who they may spare, the choice of accused must not be based on grounds that violate Constitutional rights, including the Article 14 right to equal protection of the law. The accused should not be selected, either explicitly or covertly, on constitutionally prohibited grounds. The illegal selection of accused based on grounds prohibited by the Constitution is called "selective prosecution".

In the words of then Chief Justice W. Rehnquist of the United States Supreme Court (<https://bit.ly/3918fqb>), "A selective-prosecution claim is not a defense on the merits to the criminal charge itself, but an independent assertion that the prosecutor has brought the charge for reasons forbidden by the Constitution." (*United States v. Armstrong* (1996)). "Selective prosecution" is thus a constitutional claim asserted by defendants to assail the proceedings against them on the basis that they were selected for being prosecuted in violation of Article 14 because the grounds of selection are constitutionally prohibited and are arbitrary. When the choice of accused runs afoul of the Constitution, the entire criminal pro-



ceeding is vitiated, irrespective of the determination of the second issue, viz., whether the accused are convicted or acquitted on the charges brought against them. Once the proceedings fail under the first issue, there is no legal basis to proceed to the second issue, i.e., trial on the merits of the case. The theory is that the Constitution cannot be violated to uphold the law – such an approach would spell doom for the Constitution. The selective prosecution claim must be adjudicated as a threshold issue, with the prosecution being quashed at the outset of the criminal case if the claim is justified. In the context of this discussion, the constitutionally prohibited ground we are confronting in India is the political or ideological affiliation of the accused. It is an arbitrary ground that violates the Article 14 guarantee of equal protection of the law.

Common law jurisprudence
The United States Supreme Court has a long record of experience with the claim of selective prosecution relevant to us as it is based on American equal protection jurisprudence to which our own Article 14 traces its roots.

In *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, the United States Supreme Court said some 135 years ago (in 1886) that to punish some persons for "what is permitted to others as lawful, without any distinction of circumstances [is] an unjust and illegal discrimination". The Court said

further, "Though the law itself be fair on its face and impartial in appearance, yet, if it is applied and administered by public authority with an evil eye and an unequal hand, so as practically to make unjust and illegal discrimination between persons in similar circumstances, material to their rights, the denial of equal justice is ...within the prohibition of the Constitution." Chief Justice William Rehnquist said in *Armstrong*, "A prosecutor's discretion is subject to constitutional constraints... One of these constraints, imposed by the equal protection component of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment... is that the decision whether to prosecute may not be based on 'an unjustifiable standard such as race, religion, or other arbitrary classification'.... Justice John Paul Stevens said in the same case, 'the possibility that political or racial animosity may infect a decision to institute criminal proceedings cannot be ignored... For that reason, it has long been settled that the prosecutor's broad discretion to determine when criminal charges should be filed is not completely unbridled....'"

Failure of Indian courts

Our courts have not recognised selective prosecution as an independent claim because of the erroneous assumption that the lawfulness of prosecution can only be taken up after the trial, if the accused is acquitted. Thus, for example, the 2018 Report of the Law Commission on 'Wrongful Prosecution (Miscarriage of Justice): Legal Remedies' discusses remedies for wrongful prosecution available only if and after the accused is acquitted. Remedy after acquittal comes far too late, well after a brutal and long drawn out criminal justice process that upends the lives of the victims. Also, the right against selective prosecution cannot be extinguished by conviction. Separate from post-acquittal ac-

tions for wrongful prosecution (which will still be available), the claim of selective prosecution is a threshold issue that is required to be adjudicated at the outset of criminal proceedings (even during the investigation stage) irrespective of the merit of the charges.

Importance of Goswami case

The judgment of Justice D.Y. Chandrachud in the Goswami case is crucial in this regard. It provides a much needed and long awaited legal opening to strengthen the recognition and use of the selective prosecution claim in India to counter politically coloured prosecution unleashed by the state and defend our liberty. In addition to acknowledging Mr. Goswami's claim that he is being targeted for opinions he holds and expresses, the judgment says, "Courts should be alive to... the need...of ensuring that the law does not become a ruse for targeted harassment... The doors of this Court cannot be closed to a citizen who is able to establish *prima facie* that the instrumentality of the State is being weaponized for using the force of criminal law". The Goswami judgment also quotes the 2018 Supreme Court holding in *Romila Thapar v. Union of India* that, "[T]he basic entitlement of every citizen who is faced with allegations of criminal wrongdoing is that the investigative process should be fair. This is an integral component of the guarantee against arbitrariness under Article 14 and of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21." To strengthen the protection of civil liberty, equality and democracy, it is time our courts – at all levels – recognise selective prosecution as a threshold constitutional defence against the abuse of police and prosecutorial power.

G. Mohan Gopal is former Director, National Judicial Academy and former Director, National Law School of India University, Bengaluru

Getting it wrong on India's level of agricultural support

The methodology behind the OECD's numbers, that suggests negative support, has pitfalls and limitations



SACHIN KUMAR SHARMA &
ADEET DOBHAI

The ongoing stalemate between the farmers protesting over the recently passed farm laws and the government has sparked an interesting debate regarding the level of agricultural support. Many media reports, based on data by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), have ostensibly stated that the support provided to Indian agriculture is extremely low or negative, and, therefore, net taxed. In contrast, the support provided by the Central and State governments through their various federal and sub-federal schemes is well-documented. This divergence merits a close examination for bringing clarity on this issue.

Estimates and elements

The OECD estimates the support to the farmers in terms of producer support estimates (PSE), which mainly comprises the following two elements: market price support and budgetary payments. The OECD has estimated that Indian farmers received negative support to the extent of minus ₹2.36-lakh crore and minus ₹1.62-lakh crore in 2010 and 2019, respec-

tively. The support to farmers was consistently negative during 2000-2019, except in 2000. Surprisingly, the negative support of minus ₹1.62-lakh crore as estimated by the OECD was higher than the total budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Agriculture at ₹1.09-lakh crore in 2019.

Let us look at the logic behind the OECD negative support to Indian farmers by assessing its components.

Substantive expenditure

Despite the overall negative support, the expenditure of the Central and State governments on agriculture has increased substantially since 2000. This support increased from ₹1.61-lakh crore to ₹3-lakh crore, between 2010 to 2019, registering 85% growth. Expenditure on the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, or PM-KISAN, the National Food Security Mission, crop insurance, input subsidies such as fertilizer and electricity, are some of the measures covered under the 2019 OECD estimates. However, the expenditure related to the operation of minimum support price and general services is not covered by it.

The massive negative market price support to the producers of different products has resulted in the total negative producer support, overshadowing the increase in the budgetary support over the years. The negative market price support was estimated at minus ₹46,605 crore and minus ₹21.7-lakh crore in 2019. For the



same year, the support for wheat and cotton was ₹4,034 crore and ₹4,414 crore, respectively.

Second, a negative market price support for a product in one year can turn into huge positive support in another year on account of the relative movement of domestic and international prices. For instance, in 2018, the domestic price of cotton was lower than the international price, resulting in negative support of minus ₹5,102 crore. However, in the subsequent year, the domestic price exceeded the international price, and the support turned positive to the extent of ₹4,414 crore.

Third, even if in a particular year, the government does not provide any additional support compared to a previous year, the level of support calculated by the OECD can change. This will arise if there is a change in either the gap between the domestic price and international price for a commodity, or its production, in the two years.

Prices and the gap

Why the gap between international and domestic prices? The OECD assumes government interventions lead to a gap between the international and domestic prices. However, even if the government does not implement any programme, the gap can still arise due to domestic and international factors.

Changes in supply and demand conditions in the domestic and international market due to shocks such as the COVID-19 pan-

demic, weather conditions, depressed international price due to subsidies given by other countries, among other factors, can generate a gap.

Question the methodology

Given the unpredictability in the inherent data, the total support can move from huge negative to huge positive. For India, the negative support as a percentage of the total value of agriculture production has substantially reduced in recent years. It is possible that support to Indian farmers in the near future becomes one of the highest in the world due to pitfalls in the OECD methodology. This might set alarm bells ringing, particularly in the developed countries, which may aggressively question India's support measures.

Just as beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, the amount of subsidy depends on the methodology adopted for calculating it. Rather than being swayed by the OECD numbers suggesting negative support, farmers, policymakers, and other stakeholders need to understand the pitfalls and limitations in the underlying methodology. This will help in providing a more correct perception of the level of support to agriculture in India.

Sachin Kumar Sharma is Associate Professor at the Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Delhi. Adeet Dobhal is a Research Fellow at the Centre for WTO Studies. 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 with initials.

Biden in the saddle

With the inauguration of Joe Biden as its President, the United States has finally turned a page after the tumultuous years of the Trump era (Page 1, "Biden sworn in, delivers message of unity, hope", January 21). On the domestic front, his immediate priorities would be to unify a sharply divided country and combat COVID-19. On the foreign policy front, he can count upon his vast experience and exposure. It would be a welcome change if he does not venture to equate his country's interests with those of the world. Under his leadership, America

should strive to uphold justice and fair play, stand up for principles and become a powerful moral force. Making this happen would send out a reassuring signal to the whole world.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,
Malippara, Kothamangalam, Kerala

■ The way Mr. Biden has lost no time in reversing some of the controversial decisions of his predecessor signals his intentions to the world – that he is firm about mending things. His quick decisions will go a long way in bringing changes in a positive way for America and the rest of the world.

Ds. D.V.G. SANKARARAO,
Nellore, Andhra Pradesh

■ It was unbecoming of the outgoing President to have skipped the swearing-in ceremony. Breaking protocol is the height of disobedience. A loser should gracefully accept the loss ('World' page, "Trump says he 'will be back in some form'", January 21).

K. PRADEEP,
Chennai

■ The way Mr. Biden has lost no time in reversing some of the controversial decisions of his predecessor signals his intentions to the world – that he is firm about mending things. His quick decisions will go a long way in bringing changes in a positive way for America and the rest of the world.

MANI NATARAJAN,
Chennai

treatment of two very close family members, who were diagnosed quite early and in the tertiary stage, respectively.

In the first instance, after excruciating pain led the patient and us being referred to Dr. V. Shanta, a mastectomy was advised and she lived till 81. In the second instance, the patient did not disclose her ailment for quite some time. The veteran specialist fed sad on detecting the tertiary stage. She was frank in her opinion and advised not going in for any treatment and to allow her to breathe her last calmly.

MANI NATARAJAN,
Chennai

India's Test series win

January 19 is one of the happiest days in the history of Indian cricket as Team India has won the series with complete dedication, mental alertness, and with the aim of winning. The fortress, Gabba, has been completely breached. T. Natarajan, Shardul Thakur, Washington Sundar, Mohammed Siraj, Rishabh

Pant and Shubman Gill are the players to watch. Credit goes to the team management headed by Ravi Shastri. This great victory has also been made possible under the shrewd and intelligent captaincy of Ajinkya Rahane. K.R. MAHADEVAN, Thane, Maharashtra

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the article, "The many infirmities of China's Western Theatre Command" (OpEd, January 21, 2021), the name, Zhang Xudong was incorrectly spelt as Zhao Xidong.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552663; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com



Are courts encroaching on the powers of the executive?

PARLEY

The courts are increasingly intervening in matters without providing sound legal reasoning

On January 12, 2021, the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of three controversial farm laws passed in September 2020 and ordered the constitution of a committee of experts to negotiate the laws between the farmers' bodies and the Government of India. Rather than deliberating on the constitutionality of the three laws, the court appears to be trying to move some of the parties towards a political settlement. Arguably, in doing so, it is wading into the domain of the government. Has the court in this case abdicated its constitutional duty mandated by the Constitution and is this a growing trend? Anuj Bhawania and Arun Thiruvengadam discuss this question in a conversation moderated by Jayant Sriram. Edited excerpts:

In the present instance of the court staying the farm laws and forming a committee to break the deadlock between the farmers and the government, what really stands out to both of you as problematic about this particular intervention?

Anuj Bhawania: What's really striking here is that nobody asked the court to intervene in this particular manner, to break the deadlock. As the court itself noted in its January 12 order, there are three sets of petitions: one is challenging the constitutionality of the laws and the others are with regard to the protests. None of them ask the court to negotiate between the two parties.

Now, the court has repeatedly said in its oral comments that it views the protests as completely legal and part of the exercise of citizens' rights under Article 19 of the Constitution. And it has also said that the police alone can take a call on the security aspect. The court is not even framing these cases before it in legal terms. But it has still gone ahead and intervened in this manner, noting that the government has not been particularly successful in negotiating with the farmers' groups. It has decided that it can do better than the government and appointed its own committee.

The court gave the precedent of the Maratha reservation case in which it had issued a stay, but in

that instance, the stay was given on constitutional grounds. Here it does not take up any such constitutional issues though these issues have been pleaded before the court by the farmers associations. The issues are of federalism, of agriculture being a State subject, as well as the manner in which the voice vote was passed in the Rajya Sabha, which was controversial.

Arun Thiruvengadam: If you look at the January 12 order, what is striking is that the court does not even set out clearly what the legal grounds of challenge are. The petition filed by the Bharatiya Kisan Party argues that under our constitutional scheme, agriculture and farm produce are matters reserved under entries 14, 18, 30, 46, 47 and 48 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, which lays out the subjects on which State Legislatures are competent to enact law. The argument is that the Centre simply could not pass the farm bills as it did not have legislative competence.

Courts are, of course, competent to issue stay orders on parliamentary laws, but they need to set out legal reasons. When you look at the reasoning given by the court, in paragraph 8, the court says, "We are also of the view that a stay of implementation of all the three farm laws for the present may assuage the hurt feelings of the farmers and encourage them to come to the negotiating table with confidence and good faith." Now, this is a strange reason and arguably not a sound legal reason. To issue a stay, courts usually state the legal and constitutional arguments which make them take the view that the law, on its face, raises a question of constitutional violation. But when the court cites "assuaging hurt feelings" of a section of people who are protesting against the laws as a reason to stay a parliamentary law, the order does not seem to have a clear legal basis.

That's why some commentators have asked whether the court is looking at administrative concerns rather than legal considerations. In a different but related case, the Supreme Court told the Delhi Police that the question of whether the tractor protests should be allowed or not is a 'law and order' question



REUTERS

and that it is for the police to deal with. It said, don't come to us. This seems particularly strange because the question of the protesting farmers is also a 'law and order' question that authorities have to deal with. The constitutional challenge to the farm bills involves far more people and far more serious questions than only the farmers who have gathered at the borders of Delhi. So, it seems to me that the Bench has been inconsistent in how it is approaching these questions.

Broadening the scope of the discussion, is there a case for the Supreme Court, or for the High Courts for that matter, to be more proactive in matters of governance?

AB: In India, almost every political issue gets rapidly translated into legal terms, and there's nothing inherently wrong with that. In fact, what we see here with regard to the court is not just a problem of commission but also a problem of omission. There are issues central to Indian politics such as the change to Article 370, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, reservation quotas for economically weaker sections, electoral bonds, and, more recently, the so-called 'love jihad' laws which are all extremely politically controversial. What is striking is that the court has shown no urgency in hearing any of them and has refused to pass a stay order in all of these cases.

On the other hand, the court has very much intervened in matters that are extremely controversial, the most recent obvious example

C Looking at the work of the court since 2017, it is quite debatable whether it is as strong a defender of constitutionalism and rights as it was in previous years.

ARUN THIRUVENGADAM

being in the Ayodhya case, if it is determined to do so. So, what we see is that the court is actually abdicating its constitutional responsibility of judicial review. At the same time, it's acting in usurpation of executive and legislative powers, going beyond the standard areas of judicial behaviour.

AT: Let me take a slightly broader view. This question of judicial overreach is a phenomenon that has been observed in multiple contexts in various countries. Historically speaking, the idea that judges can exercise review powers to overturn laws enacted by democratically elected governments and Parliaments is of fairly recent origin. It is only in the post-World War II era that this idea has become dominant around the world. This has also led to changes in thinking about the role of courts. For instance, in South Africa, there is an interesting provision in their Constitution that enables courts to enter into a dialogue with legislators to prevent a situation of a legal vacuum. So, the court can point out that a law that Parliament has passed is inconsistent with the Constitution to a particular extent, and can allow Parliament time to fix the identified problem.

In India, while adopting Our Con-

stitution in 1950, the framers of our Constitution made departures from the idea of parliamentary sovereignty, i.e., the kind you see in the Westminster type of Constitution in the U.K. (where Parliament has much greater power as compared to other systems). The framers gave courts the important power to strike down parliamentary laws. Over time, courts have used this power to check the power of the executive, while also extending their own authority. So, to give you an example, take the power of imposition of President's rule under Article 356. It was initially understood that courts cannot go into the question of whether President's rule has been properly imposed as this was based on the 'subjective' satisfaction of the President, but the Supreme Court has held that even that high power can be reviewed, at the very least on procedural grounds (*S.R. Bommai v. Union of India*).

So, these are some of the trends that led to the Indian Supreme Court being described routinely as the world's most powerful court, from about the 1980s till about 2015. But in all the recent cases that Anuj has mentioned, where legal and constitutional questions were raised, the court simply has not taken on those questions, and has put them in cold storage, often for years at a time. Instead, it is choosing to intervene in cases which are arguably less consequential or relevant, leading to questions being raised about the legitimacy of its intervention.

AT: Looking at the work of the court since 2017, it is quite debatable whether it is as strong a defender of constitutionalism and rights as it was in previous years.

AB: Usually when we talk about the Supreme Court, we say that in the initial period it was a more conservative court and then it became more radical over time. But even if you look at the so-called conservative period and the big-ticket political issues that came its way such as land reforms, reservations, the use of Article 356, bank nationalisation, privy purses etc., these are all issues on which the court actually adjudicated pretty promptly. Not necessarily in ways that many of us may agree with but the point is that the court didn't shy away from giving its opinion. But what we're seeing recently is the court is very reluctant to take up constitutional challenges

to similarly politically controversial moves. That's quite unfortunate.

Can we point out instances in which the court has played a positive role in protecting or advancing the rights of various groups, in some cases, perhaps even taking up issues before the executive could come to them? Has the manner in which the courts have done so changed over the years?

AT: The classic justification for taking up these cases is to uphold the interests of a group which cannot prevail in a majoritarian system of elections, which are important but not the only concern of constitutional democracies. I think a classic instance fairly recently where the court was seen as performing that role is in the *Navtej Johar* case (*Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India*) which relates to the question of the LGBTQ community and specifically on the question of decriminalisation of Section 377. This is an issue that the courts grappled with for a fairly long time. We know that LGBTQ populations in any human population are going to be a fairly small number. So, for them to run a political campaign and get a majority in Parliament for their position was going to be difficult. After a long struggle and considerable back and forth, the court finally decriminalised same sex relations in 2018.

AB: The court's record of acting in a counter-majoritarian manner is extremely erratic if not non-existent. Even if we take the *Navtej Johar* case as an exemplary instance, it was preceded by the *Kaushal v. Naz* judgment, where the court dismissed the LGBTQ community as a minuscule minority. The court has not been particularly interested in performing any counter-majoritarian role for a long time now. The *Navtej Johar* judgment is more like the exception that proves the rule. I would say in general that when we look at the court's role we have to think of it more institutionally, we have to think about how it grounds its decision in terms of its reasoning. And look at its politics somewhat expansively – not just in terms of outcomes and who it benefits, but also in terms of its process. And the process includes who it hears and how it hears but also how it decides in terms of its reasoning.

Anuj Bhawania,
Professor at the
Jindal Global Law
School, is the author
of 'Courting the
People: Public
Interest Litigation in
Post-Emergency
India'

**Arun
Thiruvengadam,**
Professor of Law at
Azim Premji
University,
Bengaluru, is the
author of 'The
Constitution of
India: A Contextual
Analysis'



Scan the QR code to
listen to the full
interview online

A case to dispose of mercy petitions swiftly

The prolonged detention of death row convicts in prison is inhuman and against the canons of justice

M.P. NATHANIEL

Balwant Singh Rajoana, former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh's assassin, was sentenced to death in 2007 by a special CBI court. His mercy petition was filed by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee in 2014. In 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs sent a letter to the Punjab government to commute Rajoana's death sentence. It said it had taken an "in principle" decision to commute the death sentence as a "humanitarian gesture" ahead of the 550th birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev. But its decision could not be implemented because the Cabinet did not send the file to the President. Rajoana has been incarcerated for over 25 years. The Supreme Court pulled up the government for its laxity and fixed the next hearing for sometime in January 2021.

Abolishing capital punishment

The delay in carrying out the death penalty is one of the reasons to review India's position on capital punishment. The debate on the efficacy of the death penalty in reducing crime has been going on for several decades. A few years ago, the issue of abolishing capital punishment was raised in the Rajya Sabha but was rejected by a voice vote. The then Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, stated that the government was not contemplating abolition of the death penalty. Through its report in 2015, the Law Commission of India proposed abolishing the death penalty and sought the comments of States and Union Territories on the subject. Despite reminders, just 14 States responded by 2018. Of these, 12 States rejected the proposal, while Karnataka and Tripura concurred.

India figures among the 56 nations in the world that have retained the death penalty, while 142 have abolished it either by practice or by law. In 2019, the Sri Lankan government put an end to its four-decades-long moratorium on capital punishment when President Maithripala Sir-

isena ordered the execution of four drug offenders. He claimed that the move would end the addiction problem in the country. According to Amnesty International, thousands of Chinese are executed in that country every year, though such executions are classified as secret information. In 2018, Iran executed 253 convicts and Saudi Arabia executed 149. However, the total number of executions across the world came down in 2018 to 690 from 993 in 2017.

Setting a time frame
While the debate on abolition of the death penalty goes on, the delay in the execution of death row convicts coupled with long years of solitary confinement leads to psychological trauma for them. The prolonged detention of death row convicts in prison is not just inhuman but also against the canons of justice. It is a small wonder that the courts tend to take a lenient view and reduce the sentence when such cases of prolonged years of detention come before them.

In India, 102 convicts were awarded the death sentence in 2019, raising the total number of death row prisoners to 378. Death row convicts have suffered imprisonment up to 25 years.

It goes to the credit of former President Pranab Mukherjee that during his term, he disposed of 34 mercy petitions that had been pending for years. While 30 were rejected, four were given reprieves. While the fact that he rejected 30 mercy petitions can be debated, what is important is that he dealt with the petitions swiftly. A time frame needs to be fixed for the President to dispose of mercy petitions. The lack of accountability of various officials in the government and the courts have adversely affected our criminal justice system. Delays in investigations, court hearings and administrative steps to be taken after the final verdict need to be inquiry into, and responsibility fixed.

M.P. Nathaniel is a retired Inspector General of Police, CRPF

NOTEBOOK

Following the paper trail

Documents, unlike people, will never betray reporters or withdraw comments

SOBHANA K. NAIR

In a scene in the 2017 movie *The Post*, a group of journalists peer into a cardboard box holding the Pentagon Papers. It is an exciting and equally stressful moment: the team has a mere 10 hours to sift through 4,000 pages, make sense of them, and hammer out a report for the city edition. As all of them start complaining about the seemingly impossible task, Tom Hanks, who plays *The Washington Post* Editor, Ben Bradlee, says, "We have 10 hours to sift, so we dig in."

This scene and what follows is what a reporter's dreams are made of. The documents may come to us with different names – police chargesheets, government file notings, personal correspondence, confidential reports, internal memos, and so on – but each of them is a hard piece of

evidence.

The paper is the key here. Documents, unlike people, will never betray you or withdraw comments. They will never blame you for a "misquote," especially in the face of an unflattering story. The spoken word can be denied, retracted and changed before a story, whereas documents mostly leave no room for doubts or questions. The cold and indifferent document provides a news copy with protection as tough as Teflon; it makes the story undeniable.

I am sure that my colleagues at *The Hindu* and in other media houses have a number of exciting stories about how they landed key documents for their scoops. These are stories of our little personal triumphs.

I remember, for instance, the jubilation, as a cub reporter, when a source walked out of a police station on the pretext of having tea, sneaking away from the TV cameras in front of the station, only to hand me a First Information Report. What I was chasing was not a scoop; it was just a routine story that everyone else was following. But often, the difference between a half-baked

love our documents so much that most reporters are well equipped to read text even upside down on files that officers sometimes forget to close, all the while carrying on with a casual conversation.

I am sure that my colleagues at *The Hindu* and in other media houses have a number of exciting stories about how they landed key documents for their scoops. These are stories of our little personal triumphs.

I remember, for instance, the jubilation, as a cub reporter, when a source walked out of a police station on the pretext of having tea, sneaking away from the TV cameras in front of the station, only to hand me a First Information Report. What I was chasing was not a scoop; it was just a routine story that everyone else was following. But often, the difference between a half-baked

news report and a rounded one is that one chit of paper or sheaf of papers.

Technological changes have made accessing documents a little easier. With multiple social media sharing platforms, often voluminous reports land directly on our phones. Instead of the hard print, we now spend time squinting at our laptops. Sometimes, if a source is too reluctant to part with the documents, we try and convince them to allow us to photograph a few pages. For paper hounds like us, the spoken word, which is the most common source of news stories, pales in front of having that document. This is often a problem.

Whether it's a digital or a hard copy, the joy of having the written word to back your byline makes a world of difference. It also means that you can have a good night's sleep on the day you have filed that rare scoop.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 22, 1971

Mylapore Gowri Amma

Rukmini Devi: It is with deep sorrow that I realise that a great artiste has left us. One by one India loses these persons and, unfortunately, with them also disappears a great tradition. Our younger generation does not have strong enough roots in our religious or cultural traditions for these to flourish when modern Western civilisation is overwhelming India. With an awakening of the consciousness of our art and the winning of freedom, wider knowledge and appreciation of art has taken the place of the deeper understanding. Among the great dancers whom I have known, Gowri Amma was the first one whom I met. It was after seeing Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai's two disciples, Jeevaratnam and Rajalakshmi, dance, that I decided to learn this art. I searched everywhere for a teacher, but as often happens, one searches everywhere except nearest to oneself. Many teachers were suggested to me, but I went to meet Gowri Amma in the home where she lived in Mylapore. My first lesson started with her as my teacher with the sabbadum "Sarasijakshulu". After that I arranged for her to come to Adyar to my home to teach me. I was learning secretly at that time for a large number of people in the country were against the dance.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 22, 1921

Native labour in Kenya

(From an Editorial)

The East African Colonial has a double way of fulfilling the white man's burden of exploitation – to oust the Indian settler from his post of vantage and the avenues of future development and to get the black native to do his bidding in the fields and factories. For both these expedients he has wit enough to secure the support of the British Government. In regard to the expansive Indians, he manufactured an unanswered array of arguments why they should not be let loose and must be segregated. To a Government for which potentialities of wealth make a stronger appeal than homage to human rights or divine duty, the white settler's disguised selflessness turns out to be a gesture of philanthropy; and nothing deters its readiness to help in its fructification. The Indians have therefore been shut up, to all appearances with a finality, however they or their paternal government might croak. As against them, the natives of East Africa have a far heavier toll to pay.



Vasanth

CM

NDE

FROM PAGE ONE

Decision on Rajiv case convict soon, SC told

The recommendation to remit their life sentences was advised by the Cabinet under Article 161.

The other convicts are Nalini, Murugan, Santhan, Jayakumar, Ravichandran and Robert Payas.

On Wednesday, Justice Rao termed the Governor's delay "extraordinary". The Bench too noted how a decision was not forthcoming despite the State government's recommendation.

A surprise

The new turn of events came as a surprise, as Additional Solicitor-General K.M. Nataraj, for the Centre, argued on Wednesday that the pleas for pardon and release should go to the President instead of the Governor.

The Centre had, for the first time, raised the point about the Governor's power to grant remission to Perivalan under Article 161 in November last.

But Mr. Sankaranarayanan had consistently argued that a convict was free to choose between the President and the Governor for pardon.

In earlier hearings, the

senior advocate had referred to the Constitution Bench's judgment in the *Union of India versus Sriharan* of December 2015, which said the "exercise of executive clemency" was "vested in the President or the Governor".

Mr. Sankaranarayanan said the Centre's rejection in 2018 of the Tamil Nadu government proposal to remit the sentence of the convicts under Section 432 of the Code of Criminal Procedure did not stop the convicts from separately moving the Governor for pardon under Article 161.

The constitutional power of pardon of the President or the Governor was "untouchable and unapproachable and cannot suffer the vicissitudes of simple legislative processes", he had explained from the *Sriharan* judgment.

The Constitution Bench, in a majority decision, had held that the States cannot unilaterally remit the sentences of life convicts in cases investigated by a Central agency under a Central law. The assassination case was probed by the CBI.

Biden begins dismantling Trump legacy

"The United States will continue to be a full participant and a global leader in confronting such threats and advancing global health and health security," the letter read.

Mr. Biden's first executive order, however, was about COVID-19, and mandated the wearing of face-masks on federal government property and encouraged people to wear masks for 100 days. More than 4,00,000 Americans have died due to the virus. He also re-established an Obama-era National Security Council unit that deals with world health security and biodefence.

"With the state of the nation today there's no time to waste. We're going to get to work immediately," he told reporters in the Oval Office.

As part of Wednesday's half-day of work, Mr. Biden repealed Mr. Trump's near-ban on travel to the U.S. from 13 Muslim-majority countries (colloquially known as the "Muslim ban"). The policy has been in place since January 2017 and had survived challenges in the U.S. Supreme Court. He also signed a memo asking the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to "preserve and fortify" the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a programme allowing individuals brought illegally to the U.S. as children, reprieve from deportation. The DHS announced a 100-day pause on all deportations on Wednesday.

Mr. Biden also stopped the construction of the wall with Mexico – a pet project of Mr. Trump which had included the redirection of some \$10 billion from Defense accounts. Mr. Biden ordered a review of funds diverted to building the wall. With regard to domestic

climate policy, Mr. Biden cancelled the permit for Keystone XL, an almost 1,931-km pipeline that brings crude into the U.S. from Canada. The permit was first denied in 2015 by former President Barack Obama and granted in 2017 by Mr. Trump. He also issued a moratorium on oil and natural gas leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and reversed a Trump administration rollback of Obama-era vehicle emission rules.

Mr. Biden also dismantled Mr. Trump's "1776 Commission" that was set up to promote "patriotic education" to children but has been criticised for whitewashing the country's history of racism. He also signed an order enforcing prohibitions on the federal government from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, reversing some Trump-era actions.

At the virtual swearing-in of his staff, he stressed the need for humility as a core value in his White House. He told members of his new team that if he ever heard them treating their colleagues with disrespect, he would fire them "on the spot... no ifs and or buts".

"Everybody... everybody is entitled to be treated with decency and dignity. That's been missing in a big way the last four years."

Mr. Biden, who did not have his predecessor at the inauguration, did receive a letter from him, as is the custom. "The President [Mr. Trump] wrote a very generous letter," Mr. Biden said. He told reporters that he did not want to discuss the contents until he had spoken with Mr. Trump.

Mr. Biden will release a national strategy for tackling COVID-19 on Thursday, the White House said.

Farmers reject proposal to suspend laws

Keeping up the pressure, the unions reiterated their plan to conduct a tractor parade inside the capital on Republic Day, despite the police opposing it. "In the meeting held with the police officials [on Thursday morning], the police requested not to conduct the parade in Delhi, while the farmers restated their plan about doing the parade on the Outer Ring Road," the Morcha said in a statement. Noting that 147 farmers have died during the protest so far, the Morcha said "their sacrifice will

not go in vain and we will not go back without the repealing of these farm laws".

In a parallel process, the Supreme Court-appointed committee started its hearings on Thursday, reaching out to 10 farmer groups in eight States via videoconferencing.

The farmers "gave their frank opinion, including suggestions to improve the implementation of the Acts", an official statement said. The Morcha has refused to appear before the committee.

They were victims of sexual assaults during lockdown

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHE

Seven minor girls in Kerala, who became pregnant after being raped, were allowed to terminate their pregnancy during the past six months.

The girls, the youngest one aged 13, are victims of separate instances of sexual assault that took place during the lockdown period.

The Kerala High Court cleared the petitions moved by the mothers of the victims as judicial permission was required for initiating Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) in cases of ad-

vanced stages of pregnancy.

Two victims, aged 14 and 16, were into their 23rd week of pregnancy, while the 13-year-old was 21 weeks pregnant, when their cases came up before the courts.

The judges issued the orders for MTP on the same day the petitions came up before them, considering the trauma faced by the minor girls.

It was after obtaining the views of medical boards on possible risks involved in the continuation of the pregnancy that the courts issued the orders. Questions on the possible risks to the girls during the termination of pregnancy and the best methods for ending the pregnancy were raised. The psychiatric

assessment of the victims was also carried out.

All the victims were shocked to learn about their pregnancy and expressed anguish over their future.

Some broke down. All of them wanted to terminate the pregnancy and resume their studies, revealed the court documents accessed by *The Hindu*.

The lawyers engaged by the Kerala State Legal Services Authority extended free legal support to the victims and stood by them, said Nizar Ahmed, secretary of the Authority.

The court had also given a directive to conserve the tissue of the foetuses for DNA analysis as criminal cases were pending.

The rally was scheduled to culminate at the NTR sta-

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI

The Dharma Parikshana Yatra of the TDP was foiled by the police at Alipiri, the foot of Tirumala hills, here on Thursday.

Through the yatra, the TDP wanted to highlight the government's "failure" to prevent the series of attacks on temples and desecration of idols.

It was to have been launched by party's State president K. Atchannaidu, but he was prevented from stepping out of his hotel room. Mr. Atchannaidu was detained along with senior leaders such as N. Amarathna Reddy, Nakka Ananda Babu, and MLAs Nimmala Rama Naidu and A. Saty Prasad.

The rally was scheduled to culminate at the NTR sta-

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI

The Dharma Parikshana Yatra of the TDP was foiled by the police at Alipiri, the foot of Tirumala hills, here on Thursday.

Through the yatra, the TDP wanted to highlight the government's "failure" to prevent the series of attacks on temples and desecration of idols.

It was to have been launched by party's State president K. Atchannaidu, but he was prevented from stepping out of his hotel room. Mr. Atchannaidu was detained along with senior leaders such as N. Amarathna Reddy, Nakka Ananda Babu, and MLAs Nimmala Rama Naidu and A. Saty Prasad.

The rally was scheduled to culminate at the NTR sta-

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI

The Dharma Parikshana Yatra of the TDP was foiled by the police at Alipiri, the foot of Tirumala hills, here on Thursday.

Through the yatra, the TDP wanted to highlight the government's "failure" to prevent the series of attacks on temples and desecration of idols.

It was to have been launched by party's State president K. Atchannaidu, but he was prevented from stepping out of his hotel room. Mr. Atchannaidu was detained along with senior leaders such as N. Amarathna Reddy, Nakka Ananda Babu, and MLAs Nimmala Rama Naidu and A. Saty Prasad.

The rally was scheduled to culminate at the NTR sta-

Sasikala tests COVID-19 positive

Aide to late Tamil Nadu CM Jayalalithaa shifted to ICU; condition stable, say doctors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU



Testing times: V.K. Sasikala being taken to Victoria Hospital from Bowring hospital in Bengaluru on Thursday. ■ PTI

V.K. Sasikala, aide to late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who was hospitalised on Wednesday evening with fever, breathlessness and cough, tested positive for COVID-19 late on Thursday night.

Doctors said her condition is stable as of now.

The 63-year-old, who is serving a jail term at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, is scheduled to be released on January 27.

She was earlier diagnosed with severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) and had been shifted to the ICU in Victoria Hospital. However, her CT Thorax showed features suggestive of severe respiratory infection. Although she had initially tested negative for COVID-19, doctors did further tests.

Victoria Hospital Medical Superintendent Ramesh Krishnan K. told *The Hindu* that her general condition is stable. She has Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and hypothyroidism, apart from SARI symptoms. She was referred to Victoria Hospital from the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital on Thursday morning, he said.

C.R. Jayanthi, Dean and Director, Bengaluru Medical College and Research Institute, to which Victoria Hos-

pital is affiliated, said Sasikala's first COVID-19 test at Bowring Hospital was negative. "However, since her CT scores were high, we again did a rapid antigen test at Victoria, which was also negative. Following that, we collected samples for TRU-NAT and RT-PCR tests and they have returned positive."

"We are shifting her to the COVID Block ICU at the Trauma and Emergency Care Centre, the dedicated COVID facility on Victoria Hospital campus. She is being continuously monitored and treated with antibiotics, antiviral drugs, insulin, heparin, steroids, and other supportive measures," the doctor said.

Sasikala was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in February 2017 in a ₹66 crore disproportionate assets case. She was later expelled from the AIADMK.

'Ambulance driver died of heart attack'

Earlier he was given COVID-19 vaccine

K. SHIVA SHANKER
HYDERABAD

A 42-year-old ambulance driver in Telangana, who died within 24 hours of getting the COVID-19 vaccine, suffered a myocardial infarction, also known as heart attack, according to the preliminary post-mortem report.

However, it would take at least two weeks to know what triggered the heart attack and if vaccine was the cause, say health officials.

The driver, G. Vital Rao, did not suffer from any comorbidities. He received the vaccine at the Kuntala Primary Health Centre, Nirmal, on Tuesday morning and was on duty till 5 p.m. He is said to have developed chest pain around 2.30 a.m. on Wednesday, and was de-

clared brought dead to the District Hospital, Nirmal, at 5.30 a.m. The post-mortem examination report has been sent to the Central AEFI Committee.

Final result awaited

Director of Public Health Dr. G. Srinivas Rao said samples of viscera and body fluids had been sent to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory, and the National Institute of Virology Pune for further examination. "This will help us know the actual cause of the death."

Officials also ruled out human error during vaccination. Human errors include not storing vials at prescribed temperatures or administering vaccine at a site other than what is prescribed.

IN BRIEF

A.P. set to begin home delivery of rations

VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy flagged off mobile dispensing units (door delivery vehicles), meant to supply rations, here on Thursday. As many as 9,260 vehicles will take essential commodities to the doorstep of ration card-holders in the State. The new service will begin on February 1.

Hold panchayat polls, court tells A.P. govt.

VIJAYAWADA
A Division Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday directed the State government to conduct elections for gram panchayats in February as per the schedule announced by the State Election Commission. In a swift move, the State government challenged the High Court order in the Supreme Court through a special leave petition.

Telangana to introduce 10% quota for EWS

HYDERABAD
Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Thursday said the State government would introduce 10% reservation for the economically weaker sections (EWS) in education and jobs. It would not affect the quota enjoyed by other sections, a release from the Chief Minister's Office said. The State is already implementing 50% quota for others, it said.

Sena leaders stopped at Karnataka border

BELAGAVI
Police stopped Shiv Sena leaders who were trying to enter Belagavi to participate in an anti-Kannada flag protest planned for Thursday. They were responding to a call given by the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, which is protesting against a Kannada flag post erected by Kannada organisations in front of the city corporation in Belagavi.

Cabinet reshuffle triggers dissatisfaction

Karnataka CM Yediyurappa effects changes in portfolios of 11 Ministers, including himself

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Limbavali has been given the Forest Department which was earlier held by B.S. Anand Singh.

R. Shankar has been given Municipal Administration and Sericulture while S. Anand Singh has got Fisheries and Ports. C.P. Yogeshwar has got Minor Irrigation and N. Nagaraj (MTB), who was expecting a plum portfolio such as Housing, has instead been given Excise.

Surprise change
The surprise in the Thursday's ministerial reshuffle was J.C. Madhuswamy, who had become the voice of the government in the legislature sessions, being stripped

of Law and Parliamentary Affairs as well as Minor Irrigation departments. He has now been given Medical Education and Kannada and Culture portfolios. Mr. Madhuswamy admitted that he had requested the Chief Minister that he be allowed to retain Minor Irrigation. Law

and Parliamentary Affairs has now been given to Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

Seven new hands

Similarly, K.C. Narayana Gowda, who had earlier held Horticulture and Sericulture departments, has to be now satisfied with Youth Empowerment and Sports and Haj and Wakfs departments. Interestingly, the Chief Minister continues to hold prominent portfolios, including Energy. In all, he has effected changes in the portfolios of 11 Ministers, including himself, besides assigning portfolios to seven new Ministers.

It did not take much time

for dissatisfaction to surface as Mr. Nagaraju publicly stated that the Excise Department was not a portfolio of his choice and that he wanted some portfolio which would help him in serving poor people.

Several Ministers, who have lost major portfolios, met at the residence of Health Minister K. Sudhakar for sometime.

Even efforts by senior Minister R. Ashok and the Chief Minister himself did not appear to have yielded results as four Ministers – Dr. Sudhakar, Mr. Madhuswamy, Mr. Nagaraju, and Mr. Gopalaiah – did not attend the Cabinet meeting held later in the day.

Kerala HC allows 7 minors to terminate their pregnancy

They were victims of sexual assaults during lockdown

K.S. SUDHI
KOCHI

Law and Parliamentary Affairs as well as Minor Irrigation departments. He has now been given Medical Education and Kannada and Culture portfolios. Mr

Centre in a bind over continuing protest

Republic Day celebrations and SC's refusal to ban tractor rally had led to its compromise formula

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

After more than 10 rounds of talks with farmers' unions, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar announced on Wednesday that the government was ready to suspend the implementation of the three contentious farm laws for 18 months. With that, the government hoped that the unions, determined to take out a tractor rally on Republic Day, would think of calling off



Mammoth talks: Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar after meeting with farmer leaders. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

their months-long agitation and lift the blockade of the national capital.

The reasons for the government's compromise formula are not hard to find. The prolonged strike by the farmers' unions, especially those from Punjab and Haryana, the Republic Day celebrations and the Supreme Court's refusal to ban a proposed tractor rally were just the immediate reasons for coming up with it.

However, within the government, there is a realisation that it had lost the communications game early in the day.

"During the COVID-19 policy rejig, the *apada main avasav* [opportunities in crisis] set of changes in laws governing labour, small industry and agriculture were announced and while a lot of consultation on these had taken place over the years, the announcements were sudden," a government official said.

Hectic backchannel

The size and heterogeneity of the farmers' protests meant that government interlocutors had to do hectic backchannel and overt negotiations with groups which may or may not have the freedom to act as representatives of all groups.

Most important, security implications of a long-term, even peaceful political protests of this sort were always going to be problematic in a border State such as Punjab.

In fact, within days of the start of the protests, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, whose party, the Congress, is supporting the cause of farmers, met Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the security implications.

While the accusations from certain sections that the movement was infiltrated by Sikh separatist elements was dismissed by the Ministers in charge of the negotiations with farmers' unions after a backlash, the statements made by MPs and even the government of Canada and some lawmakers in Britain added a new dimension to the way the government viewed the protests.

The indefinite continuation of a well-funded protest was making the government and the ruling party's ideological mothership, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak

Sangh, nervous. In an interview to the *Indian Express*, the second in command of the RSS, Suresh "Bhaiyyaji" Joshi, said in as many words that indefinite agitations by farmers were not desirable for any stable government.

The extent to which the government has been willing to go, however, has also been determined by what happened when the Modi government in its first term tried to pass the Land Acquisition ordinance and faced a backlash.

The ordinance was scrapped after an adverse response and accusations that the government was favouring crony capitalists over farmers and rural land owners. A similar narrative was building up over agriculture reforms too.

With the Supreme Court having suspended the implementation of the three farm Bills for a couple of months, the government went a step further and offered the suspension for a year-and-a-half, if required.

Nandigram to set the tone of West Bengal polls again

Mamata to contest the seat, challenging Suvendu Adhikari

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The election in West Bengal is tipped to be the most fiercely contested among the Assembly polls to be held early this year. The State is going to the polls along with Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Puducherry.

Nandigram is emerging as the set piece that will define that contest.

The site of the agitation by local people against land acquisition by the then Left Front government in 2008-09 which propelled the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress to power in 2011 and 2016, is poised to play a central role again. This is the seat Ms. Banerjee has decided to contest, directly challenging her once protégé, now detractor Suvendu Adhikari, who currently holds the seat.

Mr. Adhikari, his father and brother gained prominence in the area and indeed entire Midnapore during the Nandigram agitation and opposition to land acquisition, a movement politically helmed by Ms. Banerjee. They are local worthies and have influence in Midnapore, an area (east and west included) that has approximately 20 Assembly seats.



Suvendu Adhikari

Mr. Adhikari switching to the BJP has created a problem for the Trinamool, which the party hopes, will be resolved by Ms. Banerjee throwing her hat in the ring from that seat.

'Master stroke'

"It's a master stroke, in not just making sure Suvendu and his family are restricted to the seat in terms of campaigning but also to incontrovertibly assert ownership on the Nandigram and Singur movement. Whatever Suvendu did as part of the movement was due to the leadership of Mamata, the party and its symbol," said a senior leader.

Former Union Minister and Trinamool MP Dinesh Trivedi termed the move "a demonstration of the fact" that "Ms. Banerjee has the pulse of the people".

While the optimism in the Trinamool on her move to

Nandigram is understandable, the BJP is having none of it. "If you see Mamata Banerjee's margin of victory from Bhabhanipur in 2016 [25,000] and the Trinamool margin in the seat during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls [3,168], there is a genuine fear in the Trinamool that the seat is dicey. Her decision to fight from Nandigram, therefore, is a desperate move," said BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijaywargiya, who is in charge of the party's affairs in the State.

"If the party fields Suvendu [Adhikari] from Nandigram, he will win," he added.

The seat is, according to local leaders, going to see a community polarised campaign in the coming days. According to the latest electoral rolls finalised for the seat, it has 62,000 minority voters out of a total of 2.75 lakh.

"Already speeches in meetings are veering towards rhetoric," said a local leader of the Trinamool.

After playing kingmaker in the 2011 Assembly polls ending a nearly four-decade-old rule of the Left Front, Nandigram is poised to an insult to the rich culture of the

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

"Showing such ridiculous

and shameless things on the name of a city/district is the insult of approximately 30 lakh population and rich culture of Mirzapur," it said.

During the hearing, counsel appearing for the petitioner told the Bench that the plea has become infructuous as the web series had already been telecast. However, the Bench said it was issuing notices on the plea.

city. The petitioner, Mirzapur-resident Sujeet Kumar Singh, said he had filed the plea to protect the "historical and cultural value" of Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.

Co-WIN platform gets upgrade

1,92,581 beneficiaries inoculated on sixth day of nationwide COVID-19 vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The cumulative number of healthcare workers vaccinated against COVID-19 has touched 9,99,065 (till 6 p.m. on Thursday) through a total of 18,159 sessions, according to a provisional report.

A total of 4,041 sessions were held till 6 p.m. on Thursday, and 1,92,581 beneficiaries were vaccinated on the sixth day of the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination, said the Health Ministry on Thursday, adding that there are no cases of serious/severe AEFI (adverse event following immunisation) attributable to vaccination till date.

The Ministry said that 187 minor AEIIs have been reported till 6 p.m. on the sixth



Day six: Healthcare workers in an observation room after getting vaccinated in New Delhi. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

day of the vaccination drive. It added that an enhancement in Co-WIN software has been introduced to cater to the creation of more session sites, more sessions per site, and a change in site location, which is now allowed.

"The enhanced version also allows planning and scheduling the sessions for entire week and works for the enhanced safety of the beneficiaries, tagging of contraindications. These new features are being enabled in vaccination

module," the Ministry said. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, on Thursday, unveiled an IEC (information, education, communication) campaign with a series of posters to address the issue of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, stating that India is one of the few countries to halt the march of COVID-19 and simultaneously develop a vaccine for COVID-19.

"A handful of vested political interests who are interested in spreading rumours and encouraging vaccine hesitancy among those vulnerable to such propaganda in the population. The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines, while a section of our own is misinformed," he added.

Maharashtra orders probe into SII fire

SHOUMOJIT BANERJEE

PUNE

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday directed an immediate investigation into the fire that broke out in an under-construction building at the Serum Institute of India's Manjari premises in Pune. Five people were killed in the fire.

"I have taken information regarding the blaze from the Pune Police Commissioner and have directed a thorough inquiry into the accident. Concerns are being expressed in the country and abroad regarding the safety of this project. However, I would like to clarify that as per information received, the Corona Preventive Vaccine Project is safe. At present, putting out the fire and controlling the damage caused by the blaze is top priority," Mr. Pawar said.



Scene of tragedy: The fire at the Serum Institute of India was put out after three hours. ■ AP

State Health Minister Rakesh Tope said the fire was caused when a spark during welding fell on inflammable material. "Work pertaining to rotavirus plant installation was under way in the building. At least five fire tenders

and three water tankers were rushed to the spot. It took around two-three hours to douse the fire. After the fire was finally extinguished, five bodies were found inside the building by the authorities," he said.

Offering condolences, Cyrus S. Poonawalla, chairman and managing director of the company, said the vaccine major would offer a compensation of ₹25 lakh in addition to the mandated amount to the kin of the dead.

India to clear vaccine exports to Brazil today

Delay led to a flurry of messages from Bolsonaro govt.

SUHASINI HAIDAR

NEW DELHI

Brazil is set to receive the go-ahead from the Indian government on Friday to collect two million doses of the Covishield vaccine made by the Serum Institute, two weeks after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their "urgent" clearance, sources confirmed to *The Hindu*. The consignment, which was due to be collected by a special Brazilian plane last week, was delayed as the government had not yet finalised its plans for exports of Indian-made vaccines.

The delay had led to a flurry of messages from Brazil, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had spoken to his Brazilian counterpart Ernesto Araújo to reassure him on January 16. "The Minister assured [Mr. Araújo] of our support and confirmation that the [consignment] will be going as planned," a source said.

After the clearance of grant assistance of the vaccines to neighbouring countries, officials confirmed that Brazil is among the "key partners" who would receive export permissions for their orders next.

Brazil had first turned to India for the Covishield vaccine earlier this month to tide over the gap in production of its own units amid an emerging health crisis. In a letter to Mr. Modi on January 8, Mr. Bolsonaro asked him to "expedite the shipping" of the consignment contracted earlier, and his government had announced that it was sending a special plane to collect the vaccines on January 14.

However, after India re-



Urgent need: A Guarani indigenous man is inoculated with the Sinovac Biotech's CoronaVac vaccine in Brazil. ■ AFP

Nepal, Bangladesh thank India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Prime Ministers of Nepal and Bangladesh thanked the Indian leadership and the people of India after Kathmandu and Dhaka received on Thursday two large

consignments of the Covishield vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India. The two South Asian leaders spoke as India prepared 1.5 million Covishield doses that will be flown to Myanmar in a special flight on Friday.

der about his government's handling of the pandemic.

Brazilian officials said they now await confirmation from India so that they could reschedule their special plane.

"We still do need the Indian-made vaccines that have been contracted for," one official said.

Brazil's first phase of vaccination will target 49 million people out of its total population of 212 million.

Health regulator ANVISA has cleared both Sinovac and the U.K.'s AstraZeneca vaccine, both of which will be manufactured in Brazil.

It is unclear whether the Prime Minister will take Covishield or Covaxin.

Meanwhile, under "vaccine diplomacy," assistance has been promised for Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mauritius and Seychelles.

Modi likely to get the jab in Phase 2

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

As the COVID-19 vaccination campaign continues with varying degrees of enthusiasm in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and many Chief Ministers are likely to get the jab in the second phase of the drive for those over 50 years of age.

Mr. Modi, in a videoconference with the Chief Ministers just before the launch of the nationwide drive, said politicians should not jump the queue for vaccination, as the first round was for frontline workers in the health and law enforcement sectors, government sources noted.

"In the same vein, he said politicians would get their turn in the second phase when senior citizens will be vaccinated," a government official said.

"There is nothing new in the plan that was originally thought up," the official added.

As the campaign progresses, optics of Mr. Modi getting the jab could go a long way in addressing concerns of vaccine sceptics. In the campaign since January 16, the target could not be achieved.

Slow offtake

Several reasons are being attributed to the slow offtake with software glitches, adverse events, and uncertainty over the efficacy of the vaccine being among the many reasons.

It is unclear whether the Prime Minister will take Covishield or Covaxin.

Meanwhile, under "vaccine diplomacy," assistance has been promised for Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mauritius and Seychelles.

Some defence imports inevitable: Army chief

Can't afford to have operational voids when enemy is at the gates, General Naravane says

DINAKAR PERI

NEW DELHI

The Chief of the Army Staff, General Manoj Naravane, on Thursday said that considering the quick pace of defence modernisation being undertaken by India's adversaries, the country was lagging behind slightly.

Continued heavy dependence of the armed forces on imports needed to be addressed through indigenous capability development, but one cannot afford to have "operational voids when the enemy is at the gates", he noted.

"An important issue one needs to keep in mind is that indigenous development

The need of the hour
today is not just a revolution in military affairs to fight the modern day war. A revolution in bureaucratic affairs is also required

GEN. MANOJ NARAVANE,
ARMY CHIEF



alone cannot fill the existing... and operational voids due to lack of niche technology and manufacturing capability. Hence, there may be some inescapable need on certain percentage of imports. One cannot afford to have operational voids when the enemy is at the gates," he said at an event to commemo-

orate 25 years of Army-industry partnership, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

He said 2020 was a unique year with twin challenges – the COVID-19 pandemic and the "belligerence on our northern borders". The events of the past year have brought to the fore the vul-

nerability of global supply chains, he said.

He said external dependence on weapons and ammunition created vulnerabilities in times of crisis. In the past few years, there had been an effort to reverse this trend by boosting indigenisation and focusing on dual-use high-end technology. "We are committed to procuring indigenous equipment and weapon systems, as nothing is more motivating for any Army than to fight and win its wars with indigenous technologies and weapons," he said.

Gen. Naravane called for greater flexibility in the interpretation of the procure-

ment process to speed up the process. "The need of the hour today is not just a Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), to fight the modern day war. A Revolution in Bureaucratic Affairs (RBA) is also required to fast track relevant and future capability development," he pointed out.

Seventy-five percent of the Army's Priority-I projects in the 13th Army Plan, costing over ₹1.5 lakh crore were marked for Make in India programmes, he noted.

Dr. G. Sathesh Reddy, Secretary, Department of Defence R&D, and Chairman, DRDO, said the capability of the private industry had gone up over the years.

CPWD seeks comments on Rajpath project

Work is slated to start on February 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With work on the proposed redevelopment of Rajpath or the Central Vista Avenue expected to begin after the Republic Day celebrations, the Central Public Works Department has invited objections and suggestions to the project.

The CPWD awarded the contract to Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. recently after its bid of ₹477 crore was found to be the lowest.

Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said at a press conference on January 11 that the work would start

on February 1, after the Republic Day and Beating Retreat ceremonies.

Mandatory clearance

The CPWD has called for objections and suggestions from the public as the area is among "Grade-I Heritage Precincts", requiring clearance from the Heritage Conservation Committee, apart from the Delhi Urban Art Commission.

The CPWD has invited comments via e-mail till 5 p.m. on January 29.

The project is scheduled to be completed in time for the Republic Day parade in 2022.

Smart cameras to help women in distress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

The police in the Uttar Pradesh capital are set to install smart cameras in public places that will automatically click the pictures of women in distress situations by reading their facial expressions and alert the nearest police vehicle.

Five such artificial intelligence-based cameras will be installed at each of the 200 "hotspots" identified by the police in the city, City Police Commissioner D.K. Thakur said. The hotspots would include areas from where most complaints have been received.

The cameras would react to 40-45 different eventualities and possibilities, said Mr. Thakur at a safe city workshop event at the Lucknow University on Wednesday.

"For example, a woman is being stalked on the street, someone is chasing her. The camera would capture her change in expression," he said.

Soldier killed on LoC in Poonch

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAMMU

A soldier was killed on the Line of Control (LoC) in a ceasefire violation of Pakistan in the Pir Panjal valley's Poonch district on Thursday. Meanwhile, J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha chaired a meeting of the Unified High Command, comprising top security officials, on measures to curb militancy.

An official said a soldier, identified as Hawaldar Nirmal Singh from the Army's 10 JAK Rifle, sustained bullet injuries in the chest after Paksitan resorted to sniper fire on forward posts in Poonch's Mankote area. "Singh was immediately shifted in a chopper to the Udhampur hospital. However, the soldier died on the way," he said.

An Army spokesman said the Pakistan army resorted to unprovoked ceasefire violation in Krishna Ghati Sector". "The Indian Army responded strongly," he added.

Cong., AIUDF welcome EC move on Assam poll

Those excluded from NRC can vote, it said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GUWAHATI

A day after the Election Commission announced that those excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will be eligible to vote in the upcoming Assembly poll if their names are there on the voter list, the ruling BJP on Thursday said status quo about their voting rights has to be maintained while the Congress and the AIUDF welcomed the decision.

The final NRC, a database of Indian citizens living in Assam which was updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court and published on August 31, 2019, excluded names of over 19 lakh of the 23 crore applicants.

AIUDF general secretary Aminul Islam said: "We also want a permanent solution to the problems of doubtful or D-voters which exists only in Assam."

but names of many illegal immigrants are there in it. The NRC document in its present form has not been accepted by the party and we have asked for a reverification. Till it is done, status quo has to be maintained as the notification is yet to be issued," BJP Assam unit president Ranjeet Dass said.

State Congress spokesperson Bobbeeta Sharma said names of many genuine Indian citizens were left out of the final NRC. "The EC has taken the right step in allowing them to vote. Otherwise, their democratic rights would have been infringed upon," she said.

The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), an alliance partner of the Congress for the Assembly poll due in March-April, also welcomed the EC decision describing it as "a positive move".

AIUDF general secretary Aminul Islam said: "We also want a permanent solution to the problems of doubtful or D-voters which exists only in Assam."

Officials of FB, Twitter depose before House committee

SOBHANA K. NAIR

NEW DELHI

At a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology headed by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, Facebook, which owns the messaging platform WhatsApp, clarified that it has not "functionally" changed the privacy policy.

Officials of Facebook and Twitter deposed before the committee on the subject of "safeguarding citizens' rights and prevention of misuse of social/online news media platforms".

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) had recently written to Will Cathcart, Global CEO of WhatsApp, to withdraw the proposed changes to the privacy policy of the Facebook-owned messaging application for Indian users. The Ministry demanded that WhatsApp explain if the metadata of us-

pered that the revenue model of the platform is advertising-driven, though the officials insisted that it does not share the user data with any of its advertisers.

Members also asked Facebook to explain whether it is a publisher or merely an intermediary. Concerns were raised in the meeting that Facebook is governed solely by U.S. community laws since it is a U.S.-based registered company.

BJP MPs flagged the recent ban on former U.S. President Donald Trump on Twitter. A section of BJP MPs criticised Twitter calling it a violation of freedom of expression. Another section flagged Twitter for not showing the same as the 2016 policy, the platform has improved transparency standards," a member said.

The committee also questioned Facebook on data security and its monetisation. The Facebook officials explained if the metadata

Bedazzled by the RATION SHOP



The pandemic is when many of Kerala's urban millennials, Gen Z and even celebrities rediscovered the good old Public Distribution System, with its free, quality grocery kits

ATHIRA M

Gayathri TS is at her wits' end, thanks to her mother Vimala S' constant reminders about collecting their monthly free kit comprising rice, wheat, pulses, oil, masala powders and more from the ration shop at Edappally, in Kochi, before the last date. "She doesn't want to miss the generous supply of essential commodities and keeps calling our ration dealer to get updates about the distribution. This has been a routine ever since we got free kits for Onam," says Gayathri, a media professional.

The pandemic reconnected several households with the public distribution system (PDS) across Kerala.

While a friend confides that she had to go scouting for her ration shop, another one said that her 70-year-old mother-in-law has stepped out of her home since March only to get her kits because of the biometric authentication in place.

"It has become a habit to wait for SMS alerts every month to get updates about the kits and other items. I have to keep nagging my son to take me to the ration shop," says Indira Radhakrishnan, a retired Government employee from Tripunithura near Kochi.

Gayathri adds: "It was amusing to see Gen Z guys also queuing up. Their body language clearly showed that they were stepping into the shop for the first time. One of them said he wanted only the kit, and had no clue when the ration dealer asked whether he would like to buy anything else he is eligible for!"

As per the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Kerala, there are over 89 lakh card-holders in the State, co-



vering four categories – most economically backward (yellow card), below poverty line or BPL (pink card), Above Poverty Line (APL) or non-priority subsidy (blue card) and non-priority (white card).

The Government claims that 98% of card-holders have collected the kits since they were introduced in April via the 14,000-plus ration shops. Also, 1.5 lakh new ration cards were issued during the lockdown.

While the kits distributed in the initial months had items worth ₹1,000, those distributed in the following

months were worth ₹700, ₹350 and ₹500. Besides, 10 kilograms of rice, priced at ₹15 per kilogram, were sold for three months from April. "The good news is that the kits will be available till April this year. In addition, blue and white card-holders will be given 10 kg of rice at ₹15," says Indira.

Changing times

For many blue and white card holders, their ration card used to be just another document to prove their identity. Complaints in plenty about the poor quality of the products had

kept away many middle-class card-holders, and ration shops lost their importance with the opening of supermarket chains and provision stores.

Then, lockdown began. Parvathy Nair, who works with a private FM channel in Thiruvananthapuram, says "These free kits and the reasonably good quality of products became the talk of the town. So I didn't hesitate to get my kit. Now besides the free kits, I buy other provisions that I am entitled to get as a card-holder."

Prior to the lockdown in March,

some card-holders bought rice and wheat to feed poultry says Radhika A, an IT professional from Perumbavoor in Ernakulam district. "Now I don't want to miss out on what I am eligible for. Since I have a white card, I can buy four kilograms of rice at ₹10.90 per kilogram. The same would cost me at least ₹50 in the supermarket. Wheat flour is ₹17 per kilogram, whereas the retail rate in shops is ₹55-60. Since the kit is more than enough for my small family, I give away a few items to a neighbour. There was so much of chickpea that I didn't know what to do with it!" she says.

Image makeover

Among the celebrities who rooted for the PDS was filmmaker Ranjith Sankar. On June 9, 2020, Ranjith posted on his Facebook page that he went to a ration shop for the first time in his life.

"Kerosene was the only item that we used to buy from our ration shop, that too once in a while. But I never went to purchase it. However, during the lockdown the onus fell on me. It was an eye-opener. The ration dealer was such a nice man that he ensured that I purchased rice and flour as well. All it cost me was ₹157. I wanted more people to know about our PDS and

that's why I wrote about it," he says.

Writer-scenarist Krishna Poojappura, who penned his thoughts about ration shops in a daily, says that back in the 1970s and 1980s, ration shops used to be meeting places for people in the neighbourhood. "We all were dependent on these shops to a great extent because most of us needed the support. But after a point, I stopped buying from there, mainly due to the inferior quality of the stuff and opening of more shops. However, during the lockdown I went back to my old habit and I will hold on to it," says the writer from Thiruvananthapuram.

Ration dealers are also happy with the turn of events. Besides the basic salary of ₹18,000-plus, they earn ₹1.80 per every kilogram of rice they sell, and ₹7 for each kit distributed. Geetha Kumari (name changed), a ration dealer from Kottayam, says: "We are happy that more people are coming in. There have been a lot of new faces, including those who turn up in swanky vehicles!"



Trusty and constant (Clockwise from top left) Rice at a retail store in Kochi; operations at cooperative stores in Edappally and elsewhere • KK MUSTAFAH, THULASI KAKKAT AND SAKEER HUSSAIN

HORS D'OEUVRES



Sanjeev Kapoor for Starbucks

India's original celebrity chef, Sanjeev Kapoor, has tied up with the Tata Sampann brand to design a menu of fusion items for Tata Starbucks outlets across India. The menu includes vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes, including a French-inspired turmeric brioche with makhani dip; and a croissant-like stuffed chole paneer kulcha. Other intriguing items include:

Red poha with coconut stew: A vegan fusion of South and West India, with carrots, green peas, cashews, and yam.

Bhuna murgh pie: Inspired by the Singaporean Curry Puff, this item features Indian spicy chicken and puff pastry.

Masala chicken croissant: Filled with spicy chicken stuffing and cheese.



Brunch at 1911

At Delhi's The Imperial, the Sunday brunch is back. Expect individually done starters and salads, home cured and preserved cold meats, home smoked duck and salmon, and live counters of whole wheat hand-made pasta. For dessert, there are cup cakes and vegan ice creams, French pastry (macaroons, éclairs, and more). It's a multi-cuisine menu, suitable for all, catering to special needs such as gluten-free. You'll eat out in the sun as you spend many hours relaxing. Call 011-41116603 for a reservation; ₹3,500 plus taxes per person with soft beverages without alcohol.

MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

Japan has been producing whisky since the 1920s, if not earlier, but its global popularity has spiked over the past decade. Indians got its taste through Beam Suntory, a union – so to speak – between the Japan-based Suntory and the US-origin bourbon giant Jim Beam and Maker's Mark. With Beam Suntory, India's launch of Yamazaki and Hibiki whiskies in 2019 and Whisky Toki in 2020, the time is ripe for a deep dive into Japan's whisky culture. And who better to initiate us than Shinji Fukuyo, chief blender, Suntory?

Excerpts from an email interview:

What role does the Mizunara play in Japanese whisky, and what makes the wood so distinct?

● During the end of World War II, Japan was posed with a shortage of medicines, food and other necessities. While the country was going through these difficult times, the least of its concerns was the shortage of imported casks to produce whisky. Since the spirit was popular with the armed forces, distillers began to use the native oak of Japan – Mizunara. The oak requires a terrain that has high moisture content. Mizunara would ideally need to be about 200 years old before it can be cut and used as casks. Whiskies that are matured in this rare Japanese wood that grows in the forest of Hokkaido weaves complex aromas and flavours to create a harmony and balance that lends to the unique characteristic of Japanese whisky.

Could you explain the different kinds of terroir

Golden tipple of the East

The land of the rising whiskies has been making its presence felt in India for the past two years, at least. It is time we went exploring the nuances of Japanese whisky, guided by one of the country's best

that Japan has to offer, from the valleys of Kyoto to the highlands of Hokkaido?

● It is only in recent years that the notion of 'whisky terroir' gained popularity to express the time, region and ingredients used to create the spirit. Similar to wine that varies from region to region, the terroir plays an integral role in perfecting and making it a unique offering, gaining it worldwide recognition. There are three main factors that contribute to creating a harmonious blend of whisky.

Water of the land that is pure, clean, soft and

lacks minerals which would otherwise interfere with the taste. This kind of water tends to produce sophisticated whisky thereby giving other ingredients an opportunity to express themselves.

Barrels made from Japanese Mizunara oak that is about 200 years old is used to give unique characteristics and to achieve a balance in flavours.

There is a great change in four seasons in Japan. Due to the increase in humidity during summers, the whisky is absorbed into the wood, thereby infusing the spirit with flavour, character and depth when they contract during winters.

What are the most

important markets for Japanese whisky worldwide? Is India one of them?

● Important markets for us include Europe, US and Asia. That being said, there is a growing demand for luxury whisky and craft gin in India, due to their massive aspirational appeal.

Indians are already among the world's largest consumers of whisky and their love for the spirit is rapidly moving towards premiumisation. As consumption patterns evolve, we find Indian consumers are truly appreciative of the quality and taste of finely blended spirits that soothe the palate.

Single malt and blended Japanese whiskies are generally on the super-premium end of the price spectrum. They are highly desired and in-demand amongst the well-travelled consumer set.

For someone being introduced to Japanese whisky for the first time, which three whiskies would you recommend?

● When it comes to the art of creating Japanese whisky, it follows the Scottish tradition and practice but uses aged casks that are particular to the region to mature a specific quantity of malt whisky. This layer adds to a mesmerising aroma and taste that appeals to a beginner or even an aficionado.

My recommendation would be to try The Yamazaki Distiller's Reserve Single Malt for it is a rich and easy-to-drink whisky. This single malt whisky has been perfected to suit all possible sensibilities of whisky



drinkers. To the nose, the beautiful liquid gold whisky has a sweet, fruity smell derived from strawberry, cherry and Mizunara, while the palate is fresh with notes of raspberry, white peach and a touch of coconut giving it a round body and a profound taste.

The Hibiki Japanese Harmony is a harmonious blend of malt and grain whiskies to create a symphony of flavours. Rose lends to the floral notes, lychee to the fruity, sandalwood and Mizunara to the woody topped off with hints of rosemary to tingle senses. This whisky's complexity lies in the subtlety of flavours that lingers on one's palate, leaving behind a subtle and tender long finish.

Suntory Whisky Toki as it is a careful combination that is a vivid, well-balanced blend that is modern, but which draws on the rich legacy and heritage of The House of Suntory craftsmanship.

The grain component of the blend is brought from the Chita distillery, where the heavy-type grain whisky is distilled using two column stills and is vanilla-rich with a sweet undertone in its unblended state. The malt component was borrowed from the Hakushu distillery, which produces light, fruity malt.

The pairing of Hakushu American white oak cask malt whisky with Chita heavy-type grain whisky creates a seemingly dissimilar but deeply accordant whiskies, together with select Yamazaki malts, adds to the additional depth and complexity gives rise to an exquisite, silky taste, and distinctive character of the blended whisky.

Four indigenous martial art forms walk a tightrope to maintain their core culture and the need to modernise, after their inclusion in 2021 into the Khelo India Youth Games



PRIYADERSHINI S

Every morning before sunrise, Narayanan Embranthri steps into the *kalaris*, a rectangular training space, with his right foot first. He reverently touches the mud floor, a gesture to God and the gurus of the ancient martial discipline of Kalaripayattu. Before his students arrive, he lights the lamp, oils his body and dons the *arakacha* or tight loincloth.

He then goes to the southwest corner of the *kalaris* (which means battlefield) where seven steps, representing the seven power points in the body, are built, and offers a prayer. "That's the *poothara*. Every student who learns this art follows these rituals: the prayer, the dress, the techniques," says Narayanan, who teaches Kalaripayattu at the ENS Kalari built by his father in 1954 in Nettoor, Kochi.

In a recent move, the Sports Ministry inducted four indigenous martial art forms – Kalaripayattu of Kerala, Mallakhamb of Central India, Gatka of Punjab and Thang-ta of Manipur – into the Khelo India Youth Games (KI-YG). As practitioners, coaches, students and federations who have kept these ancient martial

arts alive rejoice, they also voice concern over a possible dilution of the culture and ritual that is at the core of these regional forms, when modified to a sport version.

"It is a moment of great joy and pride for all of us who are continuing this 3,000-year-old tradition," says Narayanan, who is also the secretary, sports of Kalaripayattu Association of Kerala. "There are roughly 1,000 to 1,500 *kalaris* in Kerala. This recognition is as gratifying as it is a challenge, for teachers and practitioners." He is wary that this new-found



scope as a sport may overshadow the essence of Kalaripayattu, if not formatted with care.

Kalari and yoga guru Sharath S Achari states, "This is the mother of all martial arts. Judo, Kung Fu, karate are its children. These are world famous but Kalaripayattu has remained inside Kerala. Why?" He explains that there are several grades of Kalaripayattu like *meythari*, which is practice of body flexibility and leg movements, followed by *kolthari* or fight using short and long sticks and an advanced state of sword play with shield.

arts alive rejoice, they also voice concern over a possible dilution of the culture and ritual that is at the core of these regional forms, when modified to a sport version.

"It is a moment of great joy and pride for all of us who are continuing this 3,000-year-old tradition," says Narayanan, who is also the secretary, sports of Kalaripayattu Association of Kerala. "There are roughly 1,000 to 1,500 *kalaris* in Kerala. This recognition is as gratifying as it is a challenge, for teachers and practitioners." He is wary that this new-found

A leg up for native martial arts



NEERAJA MURTHY

"You will get new ideas when you are on the go," begins Srinivasan Gopalan. He speaks from experience: the engineer-turned-investment and finance professional was on a holiday in Europe when an idea to "combine mythology with a dash of western adventure" occurred to him. Aided by his life experiences, the idea resulted is his recent book *Fab Four: The Legend of Garuda* (Author's Channel). Dubbed as a "global thriller" set in the late 1980s, the book has four protagonists – a Bengali detective, an aspiring civil servant, a Spanish actress and an American doctor. The protagonists are from different parts of the world, and the story has a historical context.

The 50-year-old Narayanan, who began learning the art from his father at the age of 14, adds that the *kalaris*, registered and unregistered, have received little support from the Government.

However, advocate Poothura Soman, Secretary General Indian Kalaripayattu Federation, Thiruvananthapuram, differs: "In 1958 the Government of Kerala recognised the Kerala Kalaripayattu Association and affiliated to the Kerala State Sports Council. It was considered a sport then itself."

Ramesh Indoliya, president, Mallakhamb Federation of India, is elated. Mallakhamb is a traditional form of gymnastics performed with a wooden pole (made of wood from sheesham or Indian rosewood and polished with castor oil), a cane, or a rope. "Till now only Olympic games were given importance. Now indigenous sports will get respect.

Earlier it was a demo game but now it is part of the mainstream; it's a big honour," he says, adding that contemporising an ancient art is required for it to remain relevant. Ramesh points out that girls are now allowed to perform with the pole, which was not the case earlier. "We have introduced that," he says.

Though Madhya Pradesh declared Mallakhamb the State sport only in 2013, it had been developed as a competitive sport since 1981, with rules and regulations introduced at the first National Championship that year.

Harjeet Singh Grewal, president of the Chandigarh-based National Gatka Federation of India, is thrilled at the new platform. He does not fear the dilution of the cultural aspect. "It is in our hands how much we keep and how much we forfeit. We have to change with the times."

Gatka is a style of fighting with wooden sticks that originated in Punjab in the 15th Century. The *bana* and *chola* are worn for ritualistic performances but when performed as a sport, the practitioner wears track pants and T-shirt, and the stick is no longer the size of a man. "The techniques remain the same," he says.

Gatka originally began with a display of over two dozen equip-

ment used in battle and self-defence. "Of these, only the gatka has been taken into the sport. Our aim is to take it till the Olympics," he says, adding that this may necessitate redesigning the format.

"Look at how far the T20 version took cricket. Similarly, the sports version of Thang-ta will rejuvenate it," says Vinod Sharma, secretary-general, Thang-ta Federation of India. This Manipuri art form combines ritual, demonstration and combat and involves a variety of dance forms and warrior drills.

"It is a moment of great pride that Thang-ta has been made a part of the Youth Games. It would have passed into oblivion in the recent decades had the national recognition not come," he says, adding that it can be compared to the Chinese Wushu, the Japanese Ninjutsu and the martial arts of the Filipinos. Thang-ta has eight to 10 types of punching and 12 types of kick techniques. It was converted into sports version 25 years ago, and 25 National Championships and five International championships have been conducted so far. "If a newer format is required for Khelo India, so be it," he adds.

A conservative Narayanan sums up the challenge: "Keep the tradition and develop the sport."



Spies caught in myth

Finance professional-turned-writer Srinivasan Gopalan gives a global context to reach out to a wider audience in his latest work, *Fab Four: The Legend of Garuda*

In an adventure Srinivasan ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Though based in a fictional kingdom in India, most of the book is set in Europe. One of the protagonists, a descendant of Lord Garuda, brings in the mythological element. The murder mystery traverses locations in a hunt for motley suspects and the treasure of a 16th Century explorer.

Mystery genre

Mumbai-based Srinivasan admits he was not a voracious reader but was drawn towards the mystery genre in his student days. "I am more of a travel freak and an explorer," he adds. His love for travel can be gauged by the prologue, which talks of a fictitious conversation between Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama.

Indian mythological fiction has seen a rise in the past few years. With more writers exploring the genre, mythology with a modern twist has been proved to be a winning combination. Srinivasan affirms that mythology connects with readers in India. "No matter which era we are born in, we grow up reading mythology. But I wanted to give it a global context," he adds, hoping that this makeover will do the trick. "Most mythology-based fiction novels have stories with an origin in India, whereas my protagonists are a mix of Indian, non-Indian and western spies."

Srinivasan also states that engaging readers' minds through compelling characters was his aim. Sharing his writing experience, he says, "One way to make people read through your

book is to make them part of a story, and if they relate to those characters or feel as part of the journey, they get instantly hooked. I feel books expand our imagination and give numerous possibilities than films where thoughts are dictated by what is going on, on the screen and you lack the flexibility to think beyond."

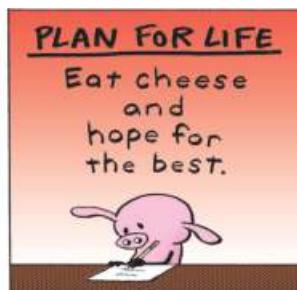
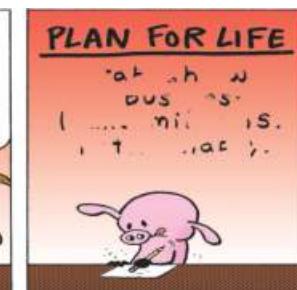
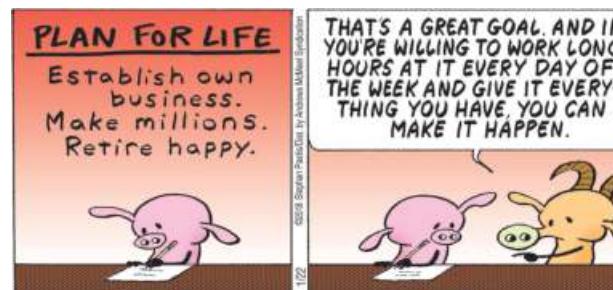
Srinivasan has authored a book on Vedic astrology, which initially began as a hobby. His maternal grandfather was also into astrology. Srinivasan is already working on part II of *Fab Four*. Without revealing much, he says, "There is an unexpected twist at the end of Part I and the second book takes off from there."

Fab Four: The Legend of Garuda is available at leading bookstores.

POOCH CAFE



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Senate confirms Biden's first Cabinet pick

Avril Haines confirmed as Director of National Intelligence; Democrats secure majority in Senate

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON

Three new Senators were sworn into office on Wednesday after President Joe Biden's inauguration, securing the majority for Democrats in the Senate and across a unified government to tackle the new President's agenda at a time of unprecedented national challenges.

In a first vote, the Senate confirmed Mr. Biden's nominee for Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines. Senators worked into the evening and overcame some Republican opposition to approve his first Cabinet member, in what's traditionally a show of good faith on Inauguration Day to confirm at least some nominees for a new President's administration.

Ms. Haines, a former CIA deputy director, will become a core member of Mr. Biden's security team, overseeing



New path: Vice-President Kamala Harris swears in Senators Raphael Warnock, Alex Padilla and Jon Ossoff. ■ AP

the agencies that make up the nation's intelligence community. She was confirmed 84-10.

The new Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., urged colleagues to turn the spirit of the new President's call for unity into action.

"President Biden, we heard you loud and clear,"

Mr. Schumer said in his first speech as majority leader. "We have a lengthy agenda. And we need to get it done together."

Harris delivers oath

Vice-President Kamala Harris drew applause as she entered the chamber to deliver the oath of office to the new Democratic Senators – Jon

U.S. resumes WHO support, launches \$1.9 tn virus plan

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

The U.S. said on Thursday it would resume its funding for the UN's health agency as President Joe Biden shifts towards greater international cooperation in the fight against COVID-19, while also launching a \$1.9 trillion plan to tackle the

Ossoff, Raphael Warnock and Alex Padilla – just hours after taking her own oath at the Capitol alongside Mr. Biden.

The three Democrats join a Senate narrowly split 50-50 between the parties, but giving Democrats the majority with Ms. Harris able to cast the tie-breaking vote.

Mr. Ossoff, a former con-

pandemic at home.

Top U.S. scientist Anthony Fauci praised the agency for "relentlessly" working to help rid the world of COVID-19.

"This is a good day for WHO, and a good day for global health," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

gressional aide and investigative journalist, and Mr. Warnock, a pastor from the late Martin Luther King Jr.'s church in Atlanta, won runoff elections in Georgia this month, defeating two Republicans.

Mr. Padilla was tapped by California's Governor to finish the remainder of Ms. Harris' term.



Hua Chunying

cisely what is needed currently in U.S.-China relations".

"The recent period has indeed been especially difficult," she added.

Beijing also sanctioned former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, more than two dozen advisers and ex-officials in the former President's administration. The officials and their family members will be prohibited from entering mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, the Foreign Ministry said.

"Over the past few years the Trump administration, especially Pompeo, has buried too many mines in U.S.-China relations that need to be eliminated, burned too many bridges that need to be built, and destroyed too many roads that need to be repaired," said Ms. Hua.

China calls for 'better angels' to prevail in reset with Biden's U.S.

It hopes to revive ties after a 'difficult period' under Trump

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China on Thursday congratulated U.S. President Joe Biden on his inauguration and called for a reset in relations between Beijing and Washington after a corrosive period of diplomacy under Donald Trump.

Beijing also welcomed news that the U.S. would rejoin the World Health Organization and the Paris climate accord.

The ever-antagonistic Mr. Trump harangued China over trade, rights, the origins of the COVID-19 virus, tech and defence supremacy,

"With cooperation from both sides, the better angels in China-U.S. relations will beat the evil forces," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

She said Mr. Biden had used the word "unity" several times in his inauguration speech, and that it was "pre-

Google, French press ink copyright payments deal

Framework set to negotiate licence deals

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TAIPEI

Taiwan's de facto Ambassador to the U.S. was formally invited to President Joe Biden's inauguration in what Taipei said on Thursday was a precedent-setting first since Washington switched recognition to Beijing in 1979.

Hsiao Bi-khim, Taipei's envoy, posted a video of himself at inauguration, saying she was "honoured to represent the people and government of Taiwan here at the inauguration of President Mr. Biden and Vice-President Harris".

Taipei's Foreign Ministry said it was the first time in decades that a Taiwanese envoy had been "invited" by the inauguration committee.

gramme, which sees it pay publishers for a selection of enriched content.

Payments are to be calculated individually and will be based on criteria including internet viewing figures and the amount of information published.

APIG head Pierre Louette said the deal amounts to the "effective recognition of neighbouring rights for the press and the start of their remuneration by digital platforms for the use of their publications online".

New outlets struggling with dwindling print subscriptions have long seethed at Google's failure to give them a cut of the millions it makes from ads displayed alongside news search results.

At least 32 killed in Baghdad bombings

Military blames IS after 2 bombers detonated explosive belts in a bustling market



Blast impact: Iraqi security forces inspecting the site of a suicide attack in Baghdad on Thursday. ■ REUTERS

son Mohammed al-Tamimi said at least 32 people were killed and 110 were wounded in the attack. He said some of the wounded were in serious condition. Iraq's military previously put the number of dead at 28.

Maj. Gen. Tahsin al-Khafaji, spokesman for the Joint

Operations Command, which includes an array of Iraqi forces, said the first suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to gather around him – and that's when he detonated his explosive belt. The second det-

onated his belt shortly after, he said.

"This is a terrorist act perpetrated by a sleeper cell of the Islamic State," Gen. al-Khafaji said. He said IS "wanted to prove its existence" after suffering many blows in military operations to root out the militants.

Pope condemns attack

Pope Francis denounced the attack as a "senseless act of brutality" and urged Iraqis to keep working to replace violence with fraternity and peace. The telegram of condolences sent to the Iraqi President was particularly heartfelt, given Pope Francis is due to visit Iraq in March to try to encourage the country's Christian communities that have been devastated by IS persecution.

Taiwan invited to inauguration in a rare shift

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
TAIPEI

Taiwan's de facto Ambassador to the U.S. was formally invited to President Joe Biden's inauguration in what Taipei said on Thursday was a precedent-setting first since Washington switched recognition to Beijing in 1979.

Hsiao Bi-khim, Taipei's envoy, posted a video of herself at inauguration, saying she was "honoured to represent the people and government of Taiwan here at the inauguration of President Mr. Biden and Vice-President Harris".

Taipei's Foreign Ministry said it was the first time in decades that a Taiwanese envoy had been "invited" by the inauguration committee.

Sri Lanka reopens for tourists

Authorities set up a 'safe and secure' bubble, allowing access to select spots

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Thursday reopened its borders for foreign tourists after about 10 months, hoping to revive its pandemic-hit tourism sector. The Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau has set up what it calls a "Safe and Secure" bubble, mandating pre-departure PCR tests for tourists, restricting their stay to designated high-end hotels and beach resorts, and allowing access to select tourist spots, to limit visitors from mixing with the local community.

The move follows a 'pilot project' in late December when some 185 tourists from Ukraine arrived in the island nation. However, with at least six of them testing COVID-19 positive on arrival, the government drew flak from the Opposition for opening up the country in a hurry and "putting lives of locals at risk".

Sri Lanka reported the first case of COVID-19 when a local tourist operator tested positive in March 2020. Though public health authorities, with the support of the military, controlled the first wave effectively, the se-

cond wave that broke out in early October persists, taking the number of cases from around 4,000 then to 55,189 as of Thursday. The fatalities have also risen more than 10 times in the last four months, to 274. More recently, health authorities have reported the new "UK-variant" of the virus.

Vaccine rollout
Meanwhile, Sri Lanka is yet to begin its vaccine rollout. Colombo is expecting supply from different sources, including India, to arrive in two weeks, according to health officials. India is among Sri Lanka's top tourist source markets and the possibility of establishing a tourism bubble for the neighbours was discussed when External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Colombo earlier this month.

Faced with an aggravating economic crunch due to the pandemic, Sri Lanka decided to reopen the country for international visitors, after tourist arrivals in 2020 fell to a fourth of the nearly 2 million arrivals recorded in 2019. The country's vital sector – it is one of the chief foreign exchange earners – reported \$ 3.6 billion earnings in 2019, with the industry accounting for 4.3% of the GDP.

Much of last year saw few international flights arriving at the Colombo and southern Mattala international airports, to repatriate Sri Lankans living and working abroad, even as several thousand Sri Lankan migrant labourers, employed mostly in West Asian countries, still await financial assistance to afford air tickets to travel back home.

Sanders sparks meme storm

Bundled-up Senator sets off first viral meme of the Biden era

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Standing out in a crowd of glamorously dressed guests, Bernie Sanders showed up for the U.S. presidential inauguration in a heavy winter jacket and patterned mittens – with an AFP photo of the veteran leftist spawning the first viral meme of the Biden era.

The Senator from the northeastern state of Vermont, beloved by supporters for his earnest and seemingly grumpy style, was seated alone at the socially distanced event on Wednesday where Joe Biden took oath as President.

Social media users quickly pounced on AFP photog-



In the cold: Bernie Sanders seated at the U.S. Capitol in Washington. ■ AP

another put him in detention with the teenagers from *The Breakfast Club*, and he also made it into numerous *Star Wars* scenes. Some photoshopped him on to the covers of albums by music stars such as Taylor Swift, Kendrick Lamar and Oasis.

"You know, in Vermont... we know something about the cold. We're not so concerned about good fashion, we want to keep warm. And that's what I did today," Mr. Sanders said with a snicker on CBS News after the inauguration.

His wife Jane O'Meara Sanders also praised the look, tweeting: "Vermont jacket, Vermont gloves, Vermont common sense!"

Twitter locks account of China Embassy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

Bertrand said on Thursday it has locked the account of the Chinese Embassy in the U.S., over a tweet claiming Uighur women were no longer "baby-making machines" after their minds had been "emancipated".

A Twitter spokesperson told AFP it took action against the tweet for "violating our policy against dehumanisation".

More than one million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities are believed to be held in re-education camps in the country's northwestern Xinjiang region, where China is also accused of forcibly sterilising women.

STATE INDUSTRIES PROMOTION CORPORATION OF TAMILNADU LIMITED

19-A, RUKMANI LAKSHMIKRISHNA ROAD, EGMORE, CHENNAI - 600 008.

CIN U7499TN1971SCG005967

Tender Notice

Tender Notice NIT.No.134/CW/T.No.138/2020-21

Dt.:20.01.2021

For and on behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, sealed tenders are invited under "Two Cover System" for the following work

from Class -I State level Civil Contractors registered in PWD/Highways/Any Department of Government of Tamilnadu, Central Government Department, Central / State Government undertaking having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be received upto 3.00 PM on 08.02.2021 and the same will be opened on the same day at 3.30 PM.

Name of Work	Approx. value of work	EMD
Providing PCC Kerb Wall cum Pathway along the Roads at SIPCOT Industrial Complex, Guimmidipundi.	Rs. 950.00 lakhs (including GST @12%)	Rs 4,85,000/-*

* in the form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of SIPCOT Ltd., payable at Chennai.

In the Tender / Firm Name only)

The tender Schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the website:

www.tenders.tn.gov.in

DIPR/443/TENDER/2021 SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, SIPCOT, CHENNAI-8

SD/- Administrative Officer

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU CENTRE FOR ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Jakkur, Bangalore 560 064

and C. N. R. RAO EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Adv. No.17/2020 Date: 22/01/2021

JNCASR, invites applications/nominations for the following awards:

1. "Outstanding Science Teachers Prize 2020" for Pre-University

and High School Science teachers (instituted by the C.N.R. Rao Education Foundation). The award carries an honorarium and a citation. For details visit website: <http://www.jncasr.ac.in/announce.php>.

Contact (080)2082749/22082755 for any clarifications.

2. "National Prize for Research in Inorganic and Physical Chemistry" for Scientists who have made outstanding contributions in the area.

For details visit website: <http://www.jncasr.ac.in/annview.php?id=915>

Sd/- Administrative Officer

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BIOMEDICAL GENOMICS

(An Autonomous Institution of the Govt. of India, Deptt. of Biotechnology)

P.O. : NETAJI SUBHAS SANATORIUM, KALYANI - 741251

RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION

Advertisement No. NIBMG/ESTB/Admin/2020-21/345 Date : 07.01.2021

MARKET WATCH

	21-01-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	49625	-0.34
US Dollar	72.99	0.08
Gold	49125	0.75
Brent oil	55.82	-0.95

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	547.65	-10.95
Asian Paints	2716.35	19.10
Axia Bank	675.85	0.10
Bajaj Auto	3703.30	59.35
Bajaj Finserv	9052.80	114.55
Bajaj Finance	5118.30	136.35
Bharti Airtel	581.35	-14.80
BPCL	408.30	-5.55
Britannia Ind	3630.80	38.50
Cipla	812.75	-20.05
Coal India	137.35	-4.15
Divis Lab	3604.60	-1.10
Dr Reddy's Lab	5052.20	-28.45
Eicher Motors	2926.60	45.05
GAIL (India)	133.75	-4.25
Grasim Ind	1017.10	-17.60
HCL Tech	993.30	-5.95
HDFC	2663.00	-25.15
HDFC Bank	1474.80	-17.20
HDFC Life	700.50	-2.45
Hero MotoCorp	3247.30	-28.30
Hindalco	248.90	-3.20
Hind Unilever	2367.65	11.70
ICICI Bank	552.70	1.70
IndusInd Bank	925.85	-21.85
Infosys	1339.70	0.25
Indian Oil Corp	96.70	-1.60
ITC	213.70	-3.95
JSW Steel	393.30	-7.60
Kotak Bank	1857.80	-25.80
L&T	1371.30	-11.35
M&M	808.25	-16.25
Maruti Suzuki	8076.75	-68.20
Nestle India Ltd.	17716.30	35.00
NTPC	96.10	-2.20
ONGC	94.70	-4.15
Power Grid Corp	195.15	-1.00
Reliance Ind	2099.40	44.70
SBI Life	878.30	-18.45
State Bank	294.85	-7.70
Shree Cement	23719.00	-260.95
Sun Pharma	582.90	-11.80
Tata Motors	290.60	15.70
Tata Steel	666.70	-23.45
TCS	3273.85	-34.95
Tech Mahindra	1004.70	-14.75
Titan	1517.30	-14.00
UltraTech Cement	5542.45	-3.65
UPL	584.55	8.20
Wipro	445.80	0.85

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.79	73.11
Euro	88.36	88.76
British Pound	99.88	100.33
Japanese Yen (100)	70.38	70.69
Chinese Yuan	11.26	11.31
Swiss Franc	82.00	82.36
Singapore Dollar	55.01	55.26
Canadian Dollar	57.63	57.91
Malaysian Ringgit	18.05	18.15

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Hero MotoCorp output tops 100 million units

NEW DELHI India's largest two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp, that crossed 100 million units in cumulative production, said it will introduce over 10 products, including variants, refreshes and upgrades every year, over the next five years. CMD Pawan Munjal said in line with its vision to 'Be the future of mobility,' the firm would unveil motorcycles and scooters over the next five years while also expanding global footprint.

France's Citroen opens physical car showroom
CHENNAI Carmaker Citroen, part of France's Group PSA, opened its physical (physical plus digital) showroom pilot in Ahmedabad on Thursday. This comes ahead of the introduction of its premium Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) C5 Aircross in Q1 of 2021 in India. Groupe PSA is also working on a new platform and India will be the first to receive products from it, said the firm's officials.

BMW to unveil 25 models in India in 2021

NEW DELHI German luxury carmaker BMW plans to unveil 25 products in India across three brands viz. BMW, MINI and Motorrad to boost sales growth in 2021. "We enter into 2021 with positivity," Vikram Pawah, president, BMW Group India, told *The Hindu*. "Across BMW, MINI and Motorrad, we aim to launch 25 exciting products this year," he said.

RBI withdraws pension recovery circular

MUMBAI The RBI on Thursday said rules regarding recovery of excess or wrong pensions are being flouted, and withdrew three circulars concerning the same. The RBI asked banks to seek guidance from the respective pension sanctioning authorities on the process to be followed for recovery of excess pension paid.

'GDP within striking distance of growth'

Success of vaccination drive can tilt balance of risks upward, say RBI officials in article on economy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The economy is within striking distance of attaining positive growth, officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) wrote, adding that the letter 'V' in the V-shaped recovery stood for vaccine.

The Centre unveiled a vaccination drive on January 16 to protect people from COVID-19.

"What will 2021 look like? The shape of the recovery will be V-shaped after all and the 'V' stands for vaccine," wrote the authors of an article on the 'state of economy' in the RBI's January Bulletin.

India's vaccination drive is backed by its comparative advantage of having the largest vaccine manufacturing capacity in the world and a rich experience of mass inoculation drives against polio and measles.

Bajaj Auto net rises 23% on product mix

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Bajaj Auto reported a 23% growth in standalone net profit to ₹1,556 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, due to higher operating leverage and better product mix. Revenue grew 16% to ₹9,279 crore.

The company saw vehicle sales grow 9% to 1,306,810 units in the quarter. "Q3 / FY21 has been a record quarter for the company," Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing. Mital Shah, head of research, Reliance Securities, said, "We expect its exports business to witness a healthy 12% growth in second half of FY21 on the back of revival in the African market."



Shot in the arm: India's vaccination drive is backed by the largest vaccine making capacity in the world. ■ NAGARA GOPAL

"If successful, it will tilt the balance of risks upwards," wrote the article's authors, including RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debata Patra.

The views expressed in the article do not necessarily

represent the central bank's views, the RBI said.

E-commerce and digital technologies will likely be the bright spots in a recovery in a world in which there will be rebounds for sure, but pre-pandemic levels of out-

put and employment are a long way off, they said.

"Recent shifts in the macroeconomic landscape have brightened the outlook, with GDP in striking distance of attaining positive territory and inflation easing closer to the target," Mr. Patra and others observed. India's GDP is estimated to contract by a record 7.7% during 2020-21 as the pandemic severely hit the key manufacturing and services segments, as per government projections released earlier this month.

The economy shrank by 23.9% in the first quarter and 7.5% in the second quarter on account of the pandemic.

The article's authors further said that in the first half of 2021-22, GDP growth will benefit from statistical support and is likely to be mostly consumption-driven. With rabi sowing surpass-

ing the normal acreage way before the end of the season, bumper agriculture production is expected in 2021.

Innovative ways needed

The authors note that slip-page ratios have been falling and loan recoveries are improving even as provisioning coverage ratios have risen above 70%. Capital infusion and innovative ways of dealing with loan delinquencies will occupy policy attention in order to ensure that finance greases the wheels of growth on a durable basis before the demographic dividend slips away, they said.

The economy shrank by 23.9% in the first quarter and 7.5% in the second quarter on account of the pandemic.

"It will take years for the economy to mend and heal, but innovative approaches can convert the pandemic into opportunities. Will the Union Budget 2021-22 be the game-changer?" the central bank officials wondered.



Index slides 0.34% to close at 49,625

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The S&P BSE Sensex slid on Thursday as investors booked profits after the equity benchmark scaled the 50,000 points mark for the first time.

Expectations that companies will report improved earnings for the third quarter, combined with sustained purchases by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have buoyed stocks in recent sessions and the Sensex crossed the key 50,000 threshold when it opened higher at 50,097 points before touching an intraday high of 50,184.

But a combination of caution and keenness to book profits, dragged the index down by as much as 785 points until some late bargain hunting helped limit the scale of losses. The Sensex closed 167 points, or 0.34%, lower at 49,625.

Just the start'

"It is a historic day for India, the Sensex has touched 50,000 mark. In 1979 it was at 100," said the BSE's MD & CEO Ashish Kumar Chauhan. "What has been done in India in the last 40 years has reflected in the Sensex touching 50,000. It is just the start," he added.

The group will have to seek shareholders' nod as well as get an approval from the NCLT.

However, BSE and NSE have stated the comments on the draft scheme of arrangement are "subject to the outcome of any of the ongoing litigations/arbitration/legal proceedings involving the draft scheme and/or decision by any competent authority/competent court in this regard."

"In 2019, the Department of Economic Affairs had recommended a two-airport cap per bidder citing the capital intensive nature of the airport projects.

Stock indices have rallied sharply since plunging to their lowest levels in more than three years in March in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic's outbreak.

"The positive thing about the ongoing rally is that it has been fairly broad-based; across market caps and sectors," said Joseph Thomas, Head of Research, Emkay Wealth Management. "As the panic and crash [in March] was pandemic in

positive," he added.

The NSE Nifty slipped 54 points to close at 14,590.

Ministry says cap was waived considering operational scale

JAGRITI CHANDRA

NEW DELHI



Group of Secretaries) took a conscious decision not to put any restrictions on the number of airports to be bid for or to be awarded to a single entity considering the fact that these six airports are smaller in size, handling only 9.5% of the passenger

traffic whereas Delhi and Mumbai airports accounted for more than 45% of the total passenger traffic in 2006 when they were brought under PPP and the decision to cap one airport to single bidder was necessary," the Ministry said in a statement.

The ministry added that the quantum of passengers handled by private airport operators was 'crucial and [more] important than the number of airports handled by a single entity'.

In 2019, the Department of Economic Affairs had recommended a two-airport cap per bidder citing the capital intensive nature of the airport projects.

Consolidated gross revenue from operations during the quarter rose 39% to ₹11,704 crore from ₹8,430 crore in the same period last year. JSPL said the improvement was an outcome of strong performance of its steel as well as power business in India.

"All operational assets, except Australia, reported positive EBITDA in 3QFY21. JSPL continues to benefit from improving operating and financial leverage," the company said in a regulatory filing.

PE investment in real estate declines 40%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Private equity investments in real estate fell 40% year-on-year to \$4.06 billion in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Knight Frank India.

Private equity (PE) investments in 2019 had almost reached \$6.8 billion.

"India attracted private equity investments to the tune of \$38,149 million in the calendar year 2020. Of the total PE investment, the real estate sector claimed 11% share with \$4,068 million, closing 21 deals during the year," Knight Frank said in a statement. Investments in office assets fell to \$2,509 million last year from \$3,258. Residential real estate saw an inflow of \$368 million versus \$717 million.



on January 11, a 20% increase since May 2020, as per a Nasscom statement. "That is, despite the high degree of overall unemployment in the U.S., demand for high-tech skills continues to remain robust – [indicating] there are just not enough workers with relevant skills to fill them. The rules announced by the previous administration will worsen this talent gap," it added.

Heroes of India's historic series win return to rousing reception

Red carpet treatment in Mumbai and Tamil Nadu; sedate scenes for Siraj in Hyderabad; Ashwin, Washington and Arun arrive via Dubai today

CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Chants of *aala re aala Ajinkya aala* headlined a red carpet welcome for Ajinkya Rahane on his triumphant return from Australia with a few teammates.

The chants (meaning here comes our Ajinkya) were accompanied by the beating of the traditional *dhol tasha* and showering of flower petals at Rahane's residential complex.

Besides stand-in captain Rahane, also arriving in Mumbai were coach Ravi Shastri, star batsman Rohit Sharma, pacer Shardul Thakur and opener Prithvi Shaw, while Brisbane Test hero Rishabh Pant landed in the

national capital early this morning.

Mohammed Siraj drove straight from Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport to the graveyard and paid his last respects to his departed father Mohammed Ghousie.

Chariot ride

T. Natarajan, who was originally picked as a nets bowler but became the first Indian cricketer to make his international debut across all three formats during the same tour, landed in Bengaluru and then took off for his village in Tamil Nadu's Salem.

Once he reached his native Chinnappampatti village, Natarajan was accorded a festive welcome, complete with garlands and a chariot ride through the streets.

Bigger surprise

However, a bigger surprise awaited him at his housing society in suburban Matunga, where residents had made elaborate preparations to accord their hero a royal welcome.

Rahane was joined by his wife and two-year-old daughter in the celebration.



Welcome back! Ajinkya Rahane and Ravi Shastri are greeted at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International airport on arrival from Australia on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Let there be music! Ajinkya Rahane arrives with his wife and daughter at his residence. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

A worthy heir to India's rich batting legacy

Gill's assured debut series in Australia shows he can excel at the highest level

P.K. AJITH KUMAR

Mohali was bitingly cold on New Year's Day in 2019. The sun made a belated, reluctant appearance at around lunch time at the PCA Stadium. And there was something else to warm the heart – the elegant batting of a tall teenager.

Shubman Gill was a delight, as he drove, pulled and cut on his way to an unbeaten 69 off 73 balls and guided Punjab to a 10-wicket victory over Kerala in a Ranji Trophy match. You knew you were watching a special talent in action: you felt, like almost everybody else who had seen him bat did, that he could well be playing for the country before long.

Ready for challenges

Shortly after the match, as he spoke, from outside Punjab's dressing room, which is just a few minutes' drive from his home, it was obvious that he had already begun to expect calls from the



Awesome talent: Shubman Gill is blessed with the kind of timing great batsmen possess. ■ AP

national selectors. "I am ready for international cricket," he had told *The Hindu*. "I can take on big challenges now."

He backed that early statement of intent these past few weeks in the epic Test series in Australia. Though he was named in India's ODI and T20I squads for New Zealand within three weeks of that interview, during which

made 259 runs at an average of 51.80 (he averages 66.55 in First Class cricket).

The last of those innings, 91, laid the foundation for India's incredible chase at Brisbane on Tuesday.

Excellent numbers

The scores in his previous innings in the series read 45, 35 not out, 50, 31 and seven. The numbers are excellent for a debutant opener in Australia against a lethal attack, but the manner in which he made those runs matters more. The 21-year-old looked completely assured as he took on Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon, who have more than 1,000 wickets among them.

He is blessed with the kind of timing great batsmen possess; it is as perfect as his head position. And he is mature beyond his years.

The legacy of the great Indian batting tradition seems to be safe in Gill's hands.

An emotional homecoming for Siraj

Pays respects at his father's grave first thing on arrival

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

For Mohd. Siraj, who played a significant role in India's historic Test series win in Australia, it was an emotional homecoming on Thursday.

He drove straight to the burial ground to pay his respects to his father Mohammed Ghaus, who passed away before the series began Down Under.

Mother's tears
"Yes, I badly missed him today. It was the most difficult time for me, to be there at his grave. I never thought I would have to go through something like this," Siraj said.

"When I met my mom on reaching home today (first time since his father's death), she was continuously weeping. Those were truly emotional moments," he said.

"I thank the entire Indian team and the support staff for the wonderful support they extended," Siraj said.

Reflecting on the series,

the 26-year-old pacer said he had never expected to get the chance to play a Test.

"But, once I got the opportunity I approached it like one of those India-A games, so as not to invite any pressure," he said.

"It was a different kind of challenge to play for India and I enjoyed it. Every teammate said 'you have it in you to make it big. Just stay focused and give your best,'" Siraj said.

"Frankly, the thought that I was the most experienced bowler (with three Tests) never occurred to me.

"We were all determined to give our best and glad to have contributed to the team's win," said Siraj.

Reflecting on the captaincy styles of Ajinkya Rahane and Virat Kohli, Siraj said



If only! Mohd. Siraj's biggest regret is that his father was not around to share in the realisation of his greatest dream.

■ NAGARA GOPAL

both were very good, with the same objective – see India win.

"All the youngsters were encouraged a lot and made to believe in themselves.

"Even when we were not good in certain spells, Ajinkya always trusted the youngsters.

"Never had a harsh word. Kept on encouraging us," Siraj said.

Still learning

"I should look at the performances in Australia as a benchmark, not relax, and try to keep improving," he said.

"I am still a boy learning the art of bowling, there is room for a lot of improvement. I'll play my heart out whenever I get the chance to represent India, which was my father's biggest dream," Siraj said.

He signed off confirming the news that he was engaged, but refused to divulge any details.

Stokes, Archer return for India series

REUTERS
LONDON

England all-rounder Ben Stokes and fast bowler Jofra Archer will return for the four-Test series in India next month as the country's cricket board (ECB) named on Thursday the squad for the first two matches.

Bairstow rested

England's selectors have decided to rest Jonny Bairstow, Sam Curran and Mark Wood, who are currently in Sri Lanka while Craig Overton will also return home after the second Test in the island nation.

The India series is scheduled to begin on Feb. 5,



Impact players: Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer will add fire-power to England Test team in India. ■ GETTY IMAGES

with the first two matches to be played in Chennai before the teams travel to Ahmedabad for the last two games.

The squad: Joe Root (Capt.),

Jofra Archer, Moeen Ali, James Anderson, Dom Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Ben Foakes, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Olly Stone and Chris Woakes.

Sindhu, Sameer cruise into the quarterfinals

THAILAND OPEN

ANI
BANGKOK

India's P.V. Sindhu and Sameer Verma stormed into the quarterfinals of the Toyota Thailand Open badminton with straight-game victories while H.S. Prannoy bowed out of the Super 1000 tournament here on Thursday.

Sindhu outclassed Malaysia's World No. 92 Kisona Selvadurai 21-10, 21-12 in the second round.

World No. 31 Sameer stunned World No. 17 Rasmus Gemke 21-12, 21-9 in just 39 minutes. Malaysia's Darren

Liew defeated Prannoy 21-17, 21-18.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa also made it to the quarterfinals with a 22-20, 14-21, 21-16 win over World No. 17 German duo Mark Lamsfuss and Isabell Hertrich in a match that lasted close to an hour.

Satwiksairaj and Chirag Shetty notched up a 21-18, 23-21 upset win over seventh-seeded Korean combination of Choi Solgyu and Seo Seung Jae.

M.R. Arjun and Dhruv Kapila also lost 9-21, 11-21 to Ben Lane and Sean Vendy.

Williams' header gives Bagan full points

ISL 2020-21

SPORTS BUREAU

A superb header by substitute David Williams in the 90th minute allowed ATK Mohun Bagan (ATKMB) to get back to winning ways with a 1-0 victory over Chennaiyin FC in an Indian Super League match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Faridabad on Thursday.

CFC's season-long troubles with defending set-pieces once again cost the team dear after Javier Hernandez sent in an inch-perfect shot from a corner to an unmarked Williams who headed in to seal the issue.

ATKMB, which outplayed

CFC, looked the more disciplined side in the park.

Good chance wasted

After a slow start, ATK had one of the best chances of the day in the 18th minute when Manveer Singh produced a good run on the right, but his cross went beyond the reach of a charging Roy Krishna.

The defensive approach of trying to pocket one point with a goalless draw failed as last year's runner-up slumped to its fourth loss of the season.

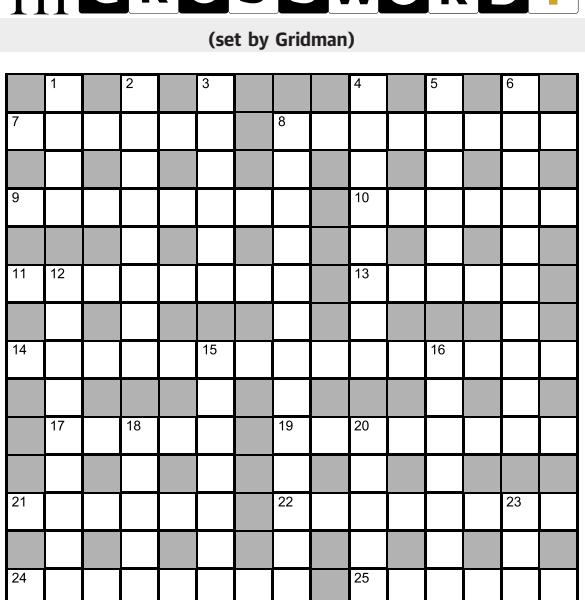
The result: ATK Mohun Bagan 1 (David Williams 90) bt Chennaiyin FC 0.

Friday's match: SC East Bengal vs Mumbai City, 7.30 p.m.

TH CROSSWORD + 13151

(set by Gridman)

Never go off the grid.
We are digital now. Come solve online.
at <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



ACROSS

- 7 Cuban name thrown right out (6)
- 8 By which illegal immigrants try to arrive on an island (8)
- 9 As I march around, see personal appeal, will you? (8)
- 10 Plate creature flipped back (6)
- 11 Dog discovered to be holding bovine at far end of ranch (8)

- 13 Faithful to sides exchanged. It's majestic! (5)
14 Punishment that is very hard? Not exactly! (7,8)
17 One from a part of Karnataka has no duck. Dog? Yes! (5)
19 You can't play tricks with this showman (8)
21 Horror film from which tipsy chakra walks out (6)
22 Game record I got in northern hotels (8)
24 Noblewoman's figure messy in a limited way (8)
25 Think fool has got you and setter (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Chennai leader remains with ready money (4)
 - 2 Celebrities' modern vessel for long-distance travel (8)
 - 3 Island not entirely perfect, not entirely close either (6)
 - 4 On the phone called man for a 'Macbeth' prop (8)
 - 5 Weak film, stupid and extremely silly (6)
 - 6 I, with a learner, stun CIA somewhere in the Caribbean (5,5)
 - 8 Changing hands, wave to men on back street to get these sweets (13)
 - 12 At times, working twice over shoes frayed at edges (2,8)
 - 15 Summaries of Poe items out (8)
 - 16 Space novel is military leader's fantasy (8)
 - 18 Concerned with change of not long ago (6)
 - 20 Half-mild one; moreover half-cheerful (6)
 - 23 What you learn from the introductions of Nair and Menon (4)

SUDOKU

2	7	1	6					4
3	9			4	2			
		9	2	8				
4				5		7	2	
1	9		8				3	
		2	8	7				
	2	5			1	4		
9				1	3	2	7	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to puzzle 13150

G	I	N	R	U	M	M	Y	A	G	E	D
S	T	A	M	E	N	K	O	N	R	E	
A	H	I									

TV PICKS

Thailand Open: Star Sports 2 (HD) & Star Sports 3, 9.30 a.m.
Sri Lanka v England: Second Test, Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10 a.m.
ISL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.
Serie A: Sony Ten 1 (SD & HD), 1.15 a.m. (Saturday).

IN BRIEF

Jagmeet in final

SONIPAT
Jagmeet Kaur outplayed Prapti Soni 6-1, 6-2 to set up a title clash against Sara Yadav in the ₹1,00,000 AITA women's ranking tennis tournament.

Other result (semifinals): Sara Yadav bt Kashish Bhatia 6-1, 7-5.

Harikrishna faces Giri

NEW DELHI
P. Harikrishna will resume his campaign in the Tata Steel Masters by taking on fellow joint-leader Anish Giri when the action resumes in the fifth round.

Indian junior women stun Chile seniors

SANTIAGO
The Indian junior women's hockey team rallied from a goal down to script a stunning 3-2 win over the Chilean senior side here.

The result: India 3 (Deepika 39, Sangita Kumari 45, Lalrindiki 47) bt Chile 2 (Fernanda Villagrán 21, Simona Avelli 56).

Purav and Ramkumar lose to top seeds

NEW DELHI
Purav Raja and Ramkumar Ramanathan lost to the top seeds Jonathan Erlich and Andrei Vasilevski 6-1, 7-6(3) in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the ₹12,280 Challenger tennis tournament in Istanbul.

Other results: \$15,000 ITF women, Cairo: (Pre-quarterfinals): Ziva Falkner (Slo) bt Riya Bhatia 6-7(3), 6-2, 6-4.

Athletics season to begin at Patiala on Feb. 18

KOCHI
The National athletics season for seniors begins with the Indian Grand Prix-1 in Patiala on February 18. The second and third legs of the IGP will also be held in Patiala on February 25 and March 5.

Pogba's strike puts United back on top

Manchester City moves to second in the Premier League after facile win over Aston Villa

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
LONDON

Manchester United reclaimed pole position in the Premier League as Paul Pogba's stunning second-half strike earned it a 2-1 victory at Fulham on Wednesday.

Ole Gunnar Solskjær's side had been leapfrogged by Leicester City on Tuesday and then Manchester City, which beat Aston Villa 2-0 earlier on Wednesday, but responded with an eighth away win of the season.

Long time coming

United moved to the top with 40 points from 19 games, two points above City, which has played a game less, and Leicester. It is the first time for eight years it has been top at the halfway stage of the season.

The results:



Ectstatic: Paul Pogba, left, celebrates with Bruno Fernandes after firing in Manchester United's second goal against Fulham. • AFP

Premier League: Manchester City 2 (Silva 79, Gundogan 90+ pen) bt Aston Villa 0; Fulham 1 (Lookman 5) lost to Manchester United 2 (Cavani 21, Pogba 65).

LaLiga: Getafe 1 (Arambarri 70) bt SD Huesca 0; Real Betis 2 (Canales 25, 44) bt Celta Vigo 1 (Lorenzo 16); Villarreal 2 (Pena

29, Moises 63+pen) drew with Granada 2 (Soldado 21, Kenedy 75).

Serie A: Udinese 1 (Pereyra 1) Atalanta 1 (Muriel 44)

Bundesliga: Schalke 1 (Hoppe 57) lost to Cologne 2 (Czichos 31, Thielmann 90); RB Leipzig 1 (Forsberg 70) bt Union Berlin 0;

Freiburg 2 (Sallai 32, Petersen 63) drew with Eintracht Frankfurt 0 (Younes 6, Schlotterbeck 75+og).

Augsburg 0 lost to Bayern Munich 1 (Lewandowski 13+pen); Arminia Bielefeld 3 (Klos 27, Kempf 47+og, Doan 86) bt Stuttgart 0.

DELHI CRICKET ROUND-UP

Karan, Abhinav hit half-centuries

Half-centuries by Karan Yadav and Abhinav Chaurasia helped LB Shastri Club beat Kuldeep Deewan Academy by 40 Runs in the Turf Youth Cup under-15 tournament.

The scores: LBSC 262/8 in 40 overs (Karan Yadav 69, Abhinav Chaurasia 63 n.o.) bt KDA 222/8 in 40 overs (Yug Kumar 78, Chirag Yadav 56, Jagrit Gambhir 3/39).

Rishab, Kartikey bat well

Rishab Kansal and Kartikey Rana scored fiftyes as RKB Academy scored a three-wicket win over MK Players XI in the Swasthik Ghevra League.

The scores: MK Players XI 210/9 in 35 overs (Nikhil Naithani 57) lost to RKBA 213/7 in 34.1 overs (Rishabh Kansal 56, Kartikey Rana 53).

Big win for Gujarat Fighters

Sikander Kumar's five-wicket haul and Kulvir Uniyal's 89 saw Fine Talent beat Gujarat Fighters by 113 runs in the One X T20 tournament.

The scores: Maharashtra Lions 119/9 in 20 overs (Tejas Bodke 38, Shubham Sangale 3/18) lost to FTA 121/7 in 18.4 overs (Yash Pote 32, Suraj Bidgar 3/21).

Fine Talent 195/2 in 20 overs (Kulvir Uniyal 89, Ankit Maurya 45 n.o.) bt Gujarat Fighters 82 in 17.2 overs (Amit Mita 46, Sikander Kumar 5/16, Vaibhav Pandey 2/17).

Sombir shines

Sombir Sheokand's unbeaten 87 set up Rann Star Club's 100-run win against Players Academy in the Shanti Devi memorial tournament.

The scores: RSC 292/5 in 40 overs (Sombir Sheokand 87)

n.o., Aditya Sharma 51, Siddarth Singh Beniwal 46) bt Players Academy 192 in 39.4 overs (Vedansh Siotia 56, Mayank Malhora 35, Rahul Chaudhary 3/35).

Gyanti Academy scrapes through

Gyanti Academy edged past Harry Academy by one wicket in the Endurance under-15 league.

The scores: Sporting Club 164 in 34.4 overs (Yash Solanki 59, Krish Chahar 47) lost to RCC Club 165/6 in 33.3 overs (Priyanshi Chahal 79 n.o.).

Harry Academy 157/8 in 35 overs (Ashish Kumar 54) lost to Gyanti Academy 161/9 in 33 overs (Trinav Kumar 61, Harsh Sharma 3/11, Parth Athwal 3/36).

Easy for Young Star

Siddhartha Kumar (5/23) and Sitanshu Singh (91) helped Young Star

Academy defeat NN Academy by 102 runs in the SN Dubey memorial under-16 tournament.

The scores:

YSA 243/5 in 40 overs (Sitanshu Singh 91, Shivam Bhati 54, Swastik Chhikara 54 n.o.) bt NNA 141 in 39.3 overs (Surya Kumar 41, Siddhartha Kumar 5/23).

Quickfire ton by Arpit

Arpit Rana's 89-ball 129 and Ankit Chouhan's four wickets helped Bal Bhawan Ajmal Khan Club defeat Youngster Club by 179 runs in the Sunil Jain memorial tournament.

The scores: BBAK 292/8 in 40 overs (Arpit Rana 129, Yash Dhul 45, Nitish Kumar 3/53) bt Youngster Club 113 in 27 overs (Paras 32, Ankit Chouhan 4/17).

Rajeev leads Airliner Academy to victory

Rajeev Giri's 86 helped Airliner Academy beat Mairathan Academy by 102 runs in the SN Dubey memorial under-16 tournament.

The scores:

Mairathan Academy 172/7 in 30 overs (Adarsh 50, Ayan Kumar 46) lost to Airliner Academy 176/2 in 23.1 overs (Rajiv Giri 86).

Deadly spell by Vahin

Vahin Kakad picked up an incredible seven wickets for just 13 runs and Paramjeet Sharma topscored with 95 runs as York CC defeated Dahiya Academy by 62 runs in the Sanjeev Tank memorial tournament.

The scores:

York CC 207/8 in 40 overs (Paramjeet 85, Vyom Arora 57, Azim Haq 3/29) bt Dahiya Academy 147 in 32 overs (Shivam 54, Ayan Qureshi 49, Vahin Kakad 7/13).

Sexton does it for Cleveland

NBA

REUTERS
CLEVELAND

Collin Sexton hit the game-tying 3-pointer with 1.2 seconds left in the first overtime and scored 15 of his career-high 42 points in the second overtime as the host Cleveland Cavaliers outlasted the Brooklyn Nets for a 147-135 victory on Wednesday night.

Sexton surpassed his previous career high of 41 by

scoring 31 points after half-time. He shot 16 of 29 from the field overall after missing the previous five games with an ankle injury.

The results:

Houston 103 lost to Phoenix 109; Atlanta 123 bt Detroit 115 (OT); Toronto 102 lost to Miami 111; Golden State 121 bt San Antonio 99; LA Clippers 15 bt Sacramento 96; Minnesota 96 lost to Orlando 97; Cleveland 147 bt Brooklyn 135 (OT); Indiana 112 lost to Dallas 124; Philadelphia 117 bt Boston 109.

Overseas college admissions to be facilitated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Aiming to provide international sporting experience and quality education for talented youngsters, Football Delhi on Thursday introduced a scheme to facilitate scholarships and overseas college admissions for talented under-16 boys and girls from the NCR.

The scheme, in partnership with Crayons Academy for Skills Excellence (CASE) – who would act as admission advisors and mentors – includes selecting two players (one from each gender) every calendar year, based on their football and academic achievements.

The players must have represented the state at the sub-junior/junior Nationals with a minimum academic eligibility as well.

TT Natls. in Panchkula

RAKESH RAO
NEW DELHI

WTT Contender Doha beginning on February 28.

Meanwhile, the National cadet and sub-junior championships is due to start at Chandigarh, and the dates advanced to February 15-23.

The dates have been advanced so that the Indian squad may reach Doha well in time for the qualifying rounds of the \$200,000

Shruti stuns Reshma

ITF JUNIORS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Qualifier Shruti Ahlawat played with confidence to oust second-seeded Reshma Maruri 7-6(4), 6-3 in the girls' quarterfinals of the ITF grade-4 junior tennis tournament here on Thursday.

The 14-year-old Shruti has been on a roll in her maiden ITF junior tournament, and has not dropped a set in six matches so far.

Reshma was the first player to push Shruti to a tie-break, and the bespectacled girl handled the challenge with confidence.

In the semifinals, Shruti will play fellow qualifier Sanjana Devineni of the US. The other semifinal will be between top seed Sanjana Sirimalla and Rutuja

Chaphalkar.

The results: **Singles (quarter-finals):** Boys: Nishant Dabas bt Manas Dhamne 6-1, 6-2; Nikhil Nirjanan (US) bt Kirtan Patel (Can) 6-2, 6-1; Ajay Malik bt Aman Dahiya 7-5, 3-6, 6-4; Chirag Duanh bt Sanjith Devineni (US) 6-1, 6-4.

Girls: Sanjana Sirimalla bt Suhitha Maruri 6-3, 6-1; Rutuja Chaphalkar bt Renne Singla 7-5, 6-2; Sanjana Devineni (US) bt Sweta Samanta 1-1 (retd.); Shruti Ahlawat bt Reshma Maruri 7-6(4), 6-3.

Doubles (semifinals): Boys: Nishant Dabas & Aman Dahiya bt Arunava Majumder & Wyatt Obrien 6-2, 6-4; Manas Dhamne & Ronin Lottikar bt Ajay Malik & Denim Yadav 6-1, 2-6, [12-10].

Girls: Reshma Maruri & Suhitha Maruri bt Sudipta Kumar & Riya Uboveja 7-6(2), 6-3; Rutuja Chaphalkar & Hrudaya Shah bt Adithi Are & Aarni Reddy Yellu 6-2, 6-3.

10 YEAR
ANYTIME WARRANTY

AAP BAS CHALAIYE, HUM SAMBAL LENGE
AMAZING ASSURANCE HAI NA!



AMAZE / THE BIG MOVE

Exciting Benefits up to ₹ 57 000*

Low interest rate of 7.10%*

EMI starting from ₹1 427* per lakh

Longest tenure up to 8 years*

Price starts at ₹ 6 22 439[#]

SMS <Amaze> to 53030

Honda From Home Book or Buy your Favourite Honda Car online at www.hondacarindia.com

Special offers for Government employees, pensioners, CSD & CPC customers, select corporates and self employed professionals (Doctors, CAs, Lawyers and Teachers). T&C apply.

Honda AutoTerrace
CAR EXCHANGE

Honda ProCARE
CUSTOMER SERVICE

Scheme on select variants/models. *Loan at the sole discretion of financier/bank partner. Offers and features are model, fuel type and variant specific. Offers are valid for limited period or till stock lasts. For Corporate Sales enquiries, write to corporatenorth@hondacarindia.com. *3 years/unlimited Kilometres Standard. Extendable upto 2 years/unlimited Kilometres. Further extended upto 120K / 10 years by renewing every year. Terms and conditions apply. #Ex-showroom price Delhi.

WEST DELHI

Samara Honda
Mayapuri
45656565
9717556161