



MARXIST WITHOUT
DOGMA



BUS THAT
BHANDARI
AND OLI MISSED

P6



PAKISTAN PM
WINS TRUST
VOTE

P7

DANANJAYA LEADS
SPINNERS' DRIVE
FOR T20 VICTORY

P11



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. Possibility of very light rain/thundershowers. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 34 and 15 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 90% Min: 38%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 31.5°C (+3) Min: 15.0°C (+2)

SUN RISES SUN SETS

06:39 hrs 18:25 hrs

MOON RISES MOON SETS

03:06 hrs 12:32 hrs

WINNING WAYS



Bowler Axar Patel (right) celebrates with teammates the dismissal of England batsman Ben Foakes during the third day of the 4th and last cricket Test match, at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday, as India thrashed England to set up a World Test Championship final with New Zealand. ■ AGENCIES

(MATCH REPORT ON PAGE 13)

Active caseload on rise again

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

India's Covid-19 tally rose to 1,11,92,088 with over 18,000 fresh cases being reported in a span of 24 hours in the country after 36 days, while active cases registered an increase for the fourth consecutive day on Saturday and were recorded at 1,80,304, according to the Union Health Ministry.

The death toll reached 1,57,656 with 108 more fatalities, while a total of 18,327 new cases were registered in a day, the ministry's data showed.

On 29 January, 18,855 new infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours after which the daily rise in fresh cases remained below 18,000. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,08,54,128 which translates to a national Covid-19 recovery rate of 96.98 per cent, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.41 per cent.

The Covid-19 active caseload has increased to 1,80,304 which now comprises 1.61 per cent of the total infections.

Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have reported

FACT FILE	
TOTAL CASES	1,11,92,088
ACTIVE CASES	1,80,304
NEW CASES	18,327
NEW RECOVERIES	14,234
TOTAL DEATHS	1,57,656

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M.
SATURDAY 06 MARCH 2021

'Speed up vaccination'

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

The Centre has asked states and UTs witnessing surge in new Covid-19 cases to continue with the strategy of "test, track and treat" that had yielded rich dividends at the height of the pandemic and accelerate vaccination for priority population.

Expressing particular concern over the surge in Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra, the Centre asked the state to not let its guard down, while asserting that the surge could be due to lack of fear of the disease among people and pandemic fatigue. PTI

ed a high number of Covid-19 daily new cases, cumulatively accounting for 82 per cent of the new cases reported in a span of 24 hours, the Ministry said.

daily count of Covid cases crossed the 300-mark. The positivity rate rose to 0.60 per cent amid a sudden surge in cases.

According to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin, the city recorded one more coronavirus-linked fatality, which took its Covid toll to 10,919. (SEE P2)

Heavy rains, thaw-freeze could have led to U'khand tragedy

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

PTI

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

parties is higher than the average working capacity of the courtrooms according to Covid-19 norms, that is 20 per court room at any given time, shall invariably be listed for hearing through the video or tele-conferencing mode.

It said if the number of parties is higher than the specified number in a matter listed for hybrid hearing, then one advocate-on-record (AOR) and one arguing counsel per party would be allowed entry.

"In any such matter as may be listed for hybrid hearing, all the counsels appearing for one party can appear either through physical presence or through video/tele-conferencing," it said.

The SOP said AORs may submit their preferences for appearing before the court either physically or through the video or tele-conferencing mode within 24 hours or by 1 p.m. the next day after the publication of the weekly list of final hearings or regular matters.

"If the advocate-on-record for a party does not opt for either physical or video/tele-conferencing modes, it shall be presumed that counsels for the party seek to appear through video/tele-conferencing and will be facilitated accordingly," it said.

Rishiganga river, it pushed running river water ahead of it, including water from small ponding structures along the river path.

(TURN TO PAGE 4)

BEHIND THE MISHAP



► The report by Kathmandu-based ICIMOD found that a crack had formed prior to the incident at the site where the rock detachment led to a rockslide from the Raunthi peak.

The ICIMOD is a regional organisation that works on different aspects in the Himalayan-Hindukush region. At the same headwall of the Raunthi peak, a large ice avalanche was previously released somewhere between 19 September and 9 October 2016, which deposited ice and more bedrock in the valley below, the report states.

(TURN TO PAGE 4)

Mamata to take on Suvendu in Nandigram fight

Former protest-site set for keenest electoral battle

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA,
6 MARCH



The BJP released its first list of 57 candidates for the Assembly elections. Former Indian cricketer Ashoke Dinda and ex-IPS officer Bharati Ghosh are among the party's candidates

West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress party chief Mamata Banerjee will be taking on former aide Suvendu Adhikari in what will be the most closely-watched electoral battle of the state Assembly elections, with the BJP deciding to field Mr Adhikari from his home turf of Nandigram.

The BJP on Saturday released its first list of 57 candidates. (TURN TO PAGE 4)

SBI HOME LOANS

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I am confident of my victory (in Siliguri)

OM PRAKASH MISHRA, TMC LEADER

ON HIS SELECTION AS THE TMC CANDIDATE FOR THE SILIGURI SEAT

Delhi again sees a spike of 300-plus Covid cases

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Delhi today recorded 321 new Covid-19 cases ~ its highest single-day count of coronavirus cases in nearly one-and-a-half months.

This was the second consecutive day this month on which the daily count of Covid cases crossed the 300-mark. The positivity rate rose to 0.60 per cent amid a sudden surge in cases.

According to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin, the city recorded one more coronavirus-linked fatality, which took its Covid toll to 10,919.

The number of active cases stood at 1,779, the health bulletin said.

Health experts and doctors have attributed this "sudden rise" in the number of cases to "complacency" among people and their not following Covid-appropriate behaviour and "assuming all is well now".

The number of people under home isolation rose to 879 from yesterday's 863, the bulletin stated, adding that over 6.28 lakh people have recovered till date.

The national capital had reported 312 Covid cases and 3 fatalities yesterday when the positivity rate was 0.53 per cent.

A total of 585 coronavirus cases were reported in Delhi on January 1 and 384 on January 4. It had

dropped to 306 on January 11 and had risen again to 386 on January 12, according to official figures.

The numbers had started to come down the next month. On February 26, 256 new cases were recorded, the highest daily count that month. The city had reported 261 cases yesterday.

104-year-old vaccinated

Meanwhile, a 104-year-old man, Tulsi Das Chawla, a resident of Delhi, was successfully vaccinated against Covid without any adverse effect.

Das was reportedly vaccinated with the first dose of the Covishield vaccine yesterday at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in the city without facing any problem or adverse effects.

At the age of 104, Chawla is said to be leading an active life and does not suffer from any major comorbidities.

A resident of Patel Nagar, Chawla was in the Indian Foreign Service from where he retired in 1975. He was posted in various countries like the United States of America, Netherlands, Pakistan and Africa. He has 2 sons, 2 daughters, 5 grandchildren and 1 greatgrandchild.

After taking the Covid shot, Chawla said, "I urge everyone who is eligible to come forward to take Covid vaccine. It is totally safe."

Principals, experts hail proposed DBSE

PTI

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

School principals and educationalists on Saturday said the Delhi government's decision to form a separate education board for the city at par with international standards will bring in aspects of best global practices and promote research and skill-based studies.

CBSE, in the city.

Welcoming the Delhi government's decision to form the DBSE, the principal of MRC School, Rohini, Priyanka Barara, said with the introduction of this board, students' assessment will get a qualitative outlook and this will definitely be helpful for their future. "We are looking forward to understand more about the aspects of the DBSE, and its management criteria," she said.

President of the Delhi Parents' Association Aprajita Gautam said with the formation of the DBSE, the pressure of competing with students of nationalised education boards will reduce for students in schools here.

"The aim should be to create a healthy relationship between students and education. There should not be any fear of exams and study. The Delhi Board of School Education will also reduce the dropout rate of students by decreasing the fear of education in them," Gautam said.

Educationist Sunita Gandhi said that the DBSE can play a "decisive role" in the evolution of the school ecosystem in the country as it has "modern day components such as international practices, focus on innovation and research, entrepreneurship, skill-based development, employability and other qualitative aspects".

"This decision (of setting up the DBSE) aligns well with the National Education Policy and the DBSE is likely to set a benchmark for other boards," she said.

There are around 1,000 Delhi government schools and about 1,700 private schools, most of them affiliated to the

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

Currently, schools in Delhi are affiliated to the CBSE or the Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE).

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday announced setting up of the DBSE which he said would be based at par with international standards to prepare "fiercely patriotic and self-dependent students" through focus on understanding and personality development.

To start with, 20-25 Delhi government schools will be affiliated to the DBSE from this academic session for 2021-22, Kejriwal said, hoping that all the Delhi government-run and private schools will come under the new board within four to five years.

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I want a government that would properly distribute Central fund ... and run a syndicate and cut money free administration...

FORMER INDIAN CRICKETER ASHOK DINDA

AFTER BEING NAMED BJP CANDIDATE FROM MOYNA

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 07 MARCH 2021

03

HP CM proposes no new tax in Budget for 21-22

Budget is silent on relief for people over price rise, fully restores ministers, MLAs' salaries; focuses on women welfare & health infra

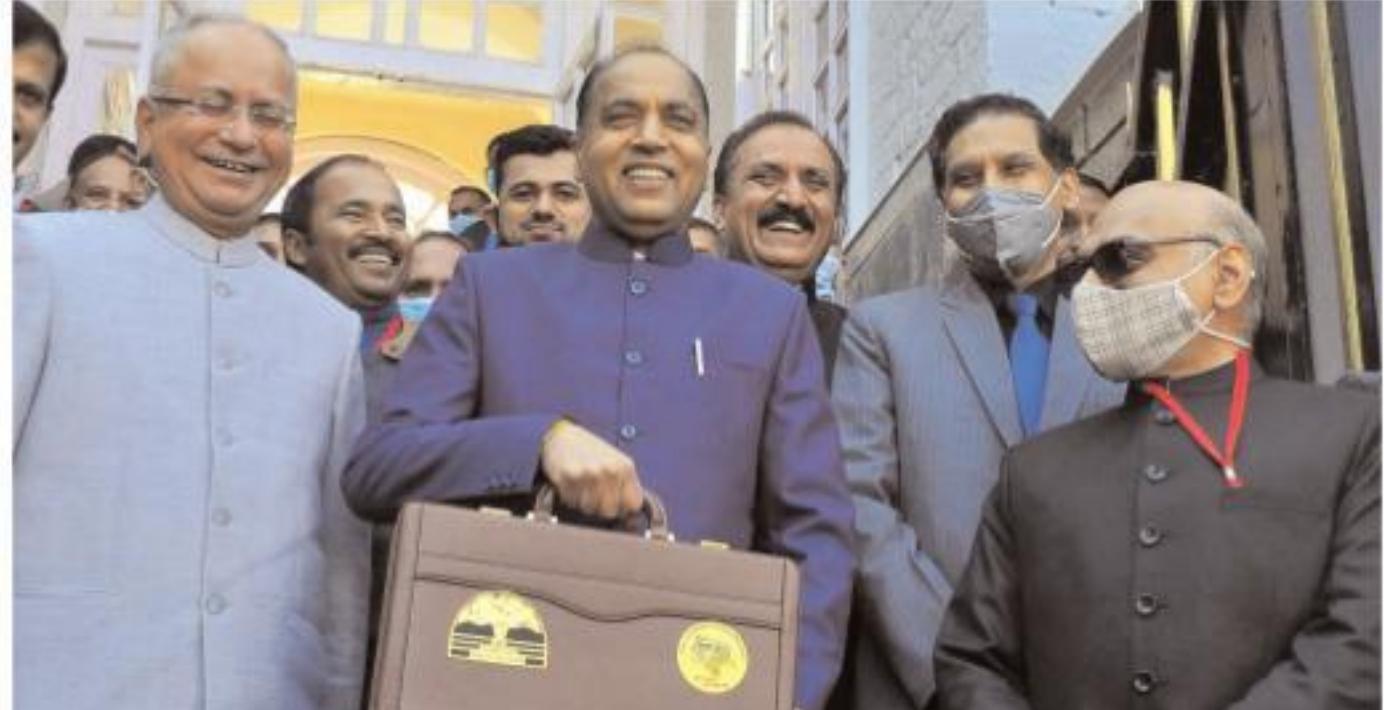
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Saturday presented in the state Assembly a tax-free budget for 2021-22 in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, with expenditure of Rs 50,192 crore and fiscal deficit of Rs 7,789 crore.

The budget is silent on giving any relief to people over price rise, but propose to fully restore the salaries of ministers and MLAs, which were cut by 30 per cent in view of the Covid pandemic.

The focus of the HP budget 2021-22 is on women welfare and empowerment, social security, uplift of weaker sections and improvement in health infrastructure. There is a marginal increase in the budget size this year from 2020-21, which was Rs 49,131 crore. Thakur did not propose any new tax in his fourth Budget.

"The impact of Covid-19 is visible on the economy and it was a difficult time for administration and economy. Still we have tried to give a development oriented budget. We have introduced 12 new schemes in different sectors. Our effort is to uplift weaker sections. We will also fill 30,000 functional posts in the government sec-



HP CM Jai Ram Thakur heading to the state Assembly to present Budget for 2021-22. In Shimla on Saturday.

LALIT KUMAR

tor," Chief Minister Thakur told media persons after delivering a three-hour-long budget speech in the HP Assembly.

He said his government has increased the budget of the health sector by 11 percent over last year, with the pandemic throwing up several needs in the field in terms of infrastructure and staffing.

He said out of every 100 rupees to be spent by the government in 2021-22, Rs 25.31 will be spent on salaries, Rs 14.11 on pension, Rs 10 on interest payments, Rs 6.64 on loan repayment and Rs 43.94 on development works and other

activities. "The impact of Covid-19 cannot be ruled out during 2020-21. This might come in the way of achieving targets fixed under Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act," Thakur said, claiming that the state was however on the recovery in "V shape". The Chief Minister said that the total debt burden on the state is Rs 60,500.

Earlier presenting the budget in the House, he announced a social security pension of Rs 1000 per month to the elderly women in the age group of 65-69 years under Swarn Jayanti Sambal Yojana. Earlier this

provision was meant for above 70 years old men and women.

He introduced a newscheme 'Shagun' involving a grant of Rs 31,000 at the time of marriage for the daughters of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Classes from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. He said two girls will now be given Post Birth grant of Rs 21,000 as fixed deposit.

The chief minister announced 25 per cent reservation for women for recruitment as constables and sub-inspectors in police in a phased manner. He said 40,000 new beneficiaries will be brought under

social security pensionschemes.

The CM said all persons above the age of 70 years and orphans living in Bal Ashrams will be covered free of cost under HIMCARE scheme of government. He said milk procurement prices will be increased by Rs 2 per litre. He announced an increase in the daily wages from Rs 275 to Rs 300. The CM proposed to increase the honorarium of Anganwari workers by Rs 500 per month, of mini Anganwari workers by Rs 300 per month and of ASHA workers by Rs 750 per month.

He said a research fund of Rs 5 crore would be set up for research in horticulture and agriculture in the two state universities.

He said the new Municipal Corporations in Solan, Palampur and Mandi will be given a special grant of Rs one crore each and each of the newly constituted Nagar Panchayats will be given a special grant of Rs 20 lakh.

He announced an increase in the MLA Development Fund from Rs 1.75 crore to Rs 1.80 crore. "Believe that necessary resources will be mobilized through effective tax administration, funding from international funding agencies, continued support of the Government of India and prudence in fiscal management," he said.

U'khand BJP core group meeting held amid speculation of leadership change



Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat with senior BJP leader Raman Singh and others in Dehradun on Saturday.

Inter-state sex racket busted in Punjab, lockdown-hit girls lured into prostitution

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 6 MARCH

In an early morning operation, Punjab Police on Saturday busted an inter-state sex racket active in Ludhiana with arrest of 14 persons including 10 girls along with the lady kingpin already on bail in similar case who used to target needy girls out of jobs due to Covid lockdowns from city and outside while forcing them into prostitution.

Antecedents of girls found involved in the flesh trade have been traced to as far as Nepal, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chandigarh and Amritsar and further investigations are on to unearth the complete area of their operations, said additional deputy commissioner of police (ADCP-4) Ludhiana, Rupinder Kaur Sran who led the operation.

"We have also recovered restricted drugs Etizolam and Escitalopram Oxalate tablets which are only allowed on prescription and the accused are being interrogated to ascertain the source of their supply," the ADCP added.

The initial investigations have also revealed the names of similar operatives in other cities with whom the main accused and her girls were in touch to widen their net, Sran said adding all these angles were being probed and more arrests were expected.

Twenty tablets of Etizolam and Escitalopram Oxalate tablets besides five pieces of Spanish Fly sex drops were seized. Seven mobile phones, 28 packets of condoms, besides Rs 3630 and two liquor bot-

tles have also been seized from the spot.

Giving details about the raid, Sran said a tip-off was received about flesh trade activity being run by the accused and her movements were kept under watch.

The main accused has been identified as Manjot Kaur alias Pammi aunty, who was also arrested in a similar case lodged at Police Station Jodhewal in 2018. Three men were also arrested from the house during the raid who had come there as customers.

She was on bail now and was running the illegal activity from her house only by luring young needy girls into prostitution. Modus operandi was to engage girls once into her net to target more needy girls out of work due to Covid Lockdown and force them into prostitution.

Of those arrested, one girl from Delhi was lured into the trade because she could not repay the loan she had taken from a relative to make ends meet during Covid, while another girl was picked up by the main accused from a city gurdwara she was visiting on the pretext of job offer. These girls back home used to tell their family members that they were working in a factory or performing in marriage parties, Sran added.

Dalai Lama gets first dose of Covid vaccine

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 MARCH

Joining the growing list of world leaders who have been vaccinated against coronavirus, Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at Zonal Hospital in Dharamshala in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh on Saturday.

After receiving the vaccine, Dalai Lama appealed to all eligible people, especially patients, to come forward and get themselves vaccinated against Covid for the greater benefit.

"This is very important so I took that. So I want to share



Dalai Lama receiving the Covid vaccine at Dharamshala on Saturday.

more people should have the courage to take this injection.

According to my trusted friend, including doctors, they suggest I should take this injection. In order to prevent some serious problems, this injection is very helpful and good. So those other patients should take this injection for greater benefit," he said.

The office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (OHHDL)'s Secretary Tseten Samdup Choekyapa said they were grateful to the Central government and the HP government for facilitating the first dose of Covid vaccine for Dalai Lama.

Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar recorded 15 new cases of COVID-19 in a day that pushed the district's infection tally to 25,592 on Saturday, official data showed.

Five patients were discharged during the same period with overall recoveries reaching 25,417, the fifth highest in the state.

With this, the district now has 84 active cases of COVID-19 on Saturday as against 74 the previous day, according to the data released by the UP Health Department.

Noida logs 15 virus cases

PTI
NOIDA, 6 MARCH

HP Budget directionless, no relief for common people: Congress

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 MARCH



Mukesh Agnihotri

Budget document and such things haven't happened in the past," he added.

Agnihotri said though Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur claimed to have presented a tax free budget but there were chances that the government will impose taxes in the year to meet revenue deficit gap.

The Budget document was also silent on loans or funding for the schemes that were announced in the budget as the revenue deficit had reached around Rs 8,000 crore. He accused the BJP government of not providing any relief to

the common masses from rising inflation and said the government should have lowered VAT on petrol and diesel to ease the burden of price rise on people.

Besides, the government should have provided subsidy on LPG gas cylinders as the people were bearing the brunt of rising prices. He further stated that the state government had only refurbished the Central government schemes in the Budget and was giving false hopes to the people of the state.

He also took on the government on the promise of filling 30,000 functional posts and said the decision would pave the way for backlog entry in jobs in the state. He added the state government had made new false promises to the people of the state while the government hadn't delivered on schemes that were announced in the last budget.

HP CPM dismisses Budget as 'fiction'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 6 MARCH



Rakesh Singha

is nothing on macro level.

The Rs 50,000 crore Budget with revenue deficit is against Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM) as the deficit has reached 4 per cent while the Act calls for capping it at 3 per cent," he said.

Singha said it was also not clear as to where the government will source funds from and how the deficit will be covered. From the schemes of the Budget, it seemed that the BJP government will resort to backdoor taxes on the people later, he added.

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LIC LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA NORTH ZONE Har Pal Apake Saath



It is wrong for Rahul Gandhi to say that there is a lack of understanding among the people of Amethi as compared to those in Kerala

ACCUSING RAHUL GANDHI OF 'INSULTING' THE PEOPLE OF AMETHI BY COMPARING VOTERS IN NORTH INDIA WITH THOSE IN KERALA.

i
ndia

THUMBNAILS

Nutritionist of the Year
Huma Rehan during the
Inspiring Women Achievers
Awards 2021 organised by
SHE at ICCR in Kolkata on
Saturday. ANAGHA BANK

Priest booked for rape:
An FIR has been registered against Mahant Mouni Baba of Khaira Mutt in UP's Ballia for allegedly raping a 17-year-old girl, police said. The teenager said that Mahant brought her for teaching and had been raping her for five years."

Amit Shah in Tamil Nadu and Kerala: Senior BJP leader and Home Minister Amit Shah will be on a day-long political tour of the poll-bound states of Tamil Nadu, where he is set to launch a door-to-door campaign. Shah will also address the valedictory function of the BJP's "Kerala Vijay Yatra" in Thiruvananthapuram,

Kanyakumari LS bypoll:
The BJP on Saturday named senior party leader and former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the 6 April bypoll to the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency in Tamil

Customs dept being used for poll purposes: Vijayan

Kerala CM says agency is trying to 'defame' state ministers in smuggling case



Hon'ble Speaker with the help of the Consulate."

Responding to the allegations, Vijayan said to serve the narrow political interests of the party ruling the centre, the customs exploited the particular mental condition of Suresh who was in their custody.

"The investigating agency cannot go ahead without evidence. Forgetting this, the Customs (gave the report in the high court) like a political statement," Vijayan said, referring to the statement given by Suresh to a court in Kochi under Section 164 of the CrPC and to the Customs under Section 108 of the Customs Act.

"As the elections are approaching, the central probe agencies are attacking the state government in a more vigorous manner. They have taken up the campaign against the Left government and has been executing the agenda of the BJP and the Congress party," the senior CPI(M) leader said. He cited the Customs investigation into the gold smuggling case and the Enforcement Directorate probe against the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB).

"They want to destroy KIIFB, which has been proved as a development alternative to the whole country," he said. The CM criticised the Customs (Preventive) Commissioner Sumit Kumar who filed the statement in court in connection with the dollar smuggling case, saying the top officer, "who is not even a party to the matter in the High Court has filed the statement to defame the Left government, its ministers and the Assembly Speaker."

He launched a scathing

attack on the central agencies on a day the Left parties carried out protest marches towards the offices of the central agency in the state.

Further escalating the tension between the Customs and ruling CPI(M), the Customs, probing various cases connected with the gold smuggling, on Saturday served notice to Vinodini Balakrishnan, wife of former CPI(M) state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, asking her to appear before it on March 10.

While Vinodini said she has not received any such notice, a Customs official said she has been directed to appear before the probe team next week. He, however, did not elaborate. Vinodini reportedly used one of the expensive mobile phones gifted by Santhosh Eappen, owner of the Unitac Company which was entrusted to construct flats for the poor in Wadakkancherry under the state government's LIFE Mission project, to a UAE consulate official. The Customs reportedly wanted to know how the phone gifted to the consulate official by Eappen reached Vinodini. Vinodini has rejected the allegations.

The state government's LIFE Mission project is financially supported by the UAE-based Red Crescent aid agency.

Earlier, the Customs had arrested Eappen, the managing director of Unitac Builders, in connection with the dollar smuggling case. A day after the Customs issued notice to Speaker Sreeramakrishnan, directing him to appear before its probe team on 12 March, the CPI(M) took out a march towards Customs offices in Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode on Saturday.

Customs falsely implicating Kerala CM: CPI-M politburo

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

The CPI (M) politburo today strongly condemned the Customs authorities' attempt to "falsely implicate" Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, three other state Ministers and the Speaker of the state Assembly, in the alleged dollar smuggling case.

The party said the Customs had based their case on an affidavit filed by one of the accused, who is in judicial custody in the gold smuggling case. "The fact that this tutored statement was recorded some months ago and presented after the elections were announced shows the political game behind this move," the politburo said.

The BJP Central government is systematically misusing the Central agencies for maligning the CM and the LDF government, CPI (M) said. "The people of Kerala will see through this political chicanery and give a fitting rebuff to the dirty tactics adopted by the BJP and the UDF," CPI (M) politburo said. SNS

TAKING THE JAB



Senior citizens sit in an observation room after receiving the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine during the second phase of the countrywide inoculation drive, in Bengaluru on Saturday.

AGENCIES

Court restrains media from publishing defamatory content against K'taka ministers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

A city court on Saturday issued a temporary injunction against media organisations from telecasting or publishing of any defamatory and unverified news items against six Karnataka ministers.

The ministers in the chief minister B S Yediyurappa-led Cabinet had moved the court on Friday seeking injunction.

The additional city civil and sessions Judge D SVijaya Kumar in the order said in his opinion it is necessary to injunct telecasting or publishing of any unverified news items against the plaintiffs/applicants.

"Therefore, till the next date of hearing, defendants/opponents are hereby restrained by an Interim Order of temporary injunction..."

They are restrained from broadcasting, telecasting or publishing or letting in circulation or posting or accom-

modating or transmitting or circulating any defamatory news items or showing footages and pictures referring to the plaintiffs in relation to alleged CDs, the court ordered.

They are also restrained from committing any act or intentional omission which thereby causes character assassination of the plaintiffs on the basis of the unverified material, it said.

The six ministers who approached the court are Labour Minister Shivaraj Hebbar, Agriculture Minister B C Patil, Cooperation Minister S Somashekhar, Health Minister K Sudhakar, Youth Empowerment and Sports Minister K C Narayana Gowda and Urban Development Minister Bhyrathi Basavaraj.

The six had instituted the suit against 68 defendants, mostly media organisations, for the relief of permanent injunction. The six ministers are among the 17 MLAs who had rebelled against the then Congress-JDS coalition gov-

ernment, leading to its fall in July 2019 and paving way for the BJP to come to power.

Disqualified from their respective parties- Congress and JDS, the MLAs had subsequently joined the BJP, contested by polls in December 2019 on the saffron party tickets and were made ministers after winning the polls.

Ramesh Jarkiholi, who recently resigned as a minister amid allegations of sexual harassment after the emergence of a sleaze CD, had also defected to the BJP along with 16 MLAs and had become a minister. He said that their moving the court was a precautionary measure amid a "big political conspiracy" against them. They also indicated that more ministers may take similar steps.

Health Minister Sudhakar alleged there seems to be a big political conspiracy to defame them by misusing the media, and they have approached court to prevent this hit-and-run smear campaign.

Mamata to take on Suvendu...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The BJP on Saturday released its first list of 57 candidates for the Bengal Assembly elections, naming Mr Adhikari as its candidate from Nandigram, from where Miss Banerjee has already announced her candidature.

Former Indian cricketer Aroke Dinda and ex-IPS officer Bharati Ghosh are among the BJP candidates, party general secretary Arun Singh told a Press conference in New Delhi, adding that it has conceded one seat to ally AJSU. With this, the party has announced candidates for all but three of the 60 seats which will go to polls in the first two phases of the eight-phase elections to be held between 27 March and 29 April.

The announcement comes amidst considerable unrest among the sitting MLAs of the Trinamul Congress whose names did not figure in the party's list of candidates made public yesterday.

Several of the dropped MLAs are said to have made a beeline for the residence of former Trinamul leader and current BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy, or communicated with him over the phone, apparently in hopes of securing tickets from the saffron party.

Miss Banerjee's trusted lieutenant, Sonali Guha, the sitting MLA from Santigachia, was among them, and told reporters that she had "fruitful discussions" with Mr Roy. She indicated that she might join the BJP during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally on Sunday at Kolkata's Brigade Parade ground. "I told him that it is not necessary to make me a candidate but I want to take part in campaigning for the BJP," Ms Guha told news persons.

Another of Miss Banerjee's erstwhile trusted aides, former TMC MP Dinesh Trivedi, formally joined the BJP in New Delhi on Saturday, accusing Miss Banerjee of abandoning her principles and alleging that people of the poll-bound state are distressed with "violence and corruption" under her government.

Nandigram, the site of protests against the Left government which had ignited a popular uprising and catapulted the TMC to power in 2011, is set for one of the keenest electoral battles in the state with Miss Banerjee taking on her former protégée and now BJP leader Mr Adhikari. Mr Adhikari had won from the seat in 2016 and resigned recently before crossing over to the saffron party.

The Adhikari family, headed by sitting Trinamul MP Sisir Adhikari and comprising sons Suwendu, Dibyendu and Soumendu hold considerable sway in East Midnapore district.

Miss Banerjee yesterday announced her candidature from the seat while giving up her traditional constituency of Bhowanipore in Kolkata.

Financial Scam: Fraudsters targeting retirees, PF subscribers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, 6 MARCH

Prashanth Madani, who retired from an MNC last year as a senior executive, was surprised to receive a call from a lady recently who claimed to be speaking from the Employees Provident Fund Organisation in New Delhi.

Much to his surprise, she knew all the relevant details about his office, the nature of his work in addition to his wife's name and that she was his nominee. And the fact that he had just retired.

A puzzled Prashanth, taken in initially, became alert when she started asking him details about his bank account, Aadhaar and pan card numbers.

According to the lady, he was set to get a substantial sum from the PF office. All that he had to do to receive the money though was to provide related information about his bank account.

An alert Prashanth quickly realised that it was a scam and cut the call. Incidentally, the number could not be traced.

Just as well because the woman was a member of a gang which targeted retirees.

ed to the amount under mention.

Realising that he was being set up, the journalist disconnected the call. Within a month or so, however, the same drama was repeated but this time the call came to the journalist's wife, asking to be connected to her husband.

The woman caller repeated the story about the amount that was lying in the retiree's name, adding that it had been sent to the EPFO head office by its Bengaluru unit.

The journalist played along but the woman quickly realised this and cut the call. In fact, she even wanted the scribe to effect a net transfer of Rs 5,000 before the huge sum could be credited into his account.

Enquiries here, meanwhile, reveal that a lot of retirees have been receiving similar calls. While some who were gullible did become victims of the scam, others have now got alert and are learnt to have reported the matter to the local police.

What they are trying to figure out, however, is the access that these scammers have to the retirees' data.

(Representational image)

Night curfew imposed in four Punjab districts

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 6 MARCH

A night curfew was imposed in Punjab's four districts from Saturday to tackle a recent surge in Covid cases.

The orders came after Punjab Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan and Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta held a meeting to review the coronavirus situation with all DCs, district police chiefs

and civil surgeons through a video conferencing. The districts where the night curfew has been imposed are Jalandhar, SBS Nagar, Hoshiarpur and Kapurthala. The night curfew will remain in place in the districts from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. Jalandhar Deputy Commissioner Ghanshyam Thoru had earlier in the day said the order will be effective from Saturday till further directions.

The resulting destabilisation of the rock due to the lack of ice cover (glacial debouching, stress-release fracturing), and increased exposure to solar radiation and hence an increased freeze thaw cycle, in combination with a large snowfall event preceding the event of 7 February, 2021 and rapid melt water production, may have favoured

the fracturing of rock, the report states.

This can, however, not explain the depth of the fracture (150 metres), which must have evolved over a longer period of time, the report states.

The ICIMOD report further states that a strong western disturbance passed across Kashmir and northwest India from 4-6 February. It was fully charged with convective instability that may have con-

tributed to the heavy precipitation. The Uttarakhand tragedy occurred on 7 February.

The temperatures are also rising in Uttarakhand, the report states, saying maximum temperature in the Chamoli area has increased at the rate of 0.032 degrees Celsius per year between 1980 and 2018. January 2021 was the warmest January on record in Uttarakhand for six decades.

Customs dept summons Kerala Assembly Speaker

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 6 MARCH

The Customs department, probing the Kerala gold and dollar smuggling case, has issued a notice to Kerala Assembly Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan asking him to appear before it on 12 March in connection with the dollar smuggling case.

The development came close on the heels of the Customs informing the Kerala High Court that the prime accused in the case, Swapna Suresh, has stated that the smuggling of the US currency was done at the instance of Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Assembly Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan with the help of the UAE Consulate General Sumit Kumar, Commissioner of Customs (preventive), Kochi, in an affidavit filed before the Kerala High Court.

In January 2021, the Customs has recorded the statements of Sreeramakrishnan's assistant private secretary in connection with the probe into the alleged smuggling of US currency totalling \$1,90,000 (equivalent to Rs 1.30 crore) by a former finance head of the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram to Muscat.

Separately, the Customs also issued a summons to Vinodini Balakrishnan, wife of former CPI-M Kerala secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan for using an iPhone purchased by Unitac owner Santhosh Eappen.

Apparently, this scam is not confined to one or two cities, according to an official source.

In another case, a woman who identified herself as Poonam Singh, a journalist who had just retired, virtually giving the same story. In this case though she transferred the call to a person who identified himself as "Mr Patel," claiming to be an officer from the EPFO in Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi.

The person claimed that Rs 4 lakh was lying in the EPFO's office in the scribe's name and would be credited to his bank account once he shared the relevant details along with the Aadhaar and Pan card numbers.

According to the lady, he was set to get a substantial sum from the PF office. All that he had to do to receive the money though was to provide related information about his bank account.

An alert Prashanth quickly realised that it was a scam and cut the call. Incidentally, the number could not be traced.

Just as well because the woman was a member of a gang which targeted retirees.

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3. Bid must be submitted online at Government e-portal <https://hp.tenders.gov.in> by 22.03.2021 upto 1100 Hrs IST along with hard copy submission as per instructions of RFP. Bids received online shall be opened on 22.03.2021 at 1130 Hrs IST. Bids through any other mode shall not be entertained.
4. Please note that the Department of Transport, Government of Himachal Pradesh reserves the right to accept or reject all or any of the Bids without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Director
Department of Transport,
Parivahan Bhawan,
Shimla-171004
Tel: 0177

The BJP govt must realise the dangers of witch-hunting and intimidation and desist from vindictive designs



CPI(M) LEADER MOHAMMAD YOUSUF TARIGAMI

REACTING TO THE ED'S SUMMONS TO PDP CHIEF MEHBOOBA MUFTI

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 07 MARCH 2021

05

THUMBNAILS



Members of Indian Youth Congress workers during a protest against the hike in fuel and LPG prices, in Amritsar, on Saturday.

IANS

Guj Dalit seeks protection: Terrified by repeated attacks on wedding processions of Dalits for its groom riding horse or sporting headgear, a college lecturer from Gujarat belonging to the community has sought police protection on his marriage day. Sabarkantha district police confirmed that the lecturer has been sanctioned police protection for his wedding day.

SNS

Civil defense staffer killed: The body of a 22-year-old civil defense staffer, bearing multiple gunshot injuries, was found in north Delhi's Bawana on Saturday. The deceased has been identified as Shashi Kadyan. It appeared to be a case of personal enmity, police said.

PTI

Farmers block Haryana expressway on 100th day

Leaders of protesting farmers firm on demand of repealing new farm laws



A farmer sits on the tyre of a tractor on the 100th day of the ongoing agitation, in New Delhi, Saturday.

IANS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHANDIGARH, 6 MARCH

Farmers protesting the Centre's three farm laws on Saturday blocked the six-lane Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway at some places in Haryana to mark the completion of 100 days of their agitation at the Delhi borders.

The road blockade began at 11 am and continued till 4 pm. Farmers holding black flags and wearing black arm-bands and some women protesters with black 'dupattas' shouted slogans against the BJP-led government for not acceding to their demands. Protesters in Sonipat and Jhajjar districts and some other places brought their tractor-trolleys and other vehicles and parked them in the middle of the KMP Express-

way in some stretches. The Haryana Police had made arrangements for traffic diversions and deployed adequate personnel.

The call for blocking the expressway was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting farmer unions which is spearheading the agitation against the legislations.

Protesting farmers squatted on the expressway and criticised the Narendra Modi government for not withdrawing the farm legislations, which they called as "black laws". Our agitation against the three farm laws will continue unless the Centre withdraws these laws. We will not step back," said a protester in Sonipat. Farmers held protest at the KMP Expressway near Mandot village in Jhajjar district. Some people from near-

100 days of BJP's arrogance; black chapter in our democracy: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

As the farmers' protest against the Centre's new farm laws completed 100 days, the Congress on Saturday said the period was a "black chapter" in India's democracy for the treatment meted out to the protesters and also marked 100 days of the ruling BJP's "arrogance". Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Centre over the farmers' protest and said nails were laid at Delhi's borders for those, whose sons risk their lives at the country's borders.

His attack came after the farmers' agitation completed 100 days with the

protesting union leaders asserting that their movement is far from over and they are "going strong".

In a tweet in Hindi, Gandhi said, "Whose sons risk their lives at the country's borders, for them nails have been laid at the borders of Delhi. Annadaatas' demand their rights, government commits atrocities." Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also hit out at the Centre in a tweet in Hindi. She said, "100 days of farmers' struggle, of fight for rights, of respect for 'annadaatas', of the path shown by Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehruji, Lal Bahadur Shastriji, Shaheed Bhagat Singh."

by villages joined them. "We are holding our protest in a peaceful manner, said a farmer, adding that they were also observing black day on Saturday.

Farmer leaders said the protesting unions stand firm on their demand of a complete repeal of the three agri laws and asserted that they are ready for talks with the government, but that should be held without any condition.

Darshan Pal, a senior

member of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha which is spearheading the going protest, said farmer unions stand firm on the demand of repeal of three agri laws.

"Since the beginning of our agitation, our demand remains the same which is the repeal of three new agricultural laws. We are ready to resume talks with the government, but that should be held without any precondition," Pal told PTI.

J&K cops foil attempts of Pakistani terrorists to revive militancy

STATESMAN NEWS SCIENCE

JAMMU, 6 MARCH

A joint team of the Army and J&K Police has seized a cache of arms and ammunition in the mountainous Mahore area of Jammu and foiled the efforts of a Pakistani-based terrorist of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) to revive terrorism in the Chenab region. One person has been arrested in this connection, said the IGP (Jammu) Mukesh Singh.

The IGP said that on the basis of intelligence inputs the joint team launched a search operation and recovered the cache that includes Chinese grenade, AK bullets and explosives. One person, Reyaz Ahmed has been apprehended by the police.

In sustained interrogation in presence of executive magistrate, Mahore, he disclosed that he has concealed the cache in a hideout located between Makhdihar and upper Shikari ridge of Tehsil Mahore, District Reasi.

A joint search operation of Jammu and Kashmir police and Army was launched in the area and the arms and ammunition recovered.

Investigation so far revealed that the cache of arms and ammunition was to be delivered to some person from Gool in district Ramban. It has also been revealed that the consignment was sent by LeT commander Khobaib (original resi-



dent of Doda and now based in Pakistan).

Khobaib has been continuously trying to send money and arms in the Jammu region and has also been trying to revive terror activities in the Chenab valley by recruiting young boys for LeT, the IGP said.

This is the third big recovery within a week in the area.

Meanwhile, security forces have arrested two residents of Uttar Pradesh from Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir following recovery of a pistol from their possession, officials said on Saturday.

The accused have been identified as Mohammad Danish Sedaqi and Mohammad Nawshad Nayi, both residents of Rajapur in Uttar Pradesh.

The police, Army and CRPF apprehended the duo during searches at Jawahar Tunnel in Kulgam district on Friday, they said.

A pistol and 20 rounds were recovered from their possession, they added.

Pannu, Kashyap break silence on Instagram

MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

Actor Taapsee Pannu and director Anurag Kashyap resumed shooting for their film *Dobaaraa* on Saturday, both using social media to speak for the first time since I-T raids on their premises with posts indicating their spirit remained intact.

With all our love to all the haters, Kashyap said in a message on Instagram to announce the resumption of shooting of his new film and share an on-set picture of Pannu and himself laughing and showing the victory sign. Earlier, in the day Pannu put out three tweets on an "alleged bungalow" in Paris, the "alleged receipt" of Rs 5 crore and her "memory of 2013".

These were the first comments from Kashyap and Pannu - since the Income Tax Department began searching their homes and offices on March 3. The raids also covered Kashyap's partners who launched the now-shuttered production house Phantom Films with him.

Following Pannu, Kashyap, who was working on *Dobaaraa* with the actor before the I-T raids, also decided to break his radio silence on social media with a special message for the "haters".

"And we restart #Dobaaraa...with all our love to all the haters..." the filmmaker wrote alongside the photograph.

Kashyap, however, refrained from directly addressing the raids.

Opp questions probe into death of 'owner' of vehicle found near Antilia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

A day after the purported owner of the vehicle with explosives parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house was found dead, the Opposition BJP said on Saturday that it appeared to be a murder and questioned the investigation by police.

Shiv Sena leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said the Sena-led Maharashtra government should not be put in the dock over the death of a prime witness, but finding out the truth was important for the coalition government's image.

Mansukh Hiren (46), who the police had said was the owner of the stolen Scorpio with gelatin sticks parked near Ambani's residence in south Mumbai on February 25, was found dead in a creek in neighbouring Thane on Friday morning. Home min-

Mansukh Hiren was found dead in a creek in neighbouring Thane on Friday morning.

ister Anil Deshmukh, who belongs to the NCP announced transfer of the probe to the Anti-Terrorism Squad on the same evening. He also said Hiren was not the owner of the SUV but was in its possession for carrying out some interior work. "It is wrong to politicise this death and put the government in the dock.

There are doubts whether Mansukh Hiren's death was a suicide or murder. He was an important witness in the case," Raut said.

"On the transfer of the probe from the Mumbai crime branch to the ATS, the Sena leader said the BJP wanted the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to probe it, but it would not guarantee that the case would be solved immediately.

In less than two years, several ministers have faced serious allegations but none of them stepped down, except the recent resignation of former minister," he said.

Forest minister Sanjay Rathod resigned earlier this month after his name was linked to the death of a young woman in Pune. "It gives an assurance to criminals that they can join politics and get protected.

PAYING TRIBUTE



Union minister Sanjeev Balyan performs 'Abhishek' on the statue of Bhim Rao Ambedkar during an event, in Muzzaffarnagar on Saturday. The statue will be installed in Srinagar.

BJP worker killed, 6 hurt in blast

KOLKATA, 6 MARCH

Amid the presence of central forces in poll-bound West Bengal, a BJP worker was killed and another six were severely injured on Friday night following a bomb explosion at Katakhali Arampur in Gosaba in South 24 Parganas.

BJP state president Dilip Ghosh alleged that Trinamul-backed miscreants hurled a bomb at them.

The incident took place while they were returning home from a marriage party. Villagers came out of their houses on hearing the explosion and saw the injured persons writhing in pain amid a pool of blood. They were sent to hospital.

"Trinamul-backed miscreants who feared defeat in the polls attacked our party workers," said Ghosh.

However, a local Trinamul leader said that the victims were manufacturing bombs which suddenly exploded.

Police and forensic experts arrived at the spot to probe the incident. No one has been arrested in this connection.

Tigress Avni's cub released into wild

NAGPUR, 6 MARCH

The female cub of tigress Avni, who was shot dead after being declared a man-eater in November 2018, has been released into the wild in the Pench Tiger Reserve of Maharashtra's Nagpur district after over two years of "re-wilding" efforts, authorities said.

This adult tigress, now named as PTRP-84, Chief-Conservator of Forests and Field Director of the PTR said in a release.

LOST & FOUND
Document of Flat Buyer Agreement of Flat No. 1102, Located Tower No. B3, Floor 11th, Of/Or Flat No. 401 and 402, Located Tower No. B5, Floor 4th in Project ALOHA GURGAON, situated at AEZ Inspiration, Sector -57, Village Tighra, Tehsil and District Gurgaon has been lost in my office 8-B Basement floor main Mathura road, jangpura - 110014. Use above document by anyone will be illegal. The flat has not been transferred to any party on till today.

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Chairman

Board of Governors

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that a person namely **Ravi S/o Nagdu Bhardwaj** R/o H.No.Noshupur, Distt:Mau, U.P. has been missing since 28.02.2021 from the area of P.S. Patparganj Ind. Area, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. **60A** dated 01.03.2021 has been lodged at PS, Patparganj Ind. Area, Delhi. The description of missing person is as under:

Name: Ravi, **Father's Name:** Nagdu Bhardwaj, **Age :** 25 years, **Height :** 5'5", **Face :** Round, **Complexion :** Wheatish, **Built:** Medium, **Wearing :** Green Shirt, Khaki Pant, Yellow Shoes in feet. If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned at following phone numbers.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax : 011-24368639
Ph. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/411/ED/2021 Ph. : 011-22146490, 22146491

SHO
P.S., Patparganj Ind. Area, Delhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin is expected to visit India later this month in what could be the first trip to New Delhi by a top representative of the new Joe Biden administration.

His visit will be part of the American leader's larger trip to countries in the Indo-Pacific region, sources said.

During his India visit, Lloyd

is likely to hold wide-ranging talks with Defence minister Rajnath Singh and also call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat and the three services chiefs are also likely to meet the visiting dignitary. The two defence ministers had held a telephonic conversation in January soon after Austin was named as the Secretary of Defence with the focus on the Indo-Pacific region. The proposed visit is being

seen as an important sign of how the two countries propose to take forward their relationship under the new administration in US.

The visit is expected to take place at a time when the stage is being set for the first summit-level meeting of the Quad countries: India, Japan, Australia and US. The virtual meet will be attended by US President Biden, Australian PM Scott Morrison, Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga and Modi.

ticket since 2001.

Another sitting Trinamul MLA from Jaggatballavpur, Howrah, Abdul Qasem and Purbura's sitting MLA Nuruzzaman whose names were dropped from the list met Roy, but he

Gotcha?

Longstanding media lore has it that it's the tabloids ~ as opposed to broadsheets such as the one you are reading ~ which have the most attention-grabbing and provocative headlines. Or, to use the jargon of the trade, the best 'hook'. The latest from the UK's Daily Mail, with a readership that laps up details of the goings-on in the British royal family, had this on offer over the weekend ~ 'PIERS MORGAN: After these shocking allegations, please spare me anymore of halo-cracked hypocrites Meghan and Harry's women-empowering victimhood garbage'. It is moot if one needs to actually read the comment piece by the eponymous Morgan given the headline writer has bet on the attention-span of the reader not exceeding that of the love life of an ant, as the saying goes. The subject of the article, however, is a very serious one. For, it brings into sharp focus allegations of systematic bullying of her personal staff by the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle, as reported by The Times, which are now the subject of an official inquiry. The hypocrisy referred to in the comment piece is aimed at a 20-point guide on how to empower women released by the Sussexes timed to coincide with International Women's Day on 8 March, at a time when Ms Markle faces allegations from two former female personal assistants that she bullied them out of their jobs. Both have lodged formal complaints while a third senior female member of staff has alleged mistreatment at her hands.

Morgan, a well-known journalist and commentator, may not be everyone's cup of tea, but he has the right to point out that these allegations were duly recorded in an email by the couple's communications secretary Jason Knauf before their estrangement from the royal family and sent to a senior official now serving as the Cabinet Secretary. Not just that. Prince Harry, The Times reports, "pleaded (with Knauf) not to take the complaints further" though the Duke of Sussex has denied this claim.

The couple has also been accused, even before their wedding, of being "outrageous bullies" by a former aide, the report added. A spokesperson for the Duchess of Sussex has, meanwhile, said that she is "saddened by this latest attack on her character... (and) is determined to continue her work of building compassion around the world." What the couple has not done, however, is respond specifically to the jaw-dropping details - female staff members saying they were "reduced to tears" and aides speaking of being "humiliated, feeling sick, and terrified" due to the behaviour they were subjected to by the Sussexes. The couple's much-awaited talkathon with US TV host Oprah Winfrey which has already been canned may end up being a non-event given their long-running battle with the British media has created a gotcha! moment for the latter.

Pope scripts history

When Pope Francis arrived in Baghdad on Friday, he scripted history with the first-ever visit to Iraq by the head of the Catholic church. Impervious to a possible surge in coronavirus cases and undaunted by the precarious security situation, the Pope is riveted to the interests of Iraq's Christians who have braved years of war, not to forget the repressive regime of Saddam Hussein. Indeed, this is the first trip undertaken by the Pope after the pandemic plagued the world and the first time a head of the Roman Catholic Church has visited the embattled country. Well and truly, it is the second facet that makes his three-day visit historic. By choosing Iraq as his first port of call since the pandemic began, Pope Francis waded directly into the issues of war and peace, and poverty and religious strife, in an ancient biblical land. "This trip is emblematic," he said, calling it "a duty to a land martyred for many years." In an area known as the cradle of civilization, the modern history of Mesopotamia ~ now present-day Iraq ~ has been scarred by lasting hardship: three decades of despotic rule, followed by nearly two decades of war and a wave of carnage unleashed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Once regarded as a "rich tapestry of faiths", Iraq bears witness to a clash of civilizations with the hardening of the orthodox sections. Its Jews are almost completely gone, and its Christian community becomes smaller every year. About one million have fled since the Anglo-US invasion of 2003. An estimated 500,000 remain.

The ethnic factor makes the Pope's visit to the ancient city of Ur ~ believed to be the birthplace of Abraham, who is revered by Muslims, Jews and Christians alike ~ all the more powerful. It is significant, therefore, that his visit boasts a motto from the Gospel of Matthew ~ "You are all brothers." Regrettably, Iraq has not lived up to that noble matrix for much that has happened there is ignoble. The visit is, therefore, rich in symbolism.

The Pope's agenda is focused on the terrible toll wrought when divisions harden and violence takes over. On Friday evening he met priests, bishops and others at Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad. Just over a decade ago, the church was vandalised when militants unleashed a fusillade of grenades, bullets and suicide vests. At least 58 people were killed in the assault, which was carried out by an affiliate of Al Qaida.

Yet it was far from the deadliest massacre in the country, where tens of thousands have died in war and sectarian fighting, but the attack jolted the Christian community to its foundations. Pope Francis made it clear that after Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI had to scuttle plans to visit the remaining Christians in the country, he would not cancel his own trip.

Marxist Without Dogma

The other pivotal point of Luxemburg's political convictions and activism was her twin opposition to war and agitation against militarism. Here she proved capable of updating the theoretical approach of the Left and winning support for clear-sighted resolutions at congresses of the Second International, which, though disregarded, were a thorn in the side of supporters of the First World War

In August 1893, when the chair called on her to speak at a session of the Zurich Congress of the Second International, Rosa Luxemburg made her way without hesitation through the crowd of delegates and activists packed into the hall. She was one of the few women present, still in the flush of youth, slight of build, and with a hip deformity that had forced her to limp since the age of five. The first impression she gave to those who saw her was of a frail creature indeed. But then, standing on a chair to make herself better heard, she soon captivated the whole audience with the skill of her reasoning and the originality of her positions. In her view, the central demand of the Polish workers' movement should not be an independent Polish state, as everyone before her had maintained. Poland was still under tripartite rule, divided between the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires; its reunification was proving difficult to achieve, and the workers should set their sights on objectives that would generate practical struggles in the name of particular needs.

In a line of argument that she would develop in the years to come, she attacked those who concentrated on national issues and warned of the danger that the rhetoric of patriotism would be used to play down the class struggle and to push the social question into the background. There was no need to add "subjection to Polish nationality" to all the forms of oppression suffered by the proletariat. To avoid this trap, she aimed for the development of local self-government and the strengthening of cultural autonomy, which, once a socialist mode of production had been established, would serve as a bulwark against any resurgence of chauvinism and new forms of discrimination. The thrust of all these reflections was to distinguish between the national question and the issue of the nation-state. The intervention at the Zurich Congress symbolized the whole intellectual biography of a woman who should be considered among the most significant exponents of twentieth-century socialism. Born 150 years ago, on 5 March 1871, at Zamosc in Tsarist-occupied Poland, Rosa Luxemburg lived her whole life on the margins, grappling with multiple adversities and always swimming against the current. Of Jewish origin, suffering from a lifelong physical handicap, she moved to Germany at the age of 27 and managed to obtain citizenship there through a marriage of convenience. Being resolutely pacifist at the outbreak of the First World War, she was imprisoned several times for her ideas. She was a passionate enemy of imperialism during a new and violent period of colonial expansion. She fought against the death penalty in the midst of barbarism. And ~ a central dimension ~ she was a woman who lived in worlds inhabited almost exclusively by men. She was often the only female presence, both at Zurich University and in the leadership of German Social Democracy, where was appointed as the first woman to teach at



its central cadre school.

These difficulties were supplemented by her independent spirit and her autonomy. Displaying a lively intelligence, she had the capacity to develop new ideas and to defend them, without awe and indeed with a disarming candour, before such figures as August Bebel and Karl Kautsky (who had had the formative privilege of direct contact with Engels). Her aim in this was not to repeat Marx's words over again, but to interpret them historically and, when necessary, to build further on them.

Luxemburg successfully overcame the many obstacles facing her, and in the fierce debate following Eduard Bernstein's reformist turn she became a well-known figure in the foremost organization of the European workers' movement.

Whereas, in his famous text *The Preconditions of Socialism and The Tasks of Social Democracy*, Bernstein had called on the party to burn its bridges with the past and to turn itself into a merely gradualist force, Luxemburg insisted in *Social Reform or Revolution?* that during every historical period "work for reforms is carried on only in the direction given it by the impetus of the last revolution". Those who sought to achieve in the "chicken coop of bourgeois parliamentarism" the changes that the revolutionary conquest of political power would make possible were not choosing "a more tranquil, surer and slower road to the same goal", but rather "a different goal".

The point was not to improve the existing social order, but to build a completely different one. The role of the labour unions and the Russian Revolution of 1905 prompted some thoughts on the possible subjects and actions that might bring

about a radical transformation of society. In the book *Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions*, which analysed the main events in vast areas of the Russian Empire, Luxemburg highlighted the key role of the broadest, mostly unorganized, layers of the proletariat. In her eyes, the masses were the true protagonists of history.

On the question of organizational forms and, more specifically, the role of the party, Luxemburg was involved in another heated dispute during those years, this time with Lenin. In *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*, Luxemburg argued that an extremely centralized party set up a very dangerous dynamic of "blind obedience to the central authority".

The party should not stifle but develop the involvement of society, in order to achieve "the correct historical evaluation of forms of struggle". Marx once wrote that "every step of the real movement is more important than dozens of programmes". And Luxemburg extended this into the claim that "errors made by a truly revolutionary labour movement are historically infinitely more fruitful and more valuable than the infallibility of the best of all possible central committees".

This clash acquired greater importance after the Soviet revolution of 1917, to which she offered her unconditional support. Worried by the events unfolding in Russia (beginning with the ways of tackling land reform), she was the first in the communist camp to observe that "a prolonged state of emergency" would have a "degrading influence on society".

In the posthumous text *The Russian Revolution*, she emphasized that the historical mission of the proletariat, in conquering political power, was "to create a



MARCELLO MUSTO

The writer is Professor of Sociology at York University, Toronto

socialist democracy to replace bourgeois democracy ~ not to eliminate democracy altogether". Communism meant "the most active, unlimited participation of the mass of the people, unlimited democracy", which did not look to infallible leaders to guide it. Though making opposite political choices, both Social Democrats and Bolsheviks wrongly conceived of democracy and revolution as two alternative processes. For Luxemburg, on the contrary, the core of her political theory was an indissoluble unity of the two.

The other pivotal point of Luxemburg's political convictions and activism was her twin opposition to war and agitation against militarism. Here she proved capable of updating the theoretical approach of the Left and winning support for clear-sighted resolutions at congresses of the Second International, which, though disregarded, were a thorn in the side of supporters of the First World War.

In her analysis, the function of armies, the non-stop rearmament and the repeated outbreak of wars were not to be understood only in the classical terms of nineteenth-century political thinking. Rather, they were bound up with forces seeking to repress workers' struggles and served as useful tools for reactionary interests to divide the working class. They also corresponded to a precise economic objective of the age. Capitalism needed imperialism and war, even in peacetime, in order to increase production, as well as to capture new markets as soon as they presented themselves in the colonial periphery outside Europe.

This picture was a long way from optimistic reformist scenarios, and to sum it up Luxemburg used a formula that would resonate widely in the twentieth century: "socialism or barbarism". She explained that the second term could be avoided only through self-aware mass struggle and, since anti-militarism required a high level of political consciousness, she was one of the greatest champions of a general strike against war ~ a weapon that many others, including Marx, underestimated.

A cosmopolitan citizen of "what is to come", Luxemburg said she felt at home "all over the world, wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears". For the co-founder of the Spartacist League, the class struggle was not just a question of wage increases.

She did not wish to be a mere epigone and her socialism was never economicistic. Immersed in the dramas of her time, she sought to modernize Marxism without calling its foundations into question. Her efforts in this direction are a constant warning to the Left that it should not limit its political activity to bland platitudes and give up trying to change the existing state of things. The way in which she lived, her success in wedging theoretical elaboration with social agitation, offer an extraordinary lesson across time to the new generation of activists who have chosen to take up the many battles she waged.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Get the jab to end the nightmare

The pandemic has turned our world upside down. Lives were lost, businesses ruined and families devastated. And yet, just as there is renewed hope that the worst is over, there are still Malaysians who are opposed to vaccination and in fact refuse to believe that vaccines are the answer to ending this year-long nightmare. Misinformation is the main reason behind why only about 7% have thus far registered for vaccinations via the MySejahtera app. This slow pace among Malaysians to register their interest in getting vaccinated against Covid-19 is concerning and points to a lack of clarity and awareness as well as scepticism about the vaccines. But the misinformation by "anti-vaxxers" who say taking the vaccine is a waste of time could soon be drowned out by a slew of legislation and initiatives as part of the government's efforts to reopen all economic sectors and hasten the end of the pandemic. Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba has announced that five new provisions under the Emergency (Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 will come into force on March 11. These include a mandatory order for Covid-19 patients or people who have close contact with positive cases to wear a tracking device. These new legal provisions are not merely a form of punishment but also preventive measure against the spread of Covid-19 in the country. A day before this announcement, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Badar said action can be taken under the Sedition

The Star
Act 1948 against individuals who spread fake news and instigate people not to take the Covid-19 vaccine. There is no law against scepticism, and as of now, there isn't any law to compel you to take the vaccine, but let us hope that these measures or rather the threat of punitive action will see the dialling back of anti-vaccine instigation. Around the world, there is a growing pro-vaccination stand. From the United States to Europe to China, countries and people have accepted that the only way to end the pandemic is to be vaccinated. Some countries have even resorted to new laws to make vaccination compulsory. Our neighbour Indonesia is a case in point. Elsewhere, Israel, which has administered jabs to more than half its population, has introduced a green pass app that shows whether people have been fully inoculated against the coronavirus or if they have presumed immunity after contracting the disease. Malls and museums have reopened for all, but green pass holders get exclusive access to gyms, hotels, theatres, concerts, and indoor dining in restaurants and bars, albeit with some limits. And in news that is sure to send reverberations around the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia's health ministry has ruled that only people who have been vaccinated against Covid-19 will be allowed to perform the Haj this year. The importance of this new ruling cannot be underestimated as tens of millions of pilgrims will now have to produce vaccination certificates to fulfil conditions to visit Mecca. Closer to home, Asean economic ministers have proposed a common digital vaccine certificate to speed up the reopening of the hardest-hit sectors such as tourism. Even though International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali did not specify a timeline for when this can take place, it is a welcomed initiative. An Asean-wide travel pass or immunisation passport will definitely help facilitate movement among member countries and, more importantly, allow the tourism sector, among the worst hit industries, to bounce back.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR editor@thestatesman.com

Women & struggles long ago

SIR, My compliments to *The Statesman* for having published Bharat Dogra's excellent article, 'Warriors for a foreign cause' (28 February). It examines the glorious role of foreign women in the country's freedom struggle, pre-eminently Sarla Behn who was profoundly concerned over the atrocities inflicted on the family members of arrested freedom fighters during the Quit India movement in 1942.

She identified herself with their sufferings and distress. In mitigating their miseries and hardships she suffered imprisonment at the hands of her own colonial officials, and ear-



ned the respect and affection of the common people. Following her meeting with Mahatma Gandhi, she was involved with the freedom movement.

After independence she went on to work for the development and prosperity of India which she regarded as her own country. By dint of her training and inspira-

tion she became the mentor of well known activists like Radha Bhatt and Vimla Bahuguna.

Saria Behn is followed

by Annie Besant. A great educationist, she became the president of the Indian National Congress in 1917. She had collaborated with Lokmanya Tilak to launc the Home Rule League. She was

imprisoned during the freedom movement. Last but not the least, Freda was actively involved in the struggle.

The contributions of these foreign women to the freedom struggle beggar description. Rightly has Mr Dogra concluded: "It is important to remember and respect such inspiring examples of women (and men) who overcame divisions and narrow, selfish considerations to respond to the call of their conscience and we're even willing to go to jail for the freedom of a country which had been colonized and exploited by their own country."

Yours, etc., Narayan Chandra Ghosh, Madanpur, 1 March.

SCARCE OXYGEN

SIR, Your editorial, 'Gasping to death' (3 March) underscores the crisis that has been aggravated by the shortage of medical oxygen and during the relapse of the virus. This is an unfortunate development in the era of space science. Oxygen is essential for those inflicted by the virus. You have very pertinently quoted Peter Piot, director of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, as saying that "availability of medical oxygen is one of the defining health equity issues". It does not take much time to install oxygen plants and transform industrial oxygen production systems into medical-grade networks. This calls for foresight and a healthy approach. Adequate oxygen must be made available to prevent death by asphyxiation. Death caused by pneumonia and allied lung diseases are on the rise worldwide. Coronavirus has been a multiplier. Let the developed nations keep the sale and promotion of arms and ammunitions in abeyance and come forward to put in place 'oxygen plants' to the under-developed countries. India has done well to donate Covid-9 vaccines to many countries. Small oxygen plants can also be gifted to the poor countries. You have rightly stated that "the crippling scarcity of medical oxygen is no less dreadful than the disease per se". Hence the "unnecessary deaths".

Yours, etc., Rupam Guha, Kolkata, 4 March.

DEEPAK THAPA

Towards the end of 2015, just days after Bidya Devi Bhandari was sworn in as Nepal's second president, I found myself in a Baglung village talking to a couple of school-aged girls about it. Although hailing from the Kathmandu constituency both she and her late husband have represented in parliament, I was no fan of Bhandari's for the manner in which she had worked in concert with her close ally, KP Sharma Oli, the current prime minister, to undermine the post-2006 progressive agenda. For the young girls in Baglung though, the excitement at witnessing something historic was palpable. When they said that Bhandari's achievement proved that girls are capable of achieving any and everything, they meant it literally for such was the symbolic power of her elevation to the country's top post.

That was how it should have been—an epoch-making accomplishment to be nurtured for posterity, a beacon of hope for all girls struggling against the deep-seated patriarchy in our society. Instead, the president has managed to have her name dragged through the muck in her role as arguably the most active enabler of Prime Minister Oli in his many actions of dubious impropriety, and illegality, as the Supreme Court has pronounced by now. Bhandari's name will remain forever tarred, and, for that, she will have no one to blame but her close pal and the unnatural haste with which she sanctioned everything he placed before her.

Granted that heads of state in a parliamentary system have the unenviable distinction of serving as rubber stamps to the executive branch of government. But they are also allotted certain discretionary powers to stall and counsel—provided they want to use them. In the case of Nepal, we have had the other extreme when, in 2009, President Ram Baran Yadav flatly rejected on a legal technicality then-Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's move to sack the army chief.

Bhandari, on the other hand, has remained consistently mum when presented with a series of controversial cabinet decisions. In fact, she even appears to have indulged in petty subterfuge such as not allowing the anti-Oli faction of the ruling party from even registering with her office, as constitutionally mandated, the signed petition by members of parliament asking for the house be called back into session. When the time comes, that blatant attempt to stymie the democratic process should be thoroughly investigated in order to prevent future misuse of presidential powers

Bus that Bhandari and Oli missed



whether by Bhandari or by any of her successors.

Like Bhandari, Oli, too, had a chance to leave an indelible imprint on the country, and not in the negative way he will forever be portrayed in the history books. Tasked with overseeing the country's transition to a federal system, and granted *carte blanche* power through popular vote over the three tiers of government, he bungled thoroughly. And all because he appears to have had not a clue about how to go about the business of governance. Concentrating all power in his office and restricting himself to a small band of unelected advisers while most of the ministers were not even able to meet him, Oli's three-year tenure has been one of a series of bombast, and nothing more.

To understand how Oli functions, a recent article by Ghanshyam Bhusal is revealing. A prominent member of Oli's party as well as an outspoken critic of his, Bhusal had been appointed Minister for Agriculture but had resigned in the wake of the crisis engineered by Oli and Bhandari. As is his wont, Oli could not resist ridiculing Bhusal's performance as minister. Bhusal's long rebuttal makes for entertaining read-

ing, and I present below a paraphrased translation of a section that is both amusing and disturbing.

One winter day Bhusal was asked to show up at the prime minister's residence with the full contingent of departmental and divisional heads to brief Oli on his ministry's activities. The team went fully prepared complete with a presentation consisting of 48 slides. The Secretary had only just begun the briefing when the prime minister launched into a half-an-hour-long spiel he is famous for. Another long speech followed the first slide. They managed to go through just three or four slides that day, with each serving as a prelude to lengthy intercessions by the prime minister consisting of what he had seen of agricultural developments on his trips abroad; what he had heard; idiomatic expressions; what the previous government had failed to do; the importance of Nepal's climate on agriculture growth; the government's desire to increase productivity and on development; some Rajbansi woman Oli had given a thousand rupees to and how she had prospered by engaging in business; his philosophy on development that it means making the maximum use of something; and so on.

As Bhusal put it, there was not a single point in the extended lecture that was of any use to the Ministry.

What is worrisome is that our prime minister's behaviour at the highest levels of government appears to be no different from how he shows up before the general public. That he is wont to making long-winded speeches in lieu of any policy discussions is known but that his litany would consist of random thoughts regurgitated from memory perhaps explains why we are where we are as a country. If after making an ass of himself in the national parliament with outrageous statements and he can think highly of his performance, there is no reason to believe that there is a different Oli lurking somewhere blessed with the sagacity we so desperately need in an individual leading our country.

What is somewhat tragic right now, and funny at the same time, is that despite their 'victory' at the Supreme Court, the Prachanda-Nepal duo seem to be at a loss on how to deal with their nemesis. Their expectation that with the House of Representatives restored, Oli would feel morally bound to resign has been belied. Rather, they continue to be targeted by Oli with his taunts,

a skill in which he is undoubtedly a past master.

That Oli continues to behave thus is the unfortunate result of his, and Bhandari's, having ridden roughshod over accepted political norms. In the words of American law professor, Neil S. Siegel, 'Political norms can be thought of as principles of right action that bind elected officials and serve to guide and control their conduct in office. Political norms prescribe standards of behaviour that all politicians should agree on and then comply with anyway—that is, regardless of whether other politicians comply with them.'

In other words, norms are what scream out 'you just can't do that' or 'that's just wrong'—even if legally permissible. The record over the past three years makes it clear that one cannot expect any regard for such norms from either the president or the prime minister. Siegel wrote his piece 'in the spirit of encouraging Americans to insist "never again" in response to the norm-busting presidency of Donald Trump. Let us hope we will soon get our own chance to say the same once this Oli-Bhandari nightmare is over.'

The Kathmandu Post/ANN.

POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

Congress faces uncertain future

The upcoming Assembly polls to five states - West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam, and Puducherry - will decide the Congress Party's future. A growing number of Congress dissidents could leave the party or continue to remain to sabotage. Either way, it is a dilemma for the Gandhi family.

The group of 23 leaders who had challenged the Gandhis some time ago are continuing their defiance in public. While the party has announced an AICC session after the Assembly polls to elect a full-time president demanded by the dissidents, the revolt continues. An example is last week's visit of the G-23 leaders under Ghulam Nabi Azad's leadership to Jammu and Kashmir, exhibiting their strength.

In the upcoming Assembly polls, the Congress is not in power in any of the five states, although it ruled almost all of them when it was strong. The Congress depends on the Gandhi family. It has not developed strong state leaders who could counter the growing BJP and regional satraps. For instance, in West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress has replaced both the CPI-M and the Congress. The emerging BJP has taken over even the second slot. In Assam, the party lost its hold after former chief minister Tarun Gogoi's



death.

In the south, the party lost its only government in Puducherry last week. In Tamil Nadu, it is piggyback riding on the DMK, hoping to snatch the state from the AIADMK. The Congress had never come back to power after it lost it to the DMK in 1967. Kerala has been alternating between the Left-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF. There is a chance

that the Congress coalition might snatch the state from the LDF this time.

The party is weakening due to many factors. The G-23 feels sidelined while Rahul Gandhi's coterie is taking decisions. They allege that Rahul Gandhi is taking all the decisions. Sonia Gandhi cannot lead the party because of poor health.

Today's Sonia Gandhi is not the per-

son she was in 1998 when she took over the party and brought it to power twice. There is no second rung leadership or state-level leaders. Congress has not attracted any new talent while the BJP imports leaders from other parties.

On the other hand, the Congress has lost talent to the BJP in leaders like Jyotiraditya Scindia. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, it is an open house for Congress dissidents. The Gandhi family are no more vote catchers, as has been proved since 2014. Congress has lost more elections than it has won in the past six years. Even in states where it came to power, the BJP toppled Congress governments, as in Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Puducherry.

Moreover, the Congress leadership is not able to stop the erosion as Sonia was able to do in 1998. The party has already lost importance and long been overtaken by the BJP. The BJP has emerged as the number one party in the country. With a little push, the Congress will collapse like a pack of cards.

Unfortunately for the dissidents, there is no tall leader who can challenge the Gandhi family. While Sharad Pawar did raise a challenge in 1999 by splitting the Congress and launching the Nationalist Congress Party, he could not succeed in

getting rid of the family. Mamata Banerjee also broke the party in West Bengal in 1988, formed the Trinamool Congress, and came to power in 2011. Still, her success was limited to West Bengal.

The dissidents are naturally upset because the response from the Gandhi family is not encouraging. Since 20 August last, when the G-23 made their demands for party reorganization, their grievances have not been addressed other than a closed-door session in December 2020.

Meanwhile, the show of strength of the G-23 has shrunk. The display of power in Jammu was to exhibit that the dissidents could join the BJP. Some compare the revolt to the 1969 split engineered by Indira Gandhi against the syndicate (the then old guard). Indira Gandhi deftly got rid of them. But among the G-23, there is no Indira Gandhi.

However, the Gandhi family can no longer delay decisions. The family is not able to contain dissent and the only option is to try for unity. G-23 may not have prominent leaders to match the Gandhis, but what if they decide to leave the party before the Assembly polls?

The Gandhis will have to deal with the dissent without delay and before the upcoming Assembly polls. The party has no choice other than showing a united face. Or else, it will sink further.

NO 28846

SOLUTION FOR 28 FEBRUARY

ACROSS

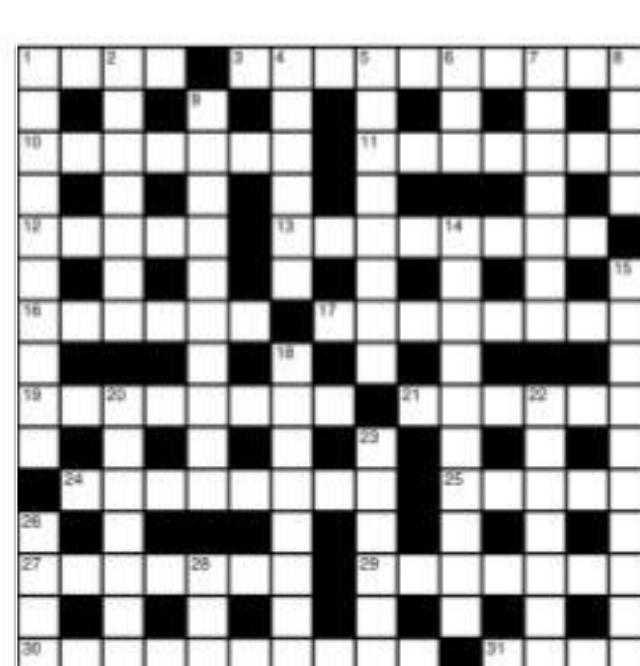
- Enticement to switch directions in government (4)
- Burden put on Jill's partner, one in the logging industry (10)
- Book to support one wielding an axe? (7)
- US actor embarrassed beside US film director (7)
- Some traverse a glen to see bird of prey (5)
- Gather before conference, maybe, to show up again (8)
- Two cups I notice shortly for stew (6)
- Eagerly devour US novelist, we hear, away from college (4,4)
- Number right to be taken by Frenchman with friend in the usual fashion (8)
- A head linked to old US space programme (6)
- Pedestrian exercise completed in easy victory (8)
- Source of spectators' impulse to create powerful rush (5)
- A cottage's interior I renovated in a restless fashion (7)
- Explosive charge shown by Australian swimmer after leaving hotel party (7)
- Ninth bloke needs sacking, not reliably working (2,3,5)
- Defy youth at regular intervals in small island (4)

DOWN

- Group supporting bridge game has flimsy piece of stationery (6,4)
- Italian dish showing a decline in Latin and North America (7)
- Posh prince before performance shows sign of improvement (6)
- Drinking haunt attended by awful sailor in holiday destination (8)
- Free characters stuck in Bridlington (3)
- A largely noisy director with love for green food (7)
- Slide, first to last, for children (4)
- Danger for surfers? Gather risk has to be reviewed (5,5)
- Plug by old railway for baked item (4,6)
- Senior most in trouble, as it were (2,4,4)
- Chef right away on counter dropping fine liquid (5,3)
- Unsentimental type about a set of items (7)
- Crime nearly out of control around Cuba (7)
- Portion of land missing a sign of sun for Mediterranean resident (6)
- Firm after sign of appreciation supplies Mexican food (4)
- Expert type of service (3)

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

CROSSWORD



NOW AND AGAIN

Invaders of the night

PARAMANANDA PAL

In the city, has anybody ever come across these bats flying around and surreptitiously entering the room of a house, encircling the ceiling and occasionally swooping down causing much fear among children?

Like the sparrows, these pipistrelle bats appear to have left the precincts of the city because of increasing pollution and radioactivity emitted by mobile towers. In fact, the environmentalist laments the exit of a number of natural creatures and birds from the city. They are apprehensive of a disturbance in the ecological balance in the natural environment of the city. However, unlike the World Sparrow Day on March 20, no association of ornithologists appears to have so far spared a thought for the dwindling pipistrelle bats.

It is, however, true that old dilapidated houses or palatial bungalows in ruins, scattered in some of the old localities of the city, have provided shelter to the bats. If anybody ventures to enter the old nearly dilapidated building of Raja Subodh Mullick (since donated to Calcutta University) near Dharamtola junction, he would be welcomed immediately by these bats. Started by footstep, they would whiz around the intruder.

The sight of these bats flying across a moonlit sky generates awe and fear particularly among children who love reading ghost stories. In their belief, these birds are the forerunners of ghosts. Such a sight has, however, has almost vanished from the city.

The towns are, however, not immune to regular sightings of these creatures. During my childhood in the 1950s when I lived in Midnapore town, I would observe that often after an evening shower, the pipistrelle bats would fly out of the adjacent trees and then steal into the house through an open window. They would continue flying with restless speed until the electric light was switched off to let them see their way out. With their exit everybody would heave a sigh of relief. But, as children addicted to ghost stories we, the little brothers and sisters, would then start to wonder in anticipation about the stealthy entry of ghosts into the house, particularly on nights when there was load-shedding. Now, as a city-dweller I miss those childhood days of fear and apprehension accompanied by the forays of pipistrelle bats.

100 YEARS AGO

A PROTEST FROM BANGALORE

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - Referring to a notification which appeared in the issue of the Hindu that I had resigned my seat on the Commission, I would like to enlighten you about the circumstances under which I entrusted a draft copy of my resignation with certain conditions to some of the constituents of the local Khilafat Committee about its being formally forwarded for acceptance after a candid and open disavowal of their violent and tyrannical methods which have resulted in creating factions. Such tyrannical and violent methods have been the ruling principle of the local Khilafat Committee from the very commencement of its work. It is on this account I had to sever my connection although I had been the prime mover at its formation. The violent and tyrannical methods of the local Khilafat Committee have not been given up. As I cannot conscientiously cooperate with such a body, and as a protest against such action, I have withdrawn my resignation.

M. ABDUL LATHEEF
Bangalore.

VALUATION V. TAXATION

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - I had occasion a few months ago to appear before the Vice-Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation as my father's agent on the day of the hearing of my father's objection to the proposed assessment of his two municipal premises. I tried unsuccessfully to address a few words on the principles of taxation as opposed to valuation according to the market prices. I have since thought over the matter and have decided to write a brief letter on the subject in the hope that it may lead to a public discussion of the question. No special knowledge of political economy is required to be aware of the fact that prices depend upon demand and supply. There is, as every one is aware, a very great demand for small houses or small plots of land in Calcutta, while the number of persons with money enough to buy big houses or big plots of land is comparatively small.

BIJAYKUMAR GANGULI.
Calcutta.

RE-EXAMINING TELEGRAPH MASTERS

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - I had served the Government for 37 long years, but never heard of such unfair dealings as are now being done in the Posts and Telegraphs. Recently an order was issued that all certified Telegraph Masters and Supervisors of the Baudot Telegraph Branch, all over India and Burma, will be re-examined by one favoured officer. This order was evidently passed to give this gentleman a few thousand rupees travelling allowances before he retires this year. Is it fair and just to harass men for re-examination who duly passed and received their certificates many years ago and who have actually proved their abilities during the last ten years by making the complicated Baudot telegraph system a complete success? I further understand from reliable sources that the Baudot staff have intimated to the Director-General that if a single certified man is re-examined anywhere there will be a "fearful strike" throughout India and Burma from that very day.

JUSTICE.





Tesla & Ford are the only American car makers not to have gone bankrupt out of 1000's of car startups

ELON MUSK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TESLA

THUMBNAILS

Reliance Home Finance default: Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL) on Saturday said it has defaulted on loan of over Rs 40 crore from Punjab & Sind Bank even as the company has enough cash and cash equivalent which it cannot use due to a court order. The Anil Ambani-controlled Reliance Capital's subsidiary defaulted on loan on 15 February 2021, and the current amount of default is Rs 40 crore alongside an interest of Rs 15 lakh. The company's total obligation is of Rs 200 crore on a 5-year tenure secured term loan at 9.25 per cent per annum from Punjab & Sind Bank, RHFL said in a regulatory filing. The company has net cash (including cash equivalent, liquid mutual fund investments, fixed deposits etc) of more than Rs 1,500 crore, it said.

TVS vaccination: Two-wheeler and three-wheeler manufacturer TVS Motor Company on Saturday announced that it had extended free Covid-19 vaccination for all employees and their immediate family members. This vaccination drive is in line with the ongoing government guidelines and will cover 35,000 direct and indirect company employees across the country, the company said in a statement.

BMW launch: BMW Motorrad India has launched new BMW R nineT and BMW R nineT Scrambler in India. Available as completely built-up units (CBU), the motorcycles can be booked at all BMW Motorrad India dealerships with immediate effect, the company said. Speaking on the development, Vikram Pawah, president, BMW Group India, said: "The new BMW R nineT and the new BMW R nineT Scrambler are an expression of a timeless motorcycling culture that celebrates pure riding, sportiness and yet absolutely stands apart in its design and appeal."

Haier AC: Home appliances and consumer electronics maker Haier has expanded its innovative product portfolio by introducing CleanCool all season hot & cold air conditioner with self-clean technology. The newly launched hot and cold 3-star AC is available in 1.5-ton cooling capacity and comes with triple inverter plus technology that self-adjusts temperature and promises up to 65 per cent energy savings, said a release.

Pharma growth: High base effect along with volume decline subdued the growth of India's pharmaceuticals market, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said. Accordingly, the volume decline in the anti-infective and respiratory products was pronounced during the month. "Ind-Ra expects a growth improvement over the coming months as the vaccination drive gains momentum and a lower base leads to better growth momentum."

IANS

Credit demand growth seen at 9-10% in FY'22: Report

On the back of timely government and regulatory measures initiated during this financial year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

On the back of timely government and regulatory measures this fiscal, which helped the economy to recover faster than expected, bank credit is seen growing 400-500 basis points to 9-10 per cent in the next financial year, according to a report.

In the current fiscal, bank credit is expected to rise 4-5 per cent despite the sharpest contraction in the economy since Independence.

As per the Crisil report, the economy is likely to grow at 11 per cent in financial year 2021-22.

While bank credit growth

OUTLOOK FOR CORPORATE CREDIT

» Growth in corporate credit, which is 49 per cent of overall bank credit, is expected to contract this fiscal as companies have put capex on the backburner but will change next fiscal when corporate credit is expected to grow 5-6 per cent on a likely revival in demand. But the share of corporate loans in the overall credit pie will continue to shrink with faster growth of other segments.



be at 0-1 per cent this fiscal.

The government measures, including the Rs 3 lakh crore emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS), have been supportive, he added.

In the first half of this fiscal, the pandemic forced borrowers and lenders to tread cautiously, leading to a contraction in credit pick-up.

In absolute terms, net credit rose to Rs 2.3 lakh crore in the first nine months of financial year 2020-21, of which disbursements under ECLGS was Rs 1.6 lakh crore

But a faster-than-expected upturn in economic activity since the relaxation of lockdowns, and pent-up and festive season demand helped thereafter.

In absolute terms, net credit rose to Rs 2.3 lakh crore in the first nine months of financial year 2020-21, of which disbursements under ECLGS was Rs 1.6 lakh crore

in this period.

Banks also deployed Rs 1.4 lakh crore via targeted long-term repo operation and partial credit guarantee scheme, serving as credit substitutes.

Growth in corporate credit, which is 49 per cent of overall bank credit, is expected to contract this fiscal as companies have put capex on the backburner but will change next fiscal when corporate credit is expected to grow 5-6 per cent on a likely revival in demand.

But the share of corporate loans in the overall credit pie will continue to shrink with faster growth of other segments.

Retail lending is likely to slow down to 9-10 per cent this fiscal before returning to the mid-teens growth of the past couple of years.

"Banks are expected to benefit from the lower competition as non-banks, grappling with multiple challenges, see tepid growth. With deposit growth outstripping credit growth so far, banks would use the surplus liquidity

to wrench credit market share away from some of the largest catchments of non-banks such as mortgages and new vehicle finance.

Even this fiscal, more than half of the incremental retail credit growth till date has been from mortgages," Subha Narayanan, a director at the agency, said.

Overall growth in credit to MSMEs is likely to be at 9-10 per cent this fiscal and 8-9 per cent in the next financial year, as the ECLGS may not be available next fiscal.

Agriculture credit has also contributed, with rural India seeing a lower impact of the pandemic and a good harvest. Credit growth here is forecast at 6-7 per cent in this fiscal and the next.

Overall, sharp economic recovery, along with a pick-up in private investment and capex demand may lead to a buoyant credit growth next fiscal.

But sub-normal monsoons and another surge in the pandemic leading to localised or partial lockdowns pose downside risks.

Govt open to evaluate, explore cryptocurrencies, says Thakur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

Union minister Anurag Thakur today said the government is open to evaluate and explore new technologies, including cryptocurrencies, for improving governance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself is a strong advocate of embracing technology in various aspects of governance, the minister of state for finance said while addressing an event organised by Entrepreneurs' Organisation - EO Punjab.

"Let me say that we welcome innovation and new technology...blockchain is a new emerging technology. Cryptocurrency is a form of virtual currency. I firmly believe that we must always evaluate, explore and encourage new ideas with an open mind," the minister said.

A high-level inter-ministerial committee (IMC) was

constituted under the chairmanship of economic affairs secretary on digital currencies and it has submitted its report.

The government would take a decision on the recommendations of the inter-ministerial committee and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due process, he said while inviting suggestions and views on this issue.

Cryptocurrencies are digital or virtual currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of their units and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the government is still formulating its opinion on cryptocurrencies and will take a calibrated position.

Reserve Bank of India Gov-

ernor Shaktikanta Das had last week said the apex bank has certain "major concerns" over the impact cryptocurrencies may have on the financial stability in the economy and has conveyed the same to the government.

The Reserve Bank of India had virtually banned cryptocurrency trading in 2018 and had directed all entities regulated by the central bank to cease dealing in virtual currencies.

The Supreme Court had also asked the Centre in 2019 to frame policies for crypto, and in 2020, struck down the curbs imposed by the RBI.

The Reserve Bank had through various public notices on 24 December 2013, 1 February 2017 and 5 December 2017, cautioned users, holders and traders of virtual currencies, including bitcoins, regarding various risks associated in dealing with such virtual currencies.

'15th Fin Comm opted for continuity in deciding tax devolution to states'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

The 15th Finance Commission opted for continuity and predictability and hence retained the share of tax devolution to states at 41 per cent of the total pool, its chairman N K Singh said today.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Singh said each Finance Commission in the past has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution to states, but the 15th Finance Commission weighed all the options considering that the fiscal space of both states and the Centre has shrunk on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rajya Sabha MP Sushil Kumar Modi highlighted that the share of divisible pool is slowly shrinking as the "cess and surcharge" component

in gross tax revenue is increasing. The 15th Finance Commission has recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission.

Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on Centre-state financial relations.

As per the Commission, the gross tax revenue (GTR) for the 5-year period is expected to be Rs 135.2 lakh crore. Out of that, divisible pool (after deducting cesses and surcharges and cost of collection) is estimated to be Rs 103 lakh crore.

States' share at 41 per cent of divisible pool comes to Rs 42.2 lakh crore for 2021-26 period.

The report of the 15th Finance Commission was



cal space of the Central government.

"Finance Commission is not an encounter with shock and awe, Finance Commission has a legacy which believes in stability, continuity and predictability. We opted for continuity and predictability," he said.

Modi, in his speech, said cess and surcharge which was 10.4 per cent of GTR in 2011-12, has increased to 20.2 per cent. Even after deducting GST compensation cess, it is 15 per cent.

"The share of divisible pool is slowly shrinking... So one of the issues which states are raising is because under the Constitution, cess and surcharge is not under divisible pool... But slowly divisible pool size is shrinking and cess and surcharge increasing," said Modi, who is also the former deputy chief minister of Bihar.

IndiGrid to buy Sterlite unit for ₹4,625 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

DEAL DETAILS

» India Grid Trust (IndiGrid) has signed a share purchase agreement for acquisition of 100 per cent shareholding and economic interest, in one or more tranches, in NER II Transmission Ltd from Sterlite Grid 4 Ltd.» According to the statement, the 100 per cent equity stake will be acquired at an enterprise value not exceeding Rs 4,625 crore, subject to all other adjustments. 1

The acquisition will be funded through a combination of internal accruals, debt, equity proceeds from the preference issue done in May 2019 and forthcoming rights issue.



of the sponsors of IndiGrid.

According to the statement, the 100 per cent equity stake will be acquired at an enterprise value not exceeding Rs 4,625 crore, subject to all other adjustments.

The indicative value of the acquisition is Rs 4,625 crore and would boost IndiGrid's asset under management (AUM) by 34 per cent to over Rs 20,000 crore (\$2.8 billion). Post completion, the plat-

form's asset portfolio would consist of 13 power transmission projects, with a total network of 38 power transmission lines and 11 substations extending over 7,570 circuit kilometres & 13,350 MVA in 17 Indian states and 1 Union Territory.

NER-II is part of Interstate Transmission Scheme network, and was awarded on a build, own, operate, maintain (BOOM) basis with a contractual period of 35 years.

The project has 11 elements, including two substations of 1,260 MVA capacity and four transmission lines extending over 830 circuit kilometres. The asset spans across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura and is of strategic importance for the delivery of power in one of the toughest regions in the country.

This project will strengthen the power transmission network in the North-eastern states and address the transmission, sub-transmission, and distribution system needs of the region.

IndiGrid had signed a framework agreement in April 2019 with Sterlite Power for acquisition of NER-II upon commissioning. This transaction is expected to be consummated during fourth quarter of 2020-21, subject to unitholders' approval, regulatory approvals, and other customary closing adjustments.

The acquisition will be funded through a combination of internal accruals, debt, equity proceeds from the preference issue done in May 2019 and forthcoming rights issue. Post this acquisition, the net debt/AUM would stand at 64 per cent.

IOC may monetise hydrogen units

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

that is also looking at getting into hydrogen production realising its vast uses.

Sources said IOC had proposed monetising some of its hydrogen producing units in lieu of its product pipelines which the government wants the company to monetise.

Government expects Indian Oil, GAIL and Hindustan Petroleum to raise Rs 17,000 crore by selling stakes in their pipelines through the infrastructure investment trust route in the next financial year.

IOC, however, wants to retain its piping operations and has proposed direct monetising of hydrogen units instead. Oil industry sources said that the PSU's proposal is being examined and a decision would be taken soon.

Forex reserves rise to \$584.55 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 6 MARCH

India's foreign reserves increased for the second consecutive week, touching \$584.55 billion as of 26 February, up by \$689 million, the Reserve Bank has said.

The overall reserves had increased by \$169 million to \$583.865 billion in the previous reporting week. The reserves, which have been steadily increasing over the last few months, had touched an all-time high at \$590.185 billion for the week ended 29 January this year.

For the week ended 26 February, the core currency assets - the largest component of the overall reserves -

compared to 194.82 lakh tons in the corresponding period of the previous year. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September.

During October 2020 and February 2021 period, sugar production in Maharashtra rose to 84.85 lakh tons compared with 50.70 lakh tons in the year-ago period.

In Uttar Pradesh, sugar output is lower at 74.20 lakh tons till February of this marketing year compared with 76.86 lakh tons in the previous year.

Sugar production in Karnataka has increased to 40.53 lakh tons from 32.60 lakh tons.

"...the ex-mill prices in most of the states are under pressure and are showing

downward trend as average prices in Tamil Nadu are hovering between Rs 3,200 and Rs 3,225 per quintal, while in northern states the ex-mill prices are in the range of Rs 3,160-3,180 per quintal. Whereas, ex-mill prices in Maharashtra and Karnataka are reeling at MSP of sugar," ISMA said.

The current prices are almost Rs 80-100 per quintal less than what it was a year back during the corresponding period.

"This is not a good sign as low sugar prices, much below the cost of production for last several months, have adversely affected the liquidity of mills and their ability to pay the FRP (fair and remunerative price) to cane farmers. It is feared that if such situation persists then cane price arrears will jump very fast to uncomfortable levels," it added.

ISMA recommended for an upward revision of sugar MSP, which was last revised two years back when the FRP of sugarcane was at Rs 275 per quintal.

"Since the government has already increased the FRP of sugarcane by Rs 10 per quintal for the current year, there is need to increase the MSP of sugar to Rs 34.50 per kg after considering the increased FRP of sugarcane for 2020-21. There is need to quickly decide on increasing the MSP of sugar to ensure that sugar mills are able to pay to farmers on time," the association said.

Sugar output up by 20% at 233.77 lakh tons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 6 MARCHPRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

India's sugar production rose by 20 per cent to 233.77 lakh tons in the first five months of 2020-21 marketing year ending September this year compared with 194.82 lakh tons in 2019-20.

The Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) said the minimum selling price (MSP) of sugar should be raised to Rs 34.5 per kg from the present Rs 31 per kg to help mills in clearing cane arrears to sugarcane farmers.

Sugar production stood at 233.77 lakh tons till February of 2020-21 marketing year as

Cabinet approves power infra projects for Paradip PCPIR

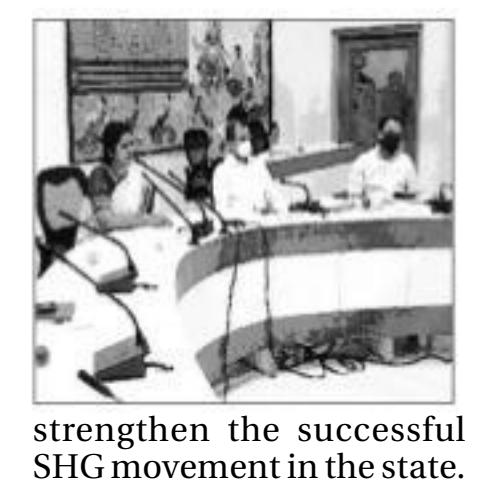
Mission Shakti dept for women SHG, 10 mega pipe water projects

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

Odisha cabinet today approved a proposal to develop the power infrastructure at Paradip for the energy requirements of the proposed Petroleum, Chemical and Petrochemicals Investment Region (PCPIR).

The Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (OPTCL) will set up a 2X500 MVA, 400/220/33 KV GIS Substation at Paradip along with associated line at a cost of Rs 637.45 crore which includes 30% equity support from the state gov-

ernment amounting to Rs. 191.235 crore. The balance is to be met by OPTCL through loan from Banks/FIs amounting to Rs. 446.215 crore and the work is to be completed in three years time.



The project will also cater to the power demand of the upcoming industries in Jagatsinghpur & Kendrapara districts and industries linked to Haridaspur-Paradip railway line. The project will also be helpful in strengthening the Transmission Network of the State.

The cabinet approved creation of a new department - Mission Shakti to further

strengthen the successful SHG movement in the state. It also cleared 10 mega rural pipe water supply schemes in Aul, Rajkanika, Chilika, Tangi, Banpur, Khordha, Jatni, Gondia, Bhuban, Golamunda, Jajpur and Binjharpur blocks.

The rural pipe water

scheme for 26 panchayats of Sambalpur district and two panchayats of Jharsuguda district were also cleared.

The work for the pipe water supply projects have been awarded to L&T and M/S. Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd, Hyderabad.

The much delayed satellite center of AIIMS in Balasore district was sought to be expedited with the sanction of 25 acres of land.

The cabinet also approved creation of a corpus fund of Rs 100 crore with a view to pre-position the fertilizers by the institutional agencies and supply the same to the

farmers in time as per their demand. The state agencies namely OSCMF/ OAIC shall be involved in procurement and supply of fertilizers to the farmers. Interest free loans will be provided to the two agencies.

Another decision taken today was to allow OMC Ltd to sell the entire quantity of bauxite ore stock at a rate of Rs 1000 per MT with an undertaking to pay the differential rate as stipulated by the High Court to prevent loss of revenue to OMC as the unsold bauxite ore meant for auction would have lost its quality and value.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

Unfazed by the lack of support from her own party leaders, BJP MP and national spokesperson Aparajita Sarangi asserted that ancient structures and monuments need to be protected and preserved rather than being demolished.

Ms Sarangi undertook a 'heritage walk' from Lingaraj Temple to Kedargouri here and claimed that it was not for political mileage. It is to create awareness on conservation of monuments, she said.

and mutts at Puri as well as

Bhubaneswar for the heritage corridor development. She questioned how heritage corridor can be done by demolishing heritage monuments.

She has also opposed the withdrawal of the draft bylaw issued for Puri and a few temples in Bhubaneswar

by the National Monument Authority.

Significantly BJP leaders including Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Pratap Sarangi had demanded withdrawal of the draft bylaws.

In fact Dharmendra Pradhan has repeatedly supported the heritage corridor and development plan of Puri Jagannath Temple initiated by CM Naveen Patnaik. Yesterday Pradhan had mooted the idea of a fund collection drive for the proposal.

Even today, Pradhan reiterated his wholehearted support and called upon people to contribute for the Jagannath Temple heritage corridor and development project.

BJP MP persists with her heritage protection campaign

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

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It may be noted that Ms Sarangi has alleged that the state government had violated the law in pulling down ancient structures



Odishi dance by Illeana Chitaristi & Swasat Joshi group at Rabindra Mandap on Gurupranam Utsav in Bhubaneswar .SNS

Servitors light diyas & pray for Simlipal National Park

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BARIPADA, 6 MARCH:



protection of the National Park.

He said the fire has been raging since one week and several medicinal plants destroyed.

Meanwhile a Mayurbhanj district based outfit here decided to observe a 12-hour protest against the failure of the Centre and State Government in protecting Asia's biggest Simlipal Biosphere Reserve.

Odisha logs 54 new COVID cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

Odisha on Saturday reported the lowest COVID-19 cases since the past 13 days with 54 new infections in the past 24 hours.

The new cases were detected in 15 of the state's 30 districts, with 32 cases reported from different quarantine cases and the remaining 22 were local contact cases.

Only Sundergarh district reported new positive cases in double digits at 10 followed by Balasore (7) and Khurda (6).

The COVID-19 death toll remained at 1,917 as no fresh fatality has been reported since Wednesday.

The State's recovery rate currently stands at 99.17% with as many as 3,34,902 patients cured of the disease so far.

Odisha currently has 802 active cases.

A total of 84,51,396 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far including 24,222 on Friday. Odisha has reported a 4% positivity rate while 96% samples have tested negative for COVID-19.

Sarpanch unseated for polygamy, lack of Odia knowledge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

A court in Ganjam district today set aside the election of a sarpanch as he perpetrated multiple infringement of law like not knowing Odia, polygamy, and violating the 'two child norm'.

Simadri, elected as the sarpanch of Agastinagam gram panchayat under Chhatrapur block of Ganjam in the 2017 polls, was disqualified by

a court in an order yesterday.

The court of civil judge (senior division) in Chhatrapur taking cognizance of defeated Sarpanch candidate Niwas Gouda unseated the sitting sarpanch a year before his term was to expire.

Simadri had two wives and six children. Besides he did not know how to write and speak Odia. These grounds turned him ineligible under the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1994.

As per the People's Repre-

All eligible farmers of Odisha will get PM KISAN installments: Tomar

BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

The central government has decided to provide the benefits of the PM Kisan Yojana to all eligible farmers of Odisha, said Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar.

Replies to a letter by his ministerial colleague Dharmendra Pradhan, the Agriculture Minister said he has directed officials to immediately take steps and sort out all issues so that eligible farmers of Odisha get the benefit of PM-KISAN benefit to the farmers in Odisha. SNS

Certain issues of non-compliance had led to stop payment orders had been raised by Pradhan.

The state Agriculture Minister Arun Sahoo had listed out the issues in his letter to Pradhan earlier.

Pradhan had requested Tomar to convene a meeting between the officials of the Agriculture ministry and the Odisha government to resolve all payment-related issues and ensure the disbursement of PM-KISAN benefit to the farmers in Odisha. SNS

Irate farmers keep paddy in front of DM's residence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAGATSINGHPUR, 6 MARCH:

Irate farmers demonstrated in front of the Jagatsinghpur district collector's residence and placed paddy at his gates saying their crop was not being procured by the government as is the case in several parts of Odisha.

The tokens issued to registered farmers have become futile due to inordinate

delay in procurement, charged the farmers. A total of 39,276 farmers had registered in the district to sell their paddy at the mandies or market yards. Many have been forced to sell at distress rates ranging from Rs 1300 to Rs 1400 per quintal.

Farmer Jatadhari Acharya said he has 53 quintals of unsold paddy while Jogendra another farmer said his 45 quintals were lying at the

mandi.

Activists of the Nab Nirman Krushak Sangathan, a peasants outfit, alleged that hundreds of farmers are in distress.

The sub collector Dharmendra Mallick, District Civil Supply Officer Bibekananda Korkora and other officials pacified the irate farmers and promised to renew their tokens entitling them to sell their crop.

Man hacked to death in broad daylight in Bhubaneswar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 6 MARCH:

A man was hacked to death in full public glare by two persons near the busy CRP Square in the heart of the capital city Bhubaneswar on Saturday afternoon, bringing under sharp focus the absence of fear of the police.

The murder was perpetrated inside a pickup van as the assailants doused on him and stabbed him repeatedly. The gory visuals were recorded on the CCTV cameras in the area.

As the man screamed, locals could see the execution of a dastardly crime. Before they could react to rescue the



man in distress, it was all over. The victim died on the spot as the murderers slit his throat.

The deceased has been identified as Jatia Das while the assailants- Sagar and Sud-

hir- were overpowered by local people.

The deceased and the two murderers were all natives of Salisahi, the city's largest slum clusters.

The deceased and the two assailants were in transport business. Both of them have been arrested. They will be interrogated after their health condition improves, police said.

Police Commissioner Sudhansu Sarangi said the deceased had a criminal track record and was on bail. He had a fight with Sagar and Sudhir, even inside the van it was Jatia who attacked Sudhir with a knife and the two retaliated.

It may be recalled here that on October last, the city had witnessed daring daylight murder when a sweet stall owner was brutally hacked to death in the middle of road at the crowded garage chowk in Samantarupur area.

Marine bio-resource centre inaugurated

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE, 6 MARCH:

Union Minister Pratap Sarangi and state agriculture minister Dr Arun Sahoo inaugurated a centre for marine bio-resources and marine biotechnology at the Fakir Mohan University Balasore.

The Union Minister said India has great potential in the field of marine bio-resources and can exploit marine fisheries, seaweeds, horseshoe crab and other resources.

The central government is focused on this potential and extending financial help to the fisheries sector, said Union Minister.

State Agriculture Minister

delay in procurement, charged the farmers. A total of 39,276 farmers had registered in the district to sell their paddy at the mandies or market yards. Many have been forced to sell at distress rates ranging from Rs 1300 to Rs 1400 per quintal.

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LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Heap of rock fragments (5)
4 Gift of the Magi (5)
7 String (4)
8 Renegade (8)
9 Well thought-out (10)
11 Drinking vessel (6)
13 Overthrow (6)
15 Tall building (10)
19 Type of church (8)
20 Was indebted to (4)
21 Liquid measure (5)
22 Roller-coast (4)

DOWN

1 Precipitation (4)
2 Thoroughgoing (7)
3 Consumed (5)
4 Left-winger (7)
5 Small ruff (5)
6 Delightful (Informal) (8)
10 Mixed drink (8)
12 Cooking dish (7)
14 Living room (7)
16 Skimp (5)
17 Sacred song (5)
18 Citrus fruit peel (4)

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

2386836, 23865181

Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747

Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403

Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 2332320

PAR SCORE 75-85

JUDD

FATHER'S DAY

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	32	26 H
HONG KONG	21	18 R
TOKYO	11	6 H
LONDON	7	1 S
DUBAI	25	21 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	13	7 H
NEW YORK	2	-1 H
MOSCOW	-4	-11 H

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

THUMBNAILS



A demonstrator holds up a Senegalese flag during protests against the arrest of opposition leader and former presidential candidate Ousmane Sonko in Dakar, Senegal.

AGENCIES

Italy surpasses 3 million cases: Italy surpassed 3 million confirmed coronavirus cases on Friday, the third straight day this week that daily new case loads exceeded 20,000 cases. With the 24,036 new confirmed infections registered by the Health Ministry, Italy has reached 3,023,129 cases. The virus variant first found in England is potentially fueling the increase.

AP

Emergency landing: An American Airlines Boeing 737 Max made an emergency landing Friday afternoon in Newark, New Jersey, after pilots noticed a possible problem with an engine oil pressure indicator. An airline spokeswoman said the plane from Miami landed safely and taxied to the gate under its own power. She said there were no injuries among the 95 passengers and six crew members.

AP

Somalia death toll: The death toll has risen to at least 20 after a vehicle packed with explosives rammed into a popular restaurant in Somalia's capital on Friday night, with 30 wounded, the government news agency reported Saturday.

AP

Six Ukrainians die: A bus carrying dozens of Ukrainian citizens rolled off an embankment into a ditch in Poland, killing six people and injuring 41, Polish media reported on Saturday. The accident occurred around midnight on the A4 motorway near the town of Jaroslaw, which is in southeastern Poland near the border with Ukraine.

AP

Cairo accident: A trailer-truck crashed into a microbus, killing at least 18 people and injuring five others south of the Egyptian capital, authorities said. The country's chief prosecutor's office said in a statement the crash took place Friday.

AP

Pope, Iraq cleric hold historic meeting

Francis thanked al-Sistani for raising his voice in defense of the weakest and most persecuted during the violence in Iraq's recent history

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PLAINES OF UR (IRAQ), 6 MARCH

most senior clerics in Shi'ite Islam and his rare but powerful political interventions have helped shape present-day Iraq.

He is a deeply revered figure in Shi'ite-majority Iraq and his opinions on religious and other matters are sought by Shiites worldwide.

The historic meeting in al-Sistani's humble home was months in the making, with every detail painstakingly discussed and negotiated between the ayatollah's office and the Vatican.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said religious authorities have a role in protecting Iraq's Christians, and that they should live in peace and enjoy the same rights as other Iraqis.

The Vatican said Francis thanked al-Sistani for having raised his voice in defense of the weakest and most persecuted during some of the most violent times in Iraq's recent history.

Al-Sistani, 90, is one of the

meters to al-Sistani's modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades.

A group of Iraqis wearing traditional clothes welcomed him outside. As a masked Francis entered the doorway, white doves were released in a sign of peace.

He emerged just under an hour later, still limping from an apparent flare-up of sciatica nerve pain that makes walking difficult.

The very positive meeting lasted a total of 40 minutes, said a religious official in Nafaj, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to brief media.



Congress still needs to go big by passing President Joe Biden's relief package to get millions of people back to work sooner

US TREASURY SECRETARY JANET YELLEN

SUPPORTING JOE BIDEN'S COVID RELIEF PACKAGE

World

US TREASURY SECRETARY JANET YELLEN

SUPPORTING JOE BIDEN'S COVID RELIEF PACKAGE

archaeological complex near the modern city of Nasiriyah.

Ur is also the traditional birthplace of Abraham, the biblical patriarch revered by Christians, Muslims and Jews.

The Vatican said the historic visit to al-Sistani was a chance for Francis to emphasise the need for collaboration and friendship between different religious communities.

The official said there was some concern about the fact that the pope had met with so many people the day before. Francis has received the coronavirus vaccine but al-Sistani has not.

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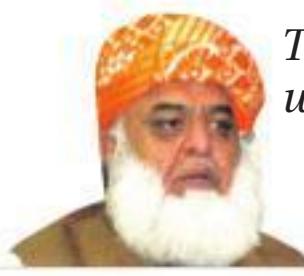
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This was not a confidence vote. We know which agencies watched the members of the assembly the entire night.

CHIEF OF THE PDM MAULANA FAZLUR REHMAN
DEMANDING PAKISTAN PM'S RESIGNATION AFTER HE WON THE TRUST VOTE

the Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 07 MARCH 2021

11

Protests continue in Myanmar

UN special envoy a day ago had urged the Security Council to take action to quell junta violence

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YANGON, 6 MARCH

Security forces in Myanmar again used force Saturday to disperse anti-coup protesters, a day after a UN special envoy urged the Security Council to take action to quell junta violence that this past week left more than 50 peaceful demonstrators dead and scores injured.

Protests were reported Saturday morning in the country's biggest city, Yangon, where stun grenades and tear gas were used against demonstrators. On Wednesday, 18 people were reported killed there.

Protests also took place in several other cities, including Mandalay, the second-biggest city, Myitkyina, the capital of the northern state of Kachin, Myeik in the far south, where police fired tear gas at students, and Dawei in the



southeast, where tear gas was also used.

Officials are believed to have exhumed the body of a young woman who was killed during Wednesday's suppression of protests in Mandalay. The woman, Kyaw Sin, had been photographed taking part in the protests before her death, and images of her on the front lines have made her a high-profile martyr.

Security forces on Friday night sealed off the cemetery where she was buried, and

when residents visited in the morning, her grave was freshly plastered over and shovels and other evidence of digging were found at the site. There was no official explanation of the incident, but media close to the military had earlier reported that the authorities had questioned the conclusion that she had been shot dead by police, and intended to investigate.

The escalation of violence has put pressure on the world community to act to restrain

the junta, which seized power on Feb. 1 by ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar, which for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party led a return to civilian rule with a landslide election victory in 2015, and with an even greater margin of votes last year. It would have been installed for a second five-year term last month, but instead Suu Kyi and President Win Myint and other members of the government were placed in military detention.

Large protests have occurred daily across many cities and towns, and security forces have responded with greater use of lethal force and mass arrests. At least 18 protesters were shot and killed last

Sunday and 38 on Wednesday, according to the U.N. Human Rights Office. More than 1,000 have been arrested, the independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said.

UN special envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener said in her briefing to Friday's closed Security Council meeting that council unity and robust action are critical in pushing for a stop to the violence and the restoration of Myanmar's democratic institutions. We must denounce the actions by the military, she said. It is critical that this council is resolute and coherent in putting the security forces on notice and standing with the people of Myanmar firmly, in support of the clear November election results.

She reiterated an earlier appeal to the international community not to lend legitimacy or recognition to this regime that has been forcefully

imposed, and nothing but chaos has since followed. The Security Council took no immediate action. Council diplomats said Britain circulated a draft presidential statement for consideration, a step below a legally binding resolution.

Any kind of coordinated action at the UN will be difficult because two permanent members of the Security Council, China and Russia, are likely to veto it.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies urged immediate protection for all Red Cross volunteers and health workers.

The statement came after video from a surveillance camera that was circulated widely on social media showed members of an ambulance crew in Yangon being savagely beaten after they were taken into custody by police on Wednesday.

Imran Khan wins trust vote; Opp demands resignation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, 6 MARCH



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly, boycotted by the Opposition, days after the ruling party's high-profile candidate suffered an embarrassing defeat in the hotly-contested Senate elections.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session called after he voluntarily sought a trust vote following the defeat of his finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in Wednesday's elections to the upper house.

The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), an alliance of 11 parties, boycotted the voting, making it easier for Khan to secure the required numbers.

Khan decided to take a vote of confidence after Shaikh was defeated in the Senate election by former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani. The Opposition demanded the Prime Minister's resignation after the debacle.

Addressing the House after securing the trust vote, the 68-year-old cricketer-turned politician thanked all lawmakers from his party and allies for supporting him.

Earlier, foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi earlier tabled a single-point resolution that the House reposes confidence in Prime Minister Khan.

Speaker Asad Qaiser announced the result, saying Prime Minister Khan had been elected to the post with 176 votes following the 2018 general elections. "Today, he has secured 178 votes," he said.

The ruling coalition had 181 members but after the resignation of one of its lawmakers, its strength was reduced to 180. The Opposition coalition has 160 members in the House. One seat was vacant.

According to the break-

down, 155 PTI lawmakers out of 156 voted in favour of Khan. Not impressed by the expected outcome of the floor test, top Opposition leaders demanded Khan's resignation and holding of fresh elections.

Chief of the PDM Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the vote of confidence has no meaning. "This was not a confidence vote. We know which agencies watched the members of the assembly the entire night. [We know] who knocked on the doors of each member to ensure they were present," he said.

His reference was towards reports that the government kept its members in lodges in Islamabad under strict watch so that all of them are present in Parliament during the floor test. He challenged Khan to be courageous and ask the public to cast a vote of confidence [by] conducting a new election".

Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Maryam Nawaz said Khan's days as prime minister were numbered. She said it was now just a matter of time when he will go.

Pakistan Peoples Party leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Khan had been exposed after the defeat in the Senate seat and the vote of confidence was meaningless. "We have already won time for change has come, he said.

Earlier, unruly scenes were witnessed outside Parliament building when supporters of the ruling alliance tried to disrupt a press conference of Opposition leaders belonging to the PML-N.

'Ready to discuss polls to advance talks with Taliban'



AGENCIES

KABUL, 6 MARCH

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said on Saturday, in a bid to push forward peace talks with the Taliban, that his government was ready to discuss holding fresh elections, insisting that any new government should emerge through the democratic process.

"Transfer of power through elections is a non-negotiable principle for us," Ghani told lawmakers at the opening of parliament session in Kabul.

"We stand ready to discuss holding free, fair and inclusive elections under the auspices of international community. We can also talk about the date of the elections and reach a conclusion."

President Ghani met US special envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad in Kabul during the past week to discuss ways to inject momentum in the stalled peace negotiations with Taliban representatives being held in Qatar. After his talks in Kabul, Khalilzad went to Qatar.

US President Joe Biden's administration has begun a review of its strategy for Afghanistan, including an agreement reached with the Taliban in early 2020 that paved the way for talks between the insurgents and

the Afghan government. Afghan officials and western diplomats said that during his visit to Kabul Khalilzad had floated the idea of establishing an interim government after bringing Afghan leaders and Taliban leaders together for a multilateral conference outside the country.

But Ghani said the only way to form a government should be through an election.

"I advise those who go to this or that gate to gain power is that political power in Afghanistan has a gate, and the key is the vote of the Afghan people," he said.

"Any institution can write a fantasy on a piece of paper and suggest a solution for Afghanistan. These papers have been written in the past and will be written in the future. Our guarantee is our constitution."

Elected two years ago, Ghani is not yet midway through his five-year term.

Violence and targeted killings have surged since the Afghan government began US-backed negotiations with the Taliban last September, and western security officials say the insurgents, already holding large swathes of rural areas, have begun to gain ground around towns and cities.

GET SET GO



Athletes compete during the WSC Women's Mass Start 30km Classic cross country event at the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in Oberstdorf, Germany on Saturday.

AP

Hundreds of Thai protesters rally to demand leaders' release

AGENCIES
BANGKOK, 6 MARCH

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in the Thai capital on Saturday evening to demand that authorities release some protest leaders from jail, defying an order on late Friday banning public gatherings in the city.

Youth-led protest movement sprung up last year calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former junta leader, and reform of the powerful monarchy. Thai courts have denied recent requests for bail for some of the jailed protest leaders.

"Release our friends,"

shouted the protesters in unison, as they gathered in front of a criminal court, which was surrounded by barbed wire. A water cannon truck could be seen behind the gates of the court.

"Abolish 112," they also said, referring to Thailand's lese majesté law, or Article 112 in the Thai criminal code, which prohibits anyone from insulting or defaming the king. A few protesters burned photographs of the king at the rally. Separate groups also led two other protests at other locations in Bangkok.

Earlier on Saturday, police warned protesters that they risked being arrested and that police might use harsh-

er measures if protesters became unruly. "Protests are illegal. Anyone who joins or invites others to join is breaking the law," Piya Tavichai, deputy commissioner of Bangkok Metropolitan Police Bureau said.

Police used rubber bullets for the first time last Sunday, as well as tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters. Ten protesters and 26 police were injured.

In a podcast on Saturday morning, the prime minister urged Thais to respect the law and avoid conflict.

"We have to love each other and be united, not divided, and respect the law," said Prayuth.

The Egyptian leader was scheduled to discuss with Sudanese officials an array of issues, including economic

Egypt president el-Sissi visits Sudan amid rapprochement

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CAIRO, 6 MARCH

Egypt's president arrived in Sudan on Saturday, his first visit to the country since a popular uprising led to the military's overthrow of long-time autocrat Omar al-Bashir in 2019.

Police used rubber bullets for the first time last Sunday, as well as tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters. Ten protesters and 26 police were injured.

In a podcast on Saturday morning, the prime minister urged Thais to respect the law and avoid conflict.

"We have to love each other and be united, not divided, and respect the law," said Prayuth.

The Egyptian leader was scheduled to discuss with Sudanese officials an array of issues, including economic

and military ties and the two nations' dispute with Ethiopia over a massive dam it is building on the Blue Nile, Egypt's presidency said.

The visit came amid a rapprochement between the two governments.

Egypt has in recent years sought to rebuild ties with its southern neighbour, an effort that has intensified since al-Bashir's ouster in April 2019. Top civilian and military officials from both nations have exchanged regular visits.

The countries signed an agreement last week to strengthen their military cooperation.

During al-Bashir's era, relations between Sudan and Egypt suffered from sporadic tensions.

Hong Kong court puts off release of activists

HONG KONG, 6 MARCH

A group of 11 Hong Kong pro-democracy activists accused of subversion will stay in jail for at least another five days while judges consider whether to release them on bail, a court said Saturday.

The group, which includes three former legislators, will have hearings Thursday and on March 13, the High Court said. A court agreed this week to release them but prosecutors appealed the decision.

They are among 47 people who were charged under a national security law imposed on the Chinese territory last year by the ruling Communist Party after pro-democracy protests.

They were arrested after opposition groups held an unofficial vote last year to pick candidates for elections to the territory's Legislative Council.

Some activists planned, if elected, to vote down major bills in an attempt to force Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam to resign.

The national security law was imposed following months of rallies that began over a proposed China extradition law and expanded to include demands for greater democracy.

The law prompted complaints Beijing is undermining the high degree of autonomy promised when the former British colony returned to China in 1997, and hurting its status as a business center.

People convicted of subversion or other offenses under the law can face penalties of up to life in prison.

Hong Kong traditionally grants bail for non-violent offenses but the new law says bail cannot be granted unless a judge believes the defendant will not continue to commit acts endangering national security.

On Friday, four of the 47 people charged were released on bail.

NASA's new Mars rover Perseverance hits dusty red road, first trip 21 feet

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAPE CANAVERAL, 6 MARCH

NASA's newest Mars rover hit the dusty red road this week, putting 21 feet on the odometer in its first test drive.

The "Perseverance" rover ventured from its landing position Thursday, two weeks after setting down on the red planet to seek signs of past life.

The roundabout, back-and-forth drive lasted just 33 minutes and went so well that more driving was on tap Friday and Saturday for the six-wheeled rover.

"This is really the start of our journey here," said Rich Rieker, the NASA engineer who plotted the route. "This is going to be like the Odyssey, adventures along the way, hopefully no Cyclops, and I'm sure there will be stories aplenty written about it."



Before the car-size rover can head for an ancient river delta to collect rocks for eventual return to Earth, it must drop its so-called protective "belly pan" and release an experimental helicopter named Ingenuity. As it turns out, Perseverance landed right on the edge of a potential helicopter landing strip, a nice, flat spot, according to Rieker.

So the plan is to drive out of this landing strip, ditch

the pan, then return for Ingenuity's highly anticipated test flight. All this should be accomplished by late spring.

Scientists are debating whether to take the smoother route to get to the nearby delta or a possibly rougher way with intriguing remnants from that once-watery time 3 billion to 4 billion years ago.

Perseverance, NASA's biggest and most elaborate rover yet, became the ninth US spacecraft to successfully land on Mars on February 18. China hopes to land its smaller rover, currently orbiting the red planet, in another few months.

NASA scientists, meanwhile, announced Friday that they've named Perseverance's touchdown site in honor of the late science fiction writer Octavia E. Butler, who grew up next door to JPL in Pasadena.

She was one of the first African Americans to receive mainstream attention for science fiction. Her works included "Bloodchild" and "Other Stories" and "Parable of the Sower."

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the pan, then return for Ingenuity's highly anticipated test flight. All this should be accomplished by late spring.

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Perseverance, NASA's biggest and most elaborate rover



HERO'S IDOL

Sachin Tendulkar grew up hero-worshipping Sunil Gavaskar (in photo, left), he has said, recalling his idol's fairytale international series. "Fifty years ago on this day he took cricket by storm. He scored 774 runs in his debut series," Tendulkar tweeted, wishing "everyone of the 1971 team a happy 50th anniversary."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Nagar beaten: Summit Nagal's dream run at the Argentine Open tennis tournament came to an end as he went down fighting against Spain's Ramos-Vinolas in the men's singles quarter-final. Nagal lost 6-4, 2-6, 5-7 in two hours and 25 minutes on Friday.

Qatar Open: Petra Kvitova and Garbiñe Muguruza advanced to the Qatar Open final on Friday. Muguruza won when Victoria Azarenka pulled out with a back injury. Kvitova beat Jessica Pegula 6-4, 6-4, winning the final four games after trailing 4-2 in the second set.

Olympics bid: Qatar was still committed Friday to bidding for the 2032 Olympics despite the International Olympic Committee heading into exclusive talks with top choice Brisbane. The IOC used its new bidding process last week to name Brisbane as its choice.

Fifa now: Fifa president Gianni Infantino defended his work with Saudi Arabia on Friday, and dismissed calls from Norway to boycott the 2022 World Cup in Qatar over human rights concerns. Infantino's comments came in an online global conference.

Swim series: Katie Ledecky led all the way in winning the 200-meter freestyle on Friday at the Pro Swim Series meet in San Antonio, earning her third title in three days. She touched in 1 minute, 56.62 seconds, adding the 200 free to her wins in the 400 free and 1,500 free.

Portuguese GP: The Portuguese Grand Prix will be held on 2 May and Formula One remains hopeful some fans can attend. It is uncertain whether they will be allowed in at the Portimao Circuit amid the coronavirus pandemic, which may prompt a public backlash.

Indians in finals: Six Indian male boxers, including world championship medal-winners Manish Kaushik (63kg) and Vikas Krishan (69kg), advanced to the finals of the 35th Boxam International Tournament in Castellon, Spain.

Sindhu enters Swiss Open final: Olympic silver medalist P V Sindhu dished out a superlative performance to outclass Mia Blichfeldt of Denmark in straight games and enter the women's singles final of the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament in Basel on Saturday.

New Delhi Marathon: India's top long-distance runners Srinu Bugathu and Sudha Singh will be aiming to attain the Tokyo Olympics qualifying mark during the sixth edition of the Aegas Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon to be held in Delhi on Sunday. Sudha, who was recently conferred the prestigious Padma Shri, was felicitated by Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju before the event.

Kohli and Co thrash England, to meet New Zealand in WTC final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD, 6 MARCH

All India needed was a draw to book a Lord's date in June with Kane Williamson's New Zealand but Patel (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the Anthony De Mello Trophy will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

hallmark of our team."

Atricious application and unbelievably poor mindset while playing spinners cost the Englishmen dearly during the last three Tests and skipper Joe Root had little to offer in terms of explanation.

"We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series, and we need to keep evolving and move forward," admitted Root.

World's best wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha will also find it difficult to add to his 38 Tests unless the 'Rourkee Rockstar' gets injured.

Patel, in his debut Test series, was a powerhouse performer but he also knows that once Ravinder Jadeja is fit and available, he will have to wait for his next Test.

The story of the third day was similar to the one that has played out for most of the series.

With shoulders already drooping after the humiliation inflicted by Pant and Washington, England's openers Zak Crawley (5, 16 balls), Dom Sibley (3, 21 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (0, 1 ball) seemed like "walking wickets" at the start of the post-lunch session.

Crawley, who in this Test match has made an ordinary strip look extraordinarily difficult with his approach, was snuffed out by Ashwin with two deliveries.

The first was a sharp off-break that made him look vulnerable and then came

iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni and emergence of Washington as a potent batting all-rounder only augurs well for the team.

So formidable is India's bench strength right now that Hanuma Vihari, who saved an epic Test in Sydney only a couple of months back, may not get to play a Test in near future.

World's best wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha will also find it difficult to add to his 38 Tests unless the 'Rourkee Rockstar' gets injured.

Patel, in his debut Test series, was a powerhouse performer but he also knows that once Ravinder Jadeja is fit and available, he will have to wait for his next Test.

The story of the third day was similar to the one that has played out for most of the series.

With shoulders already drooping after the humiliation inflicted by Pant and Washington, England's openers Zak Crawley (5, 16 balls), Dom Sibley (3, 21 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (0, 1 ball) seemed like "walking wickets" at the start of the post-lunch session.

Crawley, who in this Test match has made an ordinary strip look extraordinarily difficult with his approach, was snuffed out by Ashwin with two deliveries.

The first was a sharp off-break that made him look vulnerable and then came



the straighter ball which he managed to jab to Ajinkya Rahane at slips.

Bairstow didn't trouble the scorers as he closed his bat face to give Rohit Sharma an easy catch at leg slip.

Suddenly the track that looked docile in the first session seemed like performing all kinds of tricks.

Sibley must have been affected by the two dismissals and his was a freak one as he played a full-blooded sweep shot off Patel which ricocheted off forward short leg fielder Shubman Gill's knee and lobbed up for Pant to complete the formalities. One had expected two of England's best players in Joe Root (30) and Ben Stokes (2 off 9 balls) to put up a fight but the all-rounder failed to gauge the extrabounce as he went for a sweep shot off Patel.

The remaining wickets in the post-tea session were a mere formality which the spinners completed in due course of time.

Kohli accepted the dolly at leg slip as England's resistance was blown away at 30 for 4.

Ollie Pope (15) hit Ashwin for a six, which was more desperation than finesse, and it was only a matter of time before he yorked himself as Pant fumbled while gathering but managed to effect a stump to make it 65 for 5.

The England skipper could only helplessly look how his colleagues made a mess of Test match batting and Ashwin finally had his number trapping him leg before the on the back-foot with another straight ball.

The remaining wickets in the post-tea session were a mere formality which the spinners completed in due course of time.

The morning session belonged to Washington,

whose 96 off 174 balls was as important as Pant's second day hundred in the final context of the match.

Washington and Axar Patel

(43 off 97 balls) added an invaluable 106 runs for the eighth wicket, which ended even a minuscule chance for England to stage a recovery.

Washington and Axar Patel

SCOREBOARD

England 1st Innings: 205

India 1st Innings:

Shubman Gill lbw b Anderson 0

Rohit Sharma lbw b Stokes 49

Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Leach 17

Virat Kohli c Foakes b Stokes 0

A Rahane c Stokes b Anderson 27

R Pant c Root b Anderson 101

R Ashwin c Pope b Leach 13

Washington Sundar not out 96

A Patel run out (Bairstow/Root) 43

Ishant Sharma lbw b Stokes 0

Mohammed Siraj b Stokes 0

Extras: (8-4, 18-8) 12

Total: (all out in 54.5 overs) 365

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-20, 4-

30, 5-65, 6-67, 7-109, 8-111, 9-134, 10-135

Bowling: Mohammed Siraj 4-0-12-0, Axar Patel 24-6-48-5, Ravichandran Ashwin 22.5-4-47-5, Washington Sundar 4-0-16-0.

Man of the Match: Rishabh Pant

Man of the series: R Ashwin

England 2nd Innings

Zak Crawley c Rahane b Ashwin 5

Dominic Sibley c Pant b Axar 3

Jonny Bairstow c Rohit b Ashwin 0

Ben Stokes c Kohli b Axar 2

Ollie Pope st Pant b Axar 15

Daniel Lawrence b Ashwin 50

Ben Foakes c Rahane b Axar 13

Dominic Bess c Pant b Axar 2

Jack Leach c Rahane b Ashwin 2

James Anderson not out 1

Extras: (8-4, 18-8) 12

Total: (all out in 54.5 overs) 135

Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-20, 4-

30, 5-65, 6-67, 7-109, 8-111, 9-134, 10-135

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Man of the Match: Rishabh Pant

Man of the series: R Ashwin

Sri Lankans get even in Twenty20 series

COOLIDGE (ANTIGUA) 6 MARCH



vital wicket of West Indies captain Kieron Pollard for 13. It was Pollard who won a place in history two days ago by becoming the third cricketer to hit sixes in an over in an international match, striking 38 from 11 balls. He held himself back on Friday, coming in at No 7 but also found the pitch difficult to come to grips with, managing only 13 from 15 balls with one six. Sandakan removed him with a wider delivery which Pollard looked to hoist over cover but which took a thick edge and flew to the cover sweeper. Hasaranga was named Man of the Match for his 3-17 from four overs and his unbeaten 19 in Sri Lanka's innings.

Bowling: James Anderson 25-14-4, Ben Stokes 27.4-6-89-4, Jack Leach 27.5-8-92, Dom Bess 17-71-0, Joe Root 18-1-56. Pant, in his debut Test series, has made an ordinary strip look extraordinarily difficult with his approach, was snuffed out by Ashwin with two deliveries.

The first was a sharp off-break that made him look vulnerable and then came

Who will complain against a track like this: Shastri

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD, 6 MARCH



There is no reason to cry over the nature of the Motera track, India Head coach Ravi Shastri (in photo) asserted on Saturday, saying the curator prepared pitches that produced "fantastic entertainment" in the last two matches here. The pitch for the third Test came in for sharp criticism from a few former England players after the visitors were bowled out for 112 and 81 in the day/night match.

While England struggled on the spin-friendly track, India claimed victories in the third and fourth Test here to qualify for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in June.

"Why should I hold back? I attribute it to the groundsman," Shastri said after India dismissed England for 135 to register an innings and 25 runs in the final Test here.

"I think Ashish Bhowmick is an outstanding groundsman, he knows his job. He has learnt it the hard way. He worked with Daljit Singh, who was a master curator.

"Who will complain against

a track like this? It is fantastic entertainment, for both teams and the game and the result 3-1 doesn't really suggest close the series was."

Shastri lauded the team for making it to the WTC final despite the ICC changing the qualification criteria last year.

"For us to be on the top of the table in the World Test championship is two-and-a-half years of work and for those years to be successful, it's been six years prior to that," he said.

"The boys took one series at a time, they were not really bothered about the World Test Championship because the goal post gets shifted every time."

Shastri said after India's emphatic win in the fourth Test.

"We were hard on him. Nothing comes easy and he was told in no uncertain

terms that he has got to respect the game a little more. He has got to lose some weight and work hard on his keeping. We know the talent he has. He is a genuine match winner and he has responded."

'Had chances to get on top but we did not manage'

England captain Joe Root on Saturday mourned the opportunity his team squandered in the lost fourth Test, saying they let slip the advantageous positions from where they could have been on top of the game.

Speaking highly of Pant, Shastri said the stumper's hard work is now showing results.

"He has worked like hell in the last three or four months and the results are showing. Yesterday's innings is the best counter attacking innings. I have seen in India by an Indian, especially at number six when the ball was turning."

Shastri said after India's emphatic win in the fourth Test.

"We were hard on him. Nothing comes easy and he was told in no uncertain

Real Kashmir coach banned

NEW DELHI, 6 MARCH

The AIFF Disciplinary Committee consisting of Ushanath Banerjee, the Chairman and its members Haresh Vora, Madhav Milan Ghosh and Adithya Reddy today suspended the Coach of Real Kashmir FC and his son, a player of Real Kashmir FC for 4 matches and imposed fine of Rs 2,00,000 each for abusing the referee in Hero I-League match against Indian Arrows. The match commissioner of match no. 29 of Hero I-League 2020-21 (League) played between Real Kashmir FC and Indian Arrows on 04.02.2021 at MB Ground, Kolkata reported that Mason Robertson a Real Kashmir FC Player and his Father David Robertson, Coach of Real Kashmir FC annoyed with the Referee's decision abused the Referee in filthy vulgar languages. Today both the father and son appeared before the Committee through virtual mode of hearing. Both of them admitted that abusive expressions were unacceptable and tendered apologies. AGENCIES

Federico Gallego delivered a perfect freekick in to the area where Ashutosh Mehta leapt high, only for his header to clatter against the crossbar. That was the closest the Highlanders came to scoring in the first session.

As expected, the Mariners tightened the screws on Highland