



**THE HINDU**

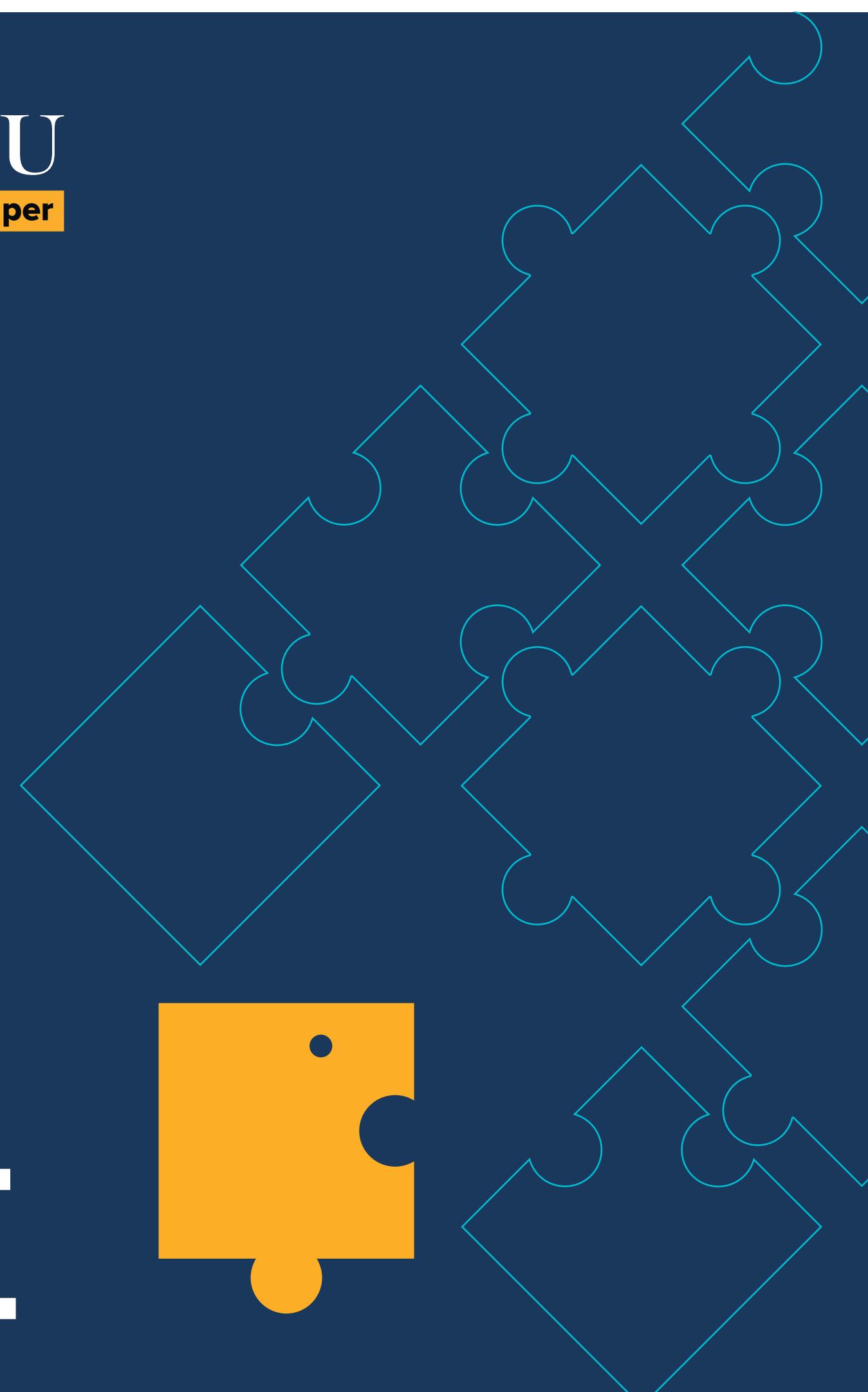
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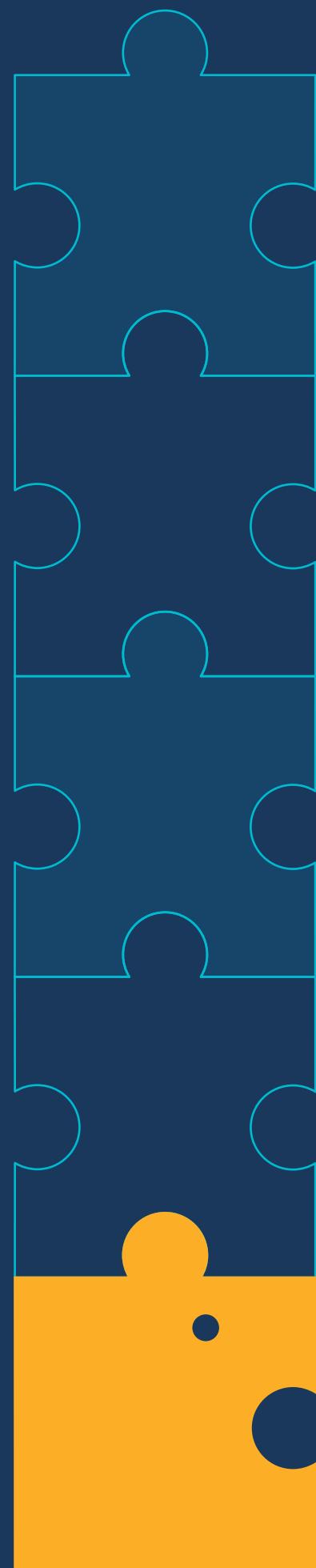
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# THE HINDU

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U.S. welcomes  
India-Pakistan  
ceasefire agreement  
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SC exploring avenues to  
offer quick relief to  
road accident victims  
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India cannot abandon  
us: Sri Lanka Foreign  
Secy. Adm. Colombeage  
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Yusuf Pathan and  
Vinay Kumar decide  
to call it a day  
page 15

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## NEARBY



'We will not budge till  
our demands are met'

NEW DELHI  
Three months into their  
agitation, farmers at Singhu  
border on Friday said they  
had left their villages in  
November with one aim in  
mind: to ensure the repeal of  
the three contentious farm  
laws. They insisted they  
won't budge until their  
demands are met.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

## Labour rights activist released from jail

CHANDIGARH  
A labour rights activist who  
was arrested by Sonipat Police  
on January 12 was on Friday  
released from jail after the  
Punjab and Haryana High  
Court granted her bail in a  
case in which she faces  
charges of attempt to murder,  
rioting, among others.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10

## Assam workers attacked in Meghalaya, one killed

GUWAHATI  
Officials in Meghalaya's West  
Khasi Hills have sent seven  
labourers home in Assam  
after masked men attacked  
them at a construction site on  
Wednesday. A labourer died  
of his injuries in hospital. The  
missionary college where they  
were working has also  
been closed for an indefinite  
period in view of the attack.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

# Assembly polls to kick off on March 27

■ T.N., Kerala and Puducherry to vote in a single phase on April 6

■ West Bengal to see 8 phases of voting from March 27 to April 29

■ Counting of votes for all the States & UT to be held on May 2

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Assembly elections in the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Assam and the Union Territory of Puducherry will be held between March 27 and April 29, the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced on Friday.

The counting of votes will be held together on May 2.

At a press conference, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said polling to 126 constituencies in Assam would be held in three phases on March 27, April 1 and April 6.

Voting in Kerala (140 seats), Tamil Nadu (234) and Puducherry (30) would be held in a single phase on April 6.

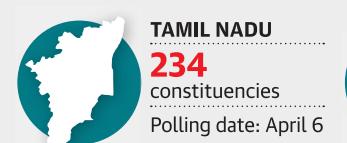
West Bengal would see polling in eight phases, up from seven last time, on March 27, April 1, April 6, April 10, April 17, April 22, April 26 and April 29. The State has 294 constituencies.

### 2 Lok Sabha bypolls

The ECI also announced by-elections to two Lok Sabha constituencies – Malappuram in Kerala and Kanniyakumari in Tamil Nadu – on April 6. Bypolls to a Lok Sabha seat each in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and 18 Assembly seats across the country would also be held. However, the schedules

## Battle of ballots

The Assembly election schedule announced by the Election Commission on Friday



TAMIL NADU

234

constituencies

Polling date: April 6



PUDUCHERRY

30

constituencies

April 6



KERALA

140

constituencies

April 6



ASSAM

126

constituencies, three phases

March 27 (47 constituencies),

April 1 (39), April 6 (40)



WEST BENGAL

294

constituencies, eight phases

March 27 (30 constituencies),

April 1 (30), April 6 (31), April 10 (44),

April 17 (45), April 22 (43),

April 26 (36), April 29 (35)

## COUNTING OF VOTES FOR ALL STATES/UNION TERRITORY: MAY 2

Arrangements will be put in place for candidates to file their nominations online. Voting will be allowed for an additional hour, keeping in mind COVID-19 safety guidelines

SUNIL ARORA

Chief Election Commissioner

Tamil Nadu, given the concerns in the two States, Mr. Arora said. Terming Tamil Nadu an "expenditure-sensitive State", he said two elections had to be rescheduled in the past, referring to the Vellore and R.K. Nagar polls.

If need be, more observers would be sent to West Bengal, Mr. Arora added.

The COVID-19 guidelines issued by the ECI in August 2020, ahead of the Bihar election, would apply.

Only two persons and two vehicles would be allowed per candidate while filing nominations. Online filing would also be allowed. The ECI would issue revised so-

cial media guidelines after reviewing the Centre's new guidelines.

With over 18 crore electors spread over 824 Assembly constituencies, the five elections would be the largest electoral process to be held during the pandemic, Mr. Arora said.

To a question about concerns over the functioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Mr. Arora said, "Any machine can malfunction" but categorically added that the "EVMs cannot be tampered" with.

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE ▶ PAGE 9

POSTAL BALLOTS ▶ PAGE 9

## Why elections in 8 phases, asks Mamata

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA/GUWAHATI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday questioned the rationale behind the Election Commission of India holding Assembly polls in the State in eight phases.

"West Bengal has 294 seats, why should elections be held here in eight phases? There should be some rationale behind the decision," she reacted hours after the announcement of poll dates. The Chief Minister, who is also chairperson of the Trinamool Congress, alleged that the dates are as per the wishes of the BJP.

In Assam, both the ruling BJP and the opposition parties welcomed the EC's choice of dates.

BJP president Ranjeet K. Dass expressed happiness at the EC avoiding a clash with the [mid-April] Bohag Bihu festival that the people could not celebrate in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Assam Congress president Ripun Bora said the party is "fully prepared" to oust the BJP.

SEE ALSO ▶ PAGE 9

the pandemic".

In a related development, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation extended the COVID-19 "guidelines for surveillance, containment and caution" till March 31.

"Territories have also been advised to speed up the vaccination of the target population so as to break the chain of transmission," the MHA said.

It asked the States to demarcate containment zones carefully and ensure that containment measures are followed.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# Ramp up vaccination, Centre tells States

'Follow COVID-19 guidelines strictly'

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Friday extended the COVID-19 "guidelines for surveillance, containment and caution" till March 31.

It asked the States to expedite the vaccination programme to break the chain of transmission.

### Maintain caution'

In a statement, the MHA said while "there has been a substantial decline in active and new cases, there is need to maintain surveillance, containment and caution to fully overcome

# India, China agree to establish new hotline

Bid to ensure 'timely communication'

### ANANTH KRISHNAN

The Foreign Ministers of India and China agreed to establish a new hotline to ensure "timely communication" in the wake of last year's border crisis but differed sharply on the way forward to restore relations, in a 75-minute phone call on Thursday.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar told his Chinese

counterpart, Wang Yi, that "bilateral relations have been impacted severely over last year" and that while "the boundary question may take time to resolve", the "disturbance of peace and tranquillity, including by violence, will inevitably have a damaging impact on the relationship".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

# 'Farmer who died in Republic Day violence had no gunshot wounds'

U.P. Delhi police reply to plea by victim's grandfather

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA NEW DELHI

India's economy returned to growth terrain in the third quarter of 2020-21, with a 0.4% rise in the GDP, even as the National Statistical Office estimated the economy to contract 8% during the full fiscal.

The NSO had earlier estimated a 7.7% contraction for FY21.

The GDP shrunk in the first two quarters by 24.4% and 7.3% respectively, following the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown.

Agriculture continued to grow strongly, with a 3.9% rise in GVA in Q3, even as manufacturing and construction resurged after two bad quarters. The Finance Ministry said this was a reflection of a "further strengthening of V-shaped recovery".

FULL REPORT ON ▶ PAGE 14

prima facie state that "there was no gunshot injury in the body of the deceased".

Delhi Police said the post-mortem report stated that Navreet Singh died due to a head injury as a result of the accident and all his injuries were possible in a road accident. The submissions were made in response to a plea by the deceased's grandfather, Hardeep Singh, claiming that the victim suffered gunshot injuries to his head.

The submission was made on the basis of the post-mortem and X-ray reports provided by the District Hospital at Rampur in U.P., which

The petition has sought a court-monitored SIT probe into the death.

The matter will be heard again on March 4.

U.P. Police, in its status report, stated that no FIR has been lodged by it in connection with the death as claimed by the petitioner.

It further submitted that there is no provision to give the post-mortem video or original X-ray plates to the family of the deceased.

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## Sensex plunges amid global meltdown

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA MUMBAI

The BSE Sensex crashed nearly 1,940 points to post its biggest single-day fall in almost 10 months, and the NSE Nifty plunged more than 568 points to settle below the psychological 15,000-mark on Friday, tracking global sell-offs triggered by a panic in bond markets overseas.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 1,9

4 arrested for  
abducting,  
killing minor

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A man and his three accomplices were arrested on Friday for allegedly killing a nine-year-old girl with an iron rod after abducting her in a car to Tibra near Uttar Pradesh's Modinagar, the police said.

The accused, Johnny alias Shiva (40), a driver by profession, and his accomplices Naresh, Kailash and Tarun were arrested from Modinagar. The girl's body was recovered from a field in Tibra village on Friday, they said.

The police said Johnny, along with his accomplices, hatched the conspiracy to kidnap the girl, who lived in his locality, to extort money from her parents. However, when he got to know that they were suspecting him to be behind the abduction, he panicked and allegedly killed the girl with the help of his accomplices.

The matter came to notice on Monday after her parents lodged a complaint at Kalyanpuri police station, stating that their daughter had gone missing while she was playing outside the house, the police said.

# 'We are not going to budge till our demands are fulfilled'

Farmers at Singhu border stand their ground as stir completes three months

SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

Three months into the agitation against the farm laws, protesting farmers at the Singhu border on Friday said that they had left their villages in November with one aim in mind, which was to ensure that the laws are repealed. They added that they have not looked back since then.

As the stalemate continues, despite several rounds of talks between the farmer leaders and the Centre, those who have been camping at the Capital's border for over 90 days now remained firm and reiterated that they were not ready to return to their respective villages.

Sukhdev Singh, a farmer from the Kapurthala district, said: "When we started out, we did not have a timeline. We only had one aim and after three months our aim is the same. The government should know that we are adapting to each season or circumstance and we are not going to budge till our demands are met."

"This will be a long fight and we are prepared for it. The unions will now have to



A group of farmers from Patiala sitting on a tractor trolley at the Singhu border in Delhi on Friday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

give the next call so that we are able to get the government's attention," added Gurjeet Singh, a farmer from Punjab's Patiala district.

#### No question of returning

Joginder Singh, a 63-year-old farmer from Punjab's Taran Tarn district, who was one of the thousands who had reached the border on the first day, said: "Everyone knows what the government is up to. The only hope we have is that we are able to get what we want. In the last three months, we have devised mechanisms and made arrangements for ourselves. We are sitting here peacefully and there is no question of us

returning."

Several of the farmers recalled how for the first one month they stayed away from their families and it was only later that a rotational system was devised among the farmers.

Sukhjeet Singh, another farmer from Patiala, said: "When we first left our homes some of us carried clothes, while many did not. Then as we proceeded we faced barricades, trenches and police action. Finally, when we reached the Singhu border we knew that we were not moving from here unless the laws are repealed."

"For the first two months, many of us did not meet our

families at all. It was only later that they started visiting us at the border and we started the rotational basis where we get to go home for a few days. In the last three months, villagers from Sonipat, Panipat and Karnal have been more than helpful to us," said Mr. Singh.

The protesting farmers have become permanent by now, said Gurjeet Singh, another farmer from Taran Tarn. "There were several hurdles before us on our way to Delhi. But now that we have been here for three months, we have almost become permanent fixtures. As many as 25 of us had come here from our village in two trolleys and for the first month none of us went back. After the January 26 incident, one more trolley joined us at the border and we stay here on a rotational basis," said Mr. Singh.

Jaspal Singh, a farmer from Kapurthala district added, "When the need arises, more trolleys will join us here. No matter what season it is or what the circumstances are, we are not moving till the laws are repealed."

# Man killed as luxury car hits two-wheeler in south Delhi

18-year-old driver of offending vehicle held, case filed

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 55-year-old man was killed allegedly after a speeding luxury car hit his scooter in south Delhi's Vasant Vihar area, the police said on Friday.

The victim, identified as Antony Joseph, is a domestic help. He died on the spot. The accident happened at 11.45 p.m. on Thursday.



The offending vehicle (left), and the victim's two-wheeler. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dies in a college in UK. He had come to India on vacation, the police said.

The deceased hailed from Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. His wife works as a cook at the house of a foreign embassy official in Vasant Vihar and they both lived in the servants' quarter, the police added.

Mr. Singh said the accused was out on a ride with two other friends when he rammed into the scooter

from behind. The co-passengers are also of the same age group and are college students. They went out for a drive for 15 minutes and the accident happened while returning.

"The accused was arrested under Sections 340A [causing death by negligence] and 279 [rash driving] of the IPC at Vasant Vihar police station. The accused was later released on bail," said Mr. Singh.

## 13,320 vaccinated in Delhi; 256 new virus cases reported

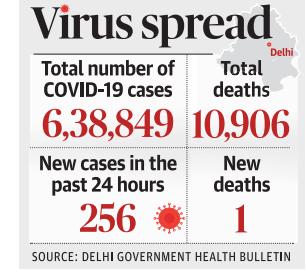
Capital witnesses 4 adverse events following immunisation

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A total of 13,320 beneficiaries - healthcare and front-line workers - took the COVID-19 vaccination in Delhi on Friday and there were four adverse events following immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson.

Till now, 1,46,827 healthcare workers and 2,20,694 front-line workers have taken the vaccine, the spokesperson said.

The vaccination of health-care workers started in Delhi on January 16 and front-line workers from the first week of February. The second dose of the vaccine is taken after



nessed 256 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,38,849, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

This is the third consecutive day that 200 or more cases have been reported.

#### 6,2768 tests

One death was reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,906. A total of 6,2768 tests were done in a day.

Of the total cases, 6,26,712 people have recovered and there are 1,231 active cases in Delhi at present.

## Man stabbed to death over petty issue

#### STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
A 25-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly by two persons over some petty issue in Shahdara, police said on Friday.

The victim has been identified as Saalim, who was involved in several criminal cases.

The incident took place on Thursday in Kanti Nagar area of Krishna Nagar. The accused called Saalim and were talking to him. Mean-

## 2 minors among 5 held in gunfight with police

They looted cigarettes worth ₹14 lakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NOIDA

Five people, including two juveniles, allegedly involved in loot of cigarettes worth ₹14 lakh from a private company in Greater Noida, have been nabbed following a gunfight with the police, they said on Friday.

He said that the police had got a tip-off about the gang moving with the looted material during the night and intercepted them, leading to a gunfight.

The two juveniles who were travelling along with them on a pick-up truck were apprehended, the officials said.

"These people had targeted a warehouse of a private company on Wednesday

night and attacked a security guard with a knife. They had decamped with a Tata Ace pick-up truck loaded with 14 cartons of cigarettes which cost around ₹14 lakh," Greater Noida Deputy Commissioner of Police Rajesh Kumar Singh said.

He said that the police had got a tip-off about the gang moving with the looted material during the night and intercepted them, leading to a gunfight.

"One of them worked in the same company until a year ago," Mr. Singh said. All of the cartons have been recovered, he said.

An FIR has been filed and further proceedings were under way, the officer said.

#### IN BRIEF

#### HC seeks Centre's reply on vaccination of lawyers

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the Centre if bar associations can be allowed to directly get in touch with the manufacturers of

COVID-19 vaccine to provide it to lawyers above 60 years and those aged above 45 and suffering from co-morbidities.

#### Notice

Sealed quotations are called through Regd. Post upto 09.03.2021 from wholesale chemists for purchase of Medicines. Surgical items required for JAN AUSHADHI GENERIC DRUG STORE inside Civil Hospital Pathankot. Detail of the terms and conditions and list of items required can be obtained from O/o SMO/JAS Civil Hospital Pathankot on any working days. All bidders are invited at the time of opening quotation on date 11.03.2021 at 12:30 pm. Sharp. The undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject all the quotation without assigning any reason. SMO cum Member Secretary Rogi Kalyan Samiti Civil Hospital Pathankot

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**CORRIGENDUM - II**

**Empanelment of Agencies under Manpower Rate Contract for providing various category of Manpower to various Departments/ Organizations/Offices of the State Government of Jharkhand**

**Tender Ref: JAP-IT/RC/MANPOWER/01/2021**

With reference to the above tender it is hereby informed that in case of more than five bidders bids the same as L1 rate their process defined in Corrigendum-II will be used for empanelment of first five bidders only.

Corrigendum-II is uploaded on the official portal <https://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and same may be downloaded and referred for more clarification.

**SD/-  
CEO, JAP-IT**

**PR Ref No. 241270  
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Government of Punjab  
No.EEWSSRaj/TenderNotice/2021/1880  
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**Corrigendum - I**  
**eTender Ref. No.: JAP-IT/DCT/CT-MIS/01/2021**  
**PR No.: 240846**

Pre-Bid response in regard of the eTender Ref. No.: JAP-IT/DCT/CT-MIS/01/2021 (regarding selection of agency for IT Operations and Maintenance JH-VAT Software and State GST Operations under the CT-MIS project') may be downloaded from <https://jharkhandtenders.gov.in> and same is also available on <https://jharkhand.gov.in> & <https://japt.jharkhand.gov.in>.

**Sd/-  
Chief Executive Officer,  
JAP-IT, Ranchi**

**PR242622 (Information Technology)20-21\*D**

Timings  
DELHI

SATURDAY, FEB. 27
RISE 06:49 SET 18:20
RISE 18:26 SET 06:59
SUNDAY, FEB. 28
RISE 06:48 SET 18:21
RISE 19:31 SET 07:38
MONDAY, MAR. 01
RISE 06:47 SET 18:21
RISE 20:36 SET 08:14

Delhi Weather max min  
Delhi City 33 15  
Safdarjung 33 15  
Palam 32 16

Delhi Palam Today  
33°C Morning and day  
temperature likely to increase  
further moderate gusty winds  
likely during day.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow  
31°C Mist/haze at some  
places during morning, dry  
comfortable weather with light  
to moderate surface winds.

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IN BRIEF

In HC, media house denies  
any offensive reporting

NEW DELHI  
A media house has denied before the Delhi High Court the allegations of indulging in "offensive and potentially fatal" attack on the Sikh community by airing on its channel unverified videos regarding the Republic Day protest by farmers against new laws. In an affidavit filed in the court, it has claimed that "not even a single assertion was made in relation to the Sikh community". The affidavit has been filed in response to one of two PILs.

THE HINDU  
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# Development work faster if elected to power, says AAP

Ahead of bypolls, party accuses BJP of 'rampant corruption'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party on Friday said the BJP has failed to carry out its duties in the three municipal corporations. It also said if AAP is elected to power in the municipal corporations, then development works will be carried at a faster pace as it is in power in the State as well.

"The civic bodies have three major legal constitutional responsibilities – cleanliness of Delhi, building and upkeep of small roads and streets in localities, cleanliness and beautification of all the parks under its jurisdiction. However, the BJP-ruled civic bodies have failed spectacu-



AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chadha.

larly in each of these responsibilities and have indulged in rampant corruption," said AAP national spokesperson Raghav Chadha.

He alleged that the BJP gave its councilors "repeated opportunities" to make money by bringing new can-

dicates every five years. Mr. Chadha appealed to the people of Delhi to come together to rid of the corruption that has become the norm in the city.

**'Vote for AAP on Sunday'**  
He requested the people to vote for AAP candidates in the by-election to five seats on Sunday.

Also, senior AAP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said retired Additional District Judge Sukhbir Singh Malhotra has joined the party on Friday.

"People are inspired by the work of Kejriwal government in education, healthcare, water, roads and WiFi, and want to join AAP," Mr. Sisodia said.

LoP, Tiwari, other senior BJP leaders take out roadshows

Party says it will win by 'huge margins'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

As part of a show of strength for next year's civic elections in the Capital, the BJP's senior leadership on Friday took out roadshows in support of the party's candidates contesting in the upcoming bypolls.

BJP national general-secretary Bhupendra Yadav, East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir, North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari, Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta and Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvij Singh Bidhuri threw their weight behind the candidates for the five wards.

"In the past six years, the Kejriwal government's way of functioning has stalled developmental activities in the city. The people will

give him and his party a befitting reply," Mr. Yadav said.

Mr. Gupta, while leading a padayatra in support of party candidate Siyaram Kanjaria, asserted that they would win all five wards by huge margins.

"Of these five, four wards had AAP councilors, who are now MLAs, but in spite of this, there has been no development in these areas and power, water supply, roads, sewers are simply missing," he alleged.

Mr. Bidhuri said AAP MLAs and councillors had made most of the city a garbage bin.

"People are forced to drink impure water. It is time to elect those who know the areas' issues," he added.

# Cong. confident of win in all 5 municipal wards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Friday said judging from the response it has been getting from public meetings and padayatras, it is confident of winning all five municipal corporation wards.

AICC in-charge of Delhi Congress Shakti Singh Gohil alleged that Delhites feel betrayed and let down by the BJP and AAP as they had hoped that these parties will create miracles but got only disappointment.

"People have now realised that it was a very big mistake to re-elect the BJP to the civic bodies and AAP to the Delhi government.

The Congress candidates for the five wards are experienced workers, who have done grassroots-level work in their wards and are familiar with the local problems

The Congress candidates for the five wards are experienced workers, who have done grassroots-level work in their wards and are familiar with the local problems

SHAKTI SINGH GOHIL

AICC in-charge

unlike BJP and AAP leaders, who swindled development funds to line their pockets."

Mr. Gohil said.

**'Same sides of a coin'**  
He added that in the past few years, BJP and AAP only accused each other of fund misuse, stalled developments and corruption. He said both the parties are the two sides of the same coin.

# Auto fares too low, complain drivers in Millennium City

They say rates fixed for Haryana are half that of Delhi's while the CNG rates are higher in the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM



Narender Kumar Shukla

has been running an autorickshaw in the Millennium City for the past 15 years. He finally got a meter installed on his vehicle two days ago.

Though elated that he now need not argue with passengers over fare, the 47-year-old feels that the fare decided by the administration is too low compared to Delhi where the CNG rates too are significantly less.

**Win-win situation**

"The installation of meters is a win-win situation for both the driver and the passenger. Passengers feel that autorickshaw drivers always over-

"The meter was installed on Tuesday, but it wasn't working. I came on Wednesday, but the staffer did not turn up. So I came again the next day to get it fixed," said Mr. Shukla, standing with fellow autorickshaw drivers at an open ground near Mahara Pratap Swaran Jayanti Park in Sector 29.

**Meter installation**  
He said that the authorities charged ₹2,950 for meter installation and another ₹50 for fixing a "Betti Bachao, Betti Padhao" sticker on his autorickshaw. He, however, feels that the rates fixed by the authorities are too low compared to Delhi and that too with the CNG rates in Haryana

are higher.

Gautam, another driver, added that the fare for the first 1km was ₹25 in Delhi, whereas it was only ₹12 in Gurugram. "The CNG is ₹10 per unit costlier in Gurugram. Besides, there are fewer passengers in Gurugram compared to Delhi, which has several railway stations, metro stations and shopping malls," said Ratan.

Chhote Lal, another auto driver, got meter installed on February 3, but said that the passengers did not prefer to pay according to the meter.

Haryana Auto Chalak Sangathan State president Mahavir Singh demanded that the process of meter installation should be put on hold for a

few months since the auto drivers were already struggling to make both ends meet as an aftermath of lockdown and the installation charges were an additional financial burden on them.

**Call to put it on hold**

"Things are still far from normal and an autorickshaw driver hardly manages to earn ₹300-400 per day. In this situation, the installation charge of ₹3,000 is an additional burden on them. Besides, the installation rates are higher in Gurugram than Delhi," said Mr. Singh.

He also reiterated the demand to increase the minimum fare and bring it at par with Delhi.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

A plea was moved in the Delhi High Court on Friday seeking a probe by various investigative agencies like CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) into a "franchisee scam" under which several persons were cheated of around ₹30 crore allegedly by Westland Trade Pvt Ltd and its directors.

The petition was moved in the Delhi High Court after the Supreme Court on February 8 said it had made a "mistake" by agreeing to examine the matter. It asked the petitioners to move the High Court instead.

Petition in HC for probe into franchisee scam

'Several cheated of around ₹30 crore'

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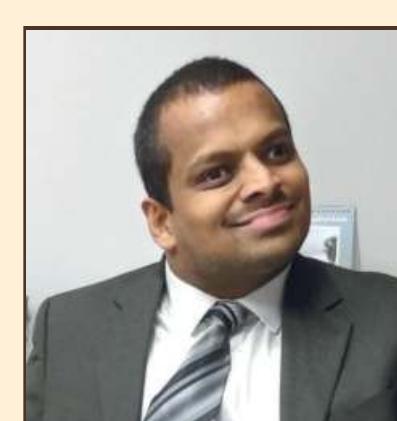
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Upon instruction and on behalf of my Client Mr. Prem Kumar Sharma S/o late K.L. Sharma, R/o F-4, Old Double Storey, Lajpat Nagar-IV, Delhi-110024, a general practitioner and his wife Mrs. Meenakshi, Mr. Raj Kumar Sharma hereby stands irrevocably, unconditionally and irreversibly declared dissolved and disinfirmed from movable and immovable properties and business of my Client Mr. Prem Kumar Sharma shall not inherit any of my Clients properties in Delhi or anywhere else and shall not be entitled to the grant of probate to my will. My client shall not be bound for any of Mr. Raj Kumar Sharma's acts, deeds, dealings, in past, present or future. Any party dealing with Mr. Raj Kumar Sharma will be doing so at his/her risk.

Kush Sharma (Advocate)

Enr. No. D/529/2007

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Axis Bank Ltd that Mr. Mohit Sharma intends to purchase &amp; mortgage the Unit No. G-602, on 6th Floor, having super area 1154.42 sq. ft, situated at Neelpadam-I Apartments built on Plot no. 4, Alashai, Sector-5, Ghaziabad, U.P. with our client Axis Bank Ltd against the financial assistance. Whereas, Mr. Digamber Prasad Baloni &amp; Mr. Ram Swaroop Baloni have acquired the said property by way of Sale Deed regd. On 06.12.2004 and after death of Mr. Ram Swaroop Baloni, his legal heirs i.e., Ms. Durga Pandey (daughter), Mr. Harish Baloni (son) and Digamber Prasad Baloni (son) (as per Surviving Member Certificate) who claims ownership of above said property as per Hindu Succession Act. Now Ms. Durga Pandey (16.66% Share), Mr. Harish Baloni (16.67% Share) and Digamber Prasad Baloni (66.67% Share) intend to sell the said property to Mr. Mohit Sharma.

If any person(s) having objection regarding ownership or regarding mortgage of the said property is/are requested to intimate in writing to undersigned within 15 days from the date of issue of this notice at below address. In the event no information is received within 15 days from date hereof, our Client i.e. Axis Bank Ltd. will proceed with the mortgage process.

DEEJPYOT SINGH, ADVOCATE

A-13, LGF, South Extn-II, New Delhi-49 # 011-26262610, 11, 12

**NOTICE**No. DUBA/Cons/434/MR/2021-(42)  
Dated:22/02/2021MR. MOHTAJKIRAN CHOWDHRY  
S/O CHOWDHRY JAIKISHAN CHOWDHRYSector of Yogi Hills, Wood Stock, 204,  
Mulund West, Mumbai, Maharashtra,  
India.

Present Address: 1234 Jumeirah Frist, Dubai, UAE

AND MISS SAIBAN SAHNI  
D/O JASBIR SINGH SAHNIResidence: Co Operative House #85  
Padam Singh Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi,  
PIN 110005, Delhi, IndiaPresent Address: Al Quoz 2, Villa 58  
Street 68, Dubai, UAEAbove mentioned INDIAN Nationals are  
presently residing in the UAE have given  
notice of intended marriage between them  
under the foreign marriages act, 1969. If  
anyone has any objection to proposed  
marriage, he/she should file the same with  
the undersigned according to the procedure  
laid down under the aforesaid within thirty  
days from the date of publication of this  
notice.Sd/-  
(Jitender Singh Negi)  
Marriage Officer  
Consulate General of India  
P.O. Box 737, Dubai (UAE)Fax No. 0097143970453  
E-mail: cons.dubai@mca.gov.in,  
cons3.dubai@mca.gov.in  
Homepage: [www.cigdubai.gov.in](http://www.cigdubai.gov.in)**PUBLIC NOTICE**Public at large are hereby informed that my  
client has financed the Plot no. 366, area  
measuring 3605sq. ft, comprised in Mustak  
48, Khanda no. 1, Kothari, Sector no. 144,  
situated at Sector 144, Model Town, Ghaziabad, Haryana  
being owned by Lam/Chander Shekhar. It  
is hereby notified to all concerned that I  
have to my client that Mr. Karam Veer had earlier  
executed GPA dated 2/12/2010 in favour of Sh.  
Sharma who further executed GPA dated  
2/12/2010 in favour of Mr. Karam Veer and he  
further executed GPA dated 15/2/2011 in  
favour of Manoj Singh. Later on Manoj  
executed GPA dated 2/12/2010 in favour of  
Vikas Kumar Goyal it is further informed that  
Sh. Karamveer has executed GPA dated  
08/01/2020 in favour of Sh. Vikas Kumar Goyal  
and thereby all the GPA's issued by me  
cancelled and became void. The Public are  
hereby cautioned against dealing in any  
manner with the above mentioned plots and  
it is at the approval stage. We  
are waiting for statutory  
clearances like fire and environmental  
clearances. We are hoping to obtain the  
requisite clearances within a couple of weeks," a senior  
DDO official said.

Vikas Shekhar Advocate

Off. Cum Resi.: AB 18 Miyawali Nagar,  
Paschim Vihar, New Delhi-110087**TENDERS****The Palakkad Paddy Procurement Processing & Marketing Co-operative Society Ltd No. R1449 (PAPCOS)**

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RE-E-Tenders are invited from reputed Contractors for Silo and Modern Rice Mill Civil Work.

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Cost of Tender form : Rs 1000/- (Ten Thousand Only)

EMD Amount : Rs 70000/- (Seventy Lakhs Only)

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Kannambra Sd/- Secretary 26/02/2021

**PERSONAL****LOST & FOUND**

It is notified for the information that my Original Birth Certificate, Qualifying Examination Certificate of Main Secondary/Senior Secondary examination with marksheets of Years 2003,2005 and Roll No. 1129892, 1230238 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Name of the Candidate Bhumi Shrivastava Full address F-51, Golf Links, Sector -40, Noida – 201303, Telephone No. – 0120-4571055.

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No. F 6(291)/TREDA/NCES/2021/9966 Date 25/02/2021

**NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER**

On behalf of Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA), Joint Director, TREDA invites e-tender for the work of design, manufacture, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of Solar PV Power Plants on turn-key basis vide DNTE-T No. F 6(291)/TREDA/NCES/2021/9964 date 25/02/2021.

The tender papers may be downloaded from e-procurement portal <http://tripuratenders.gov.in> and the deadline for submission of online e-bid is 20/03/2021 upto 3:30 PM.

(DS DAS) Joint Director

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e-Tender Reference No.—RCD/FSD /AP/RAN/24/20-21 Dated 26-02-2021

1- Name Of Work

Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report for flyover / Level separator at Argora Chowk in Ranchi city from consultants empanelled with RCD under category-II vide letter No 686 (s) WE, Dated 29.01.2019.

2- Tentative Length of Work

1.5 km

3 Work completion time

90 Days

4 Date and Time of Publishing of Tender on official website

03.03.2021, 05.00 PM

5- Last date and Time of Submission of Tender (With Tender Fee and EMD)

18.03.2021, 12.30 PM

6- Date and Timing of Bid opening

19.03.2021, 12.30 PM

7- Tender Inviting Authority

Executive Engineer, Field Survey Division, Advance Planning, RCD, Ranchi, Nirupan Bhawan, 56 set Chowk, Doranda, Ranchi -834002, Mobile No-9431591027

8 Bid Submission Address

Chief Engineer (Communication), Road Construction Department, 1 st Floor, Engineer Hostel No -2, Dhurwa, Ranchi -834004

9 Mode of Bid Submission

[e-Tendering](http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in) (<http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>)For further information please go through the website <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>.

Executive Engineer

Field Survey Division,A.P Road Construction Department,Ranchi

PR 242604 Road(20-21)D

**Lawyers oppose physical hearings from March 15****PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI

Several lawyers on Friday opposed in the Delhi High Court its decision to start holding completely physical courts with virtual proceedings only being held in exceptional cases. They urged that hybrid hearings, which will have both options, be held instead.

Reasons, like resurgence of COVID-19 cases in various

States, appearance of new strains, advanced age and co-morbidities of lawyers and their family members and a cleaner environment due to lesser vehicular use, were given before the court in support of holding hybrid hearings.

Currently, 11 Benches of the HC on rotation hold physical courts while the others hold virtual proceedings.

The project envisions an integrated development hub, bringing together residential, recreational and workplaces. It will be in close proximity to the Blue and Pink metro corridors. The project will be developed by the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) on roughly 30 hectares.

**Transit-oriented hub in east Delhi awaits nod**

It has provision for residential, recreational and office spaces

**SHINJINI GHOSH**

NEW DELHI

The East Delhi Hub at Kardooma — a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the foundation stone of which was laid in December 2019 — is awaiting statutory clearances.

The policy mandates that residential, commercial, civic or institutional establishments have to be in close proximity to allow locals to access facilities like plazas and shared parks

DDA OFFICIAL

DDA official said.

“Once we obtain the requisite clearances, the declaration of the tenders is likely to be made and further work is expected to begin immediately,” the official added.

**Public transport**

Senior DDA officials connected to the project explained that as per current proposals, around 1,000 dwelling units, apart from those under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category, will be constructed in the first phase. According to the DDA, a provision of ₹500 crore has been allotted for 2021-22 and tenders have been floated by the NBCC.

“As of now, there is a proposal to construct around 1,000 dwelling units and it is at the approval stage. We are waiting for statutory clearances like fire and environmental clearances. We are hoping to obtain the requisite clearances within a couple of weeks,” a senior

dental, office and recreational spaces in walking or cycling distance of the transit stations.

**On PPP basis**

DDA vice-chairman Anurag Jain said: “The NBCC has already floated tenders after approval of the proposal. The DDA will be building one set of residential area under the TOD project while the rest will be done on a Public-Private-Partnership basis.”

The much-awaited TOD policy, which was approved by the DDA in September 2019, entails development of “high-density, mixed-use, mixed-income buildings within a short distance of a rapid public transport network”.

In December last year, the land-owning agency had suggested modifications to the TOD policy by identifying 12 nodes which were meant to be mass transit stations according to influence zones identified by the DDA.

“The provisions of this regulation shall only be applicable in the influence zones of such identified TOD nodes. A TOD approach in Delhi will help in bringing people and jobs closer to mass transit and lead to walkable, mixed use developments within influence zones of transit stations,” a senior DDA official said.

**OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE****DEATH ANNIVERSARIES****FIRST ANNIVERSARY****Mrs.IVORY SYIEM**Born 21st April 1954  
Died 27th Feb 2020

**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Saturday:** Thunderstorm with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Muzaffarabad, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh

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

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-32.5	21.0	19.1	Kozhikode	...-33.5	26.0	21.2
Ahmedabad	...-35.5	19.1	17.5	Kurnool	...-37.8	21.2	17.5
Aizawl	...-25.0	10.7	17.5	Lucknow	...-33.0	21.5	17.5
Allahabad	...-32.1	16.4	14.2	Madurai	...-36.5	22.4	17.5
Bengaluru	...-34.1	18.4	17.5	Mangaluru	...-35.1	25.1	17.5
Bhopal	...-35.3	14.2	12.0	Mumbai	...-33.9	21.6	17.5
Bhubaneswar	...-40.4	17.0	15.2	Mysuru	...-33.0	17.6	17.5
Chandigarh	...-34.3	13.9	12.0	New Delhi	...-33.0	15.2	17.5
Chennai	...-34.6	21.2	17.8	Patna	...-32.7	17.8	17.5
Coimbatore	...-35.3	22.1	20.7	Port Blair	...-31.4	21.7	17.5
Dehradoon	...-31.8	12.0	10.7	Puducherry	...-31.8	20.6	17.5
Gangtok	...-14.2	10.2	7.2	Pune	...-36.4	19.4	17.5
Goa	...-32.9	23.8	20.7	Raipur	...-32.8	18.0	17.5
Guwahati	...-7.25	16.8	14.2	Ranchi	...-19.9	11.1	17.5
Hubballi	...-34.0	19.0	17.5	Shillong	...-20.4	11.1	17.5
Hyderabad	...-36.0	18.6	17.5	Shimla	...-15.0	6.8	17.5
Imphal	...-27.8	15.2	13.0	Srinagar	...-15.0	6.8	17.5
Jaipur	...-34.2	19.8	17.5	Thiruvananthapuram	...-34.4	24.8	17.5
Kochi	...-31.8	24.4	22.0	Tiruchi	...-36.1	21.5	17.5
Kohima	...-19.0	8.0	7.2	Vijayawada	...-36.2	20.4	17.5
Kolkata	...-35.6	21.0	19.2	Visakhapatnam	...-31.3	22.4	17.5

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	35	88	34	108	166	■■■■■
Bengaluru	15	85	37	125	121	■■■■■
Chennai	11	20	54	70	72	■■■■■
Delhi	56	58	31	283	308	■■■■■
Hyderabad	...-5	89	34	138	133	■■■■■
Kolkata	42	23	51	282	204	■■■■■
Lucknow	24	59	39	206	157	■■■■■
Mumbai	10	69	50	230	189	■■■■■
Pune	...-91	52	104	93	47	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	14	59	48	117	134	■■■■■

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■■ Moderate ■■■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.  
NO<sub>x</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.  
CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

**PM2.5 & PM10:** Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

# Masked men in Meghalaya attack labourers from Assam, one killed

We will ensure that miscreants involved are not allowed to go free, says CM Sangma

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

Officials in Meghalaya's West Khasi Hills district have sent seven labourers home in Assam after masked men attacked them at a construction site on Wednesday night. A labourer died of his injuries in hospital.

The missionary college where they were working has also been closed for an indefinite period in view of the attack.

Police said that about 15-20 masked miscreants, armed with sharp and blunt weapons, attacked the eight men from Assam's South Salmara-Mankachar district bordering Bangladesh when they were sleeping inside the St. Xavier College complex in Shait-Shait Umriod village in South West Khasi Hills district.

The college authorities



CM Conrad K. Sangma

have so far arrested two people and efforts are on to nab the other suspects," district Superintendent of Police Maxwell B. Siyem told *The Hindu* on Friday.

Father L. David Nukhu, college vice-principal, said the labourers had been brought on February 10 for constructing the college administrative block and a girls' hostel. The department concerned in the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council had given permission to pressure groups such as the Khasi Students' Union why the workers were needed. Condemning the incident, Mr. Sangma said: "We will ensure the miscreants involved are not allowed to go free and such incidents do not happen in the future."

There have been instances of non-locals having been attacked in Meghalaya, where pressure groups have been demanding implementation of Inner-Line Permit.

granted them permission. The attack happened that night," he said.

## Approval sought

In a statement, the college authorities said they had sought the approval of top officers and Ministers, including Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, to bring the labourers besides explaining to pressure groups such as the Khasi Students' Union why the workers were needed. Condemning the incident, Mr. Sangma said: "We will ensure the miscreants involved are not allowed to go free and such incidents do not happen in the future."

There have been instances of non-locals having been attacked in Meghalaya, where pressure groups have been demanding implementation of Inner-Line Permit.

## BPF sets rider for alliance in Assam polls

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) has said it was game for an alliance with anti-BJP forces provided they keep out of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) comprising four districts of poll-bound Assam.

BPF chief Hagrama Mohilary said his party was ready to go for strategic tie-ups with the Congress-led grand alliance and a front of new regional parties if they agree to BPF contesting 12 Assembly seats within the BTR.

"If they help us in these 12 constituencies, we will help them in 28 seats beyond BTR where we have a considerable support base," Mr. Mohilary said after a meeting of his party's central working committee in Udaguri on February 25.

He added that his party's 12-member core group will decide on which parties the BPF would ally with. "We are discussing with Assam Jatiya Parishad, Rajor Dal and other parties and the outcome will be revealed soon," Mr. Mohilary said. He said the BPF's doors were open to all parties except the BJP and its allies.

## Discoms in Haryana passing off power theft as sales to farmers'

Khemka alerts finance, electricity departments of the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Senior IAS officer Ashok Khemka has written to the finance and electricity departments of the Haryana government, pointing out that power distribution companies in the State were trying to pad off power theft as sales to farmers.

Mr. Khemka, who is currently Principal Secretary, Archaeological Department (Haryana), has written to both the departments, stating that the Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission (HERC) has been admitting inflated claims of discoms for agriculture pumpset (AP) sales to

farmers, burdening the public with huge Rural Energy (RE) subsidies. This public fraud is unfortunately not contested by the government before the HERC. The great fudge enables the discoms to claim over 9,200 million units (MU) as total AP sales and receive RE subsidy of ₹6,900 crore from the government without a murmur, helping the discoms to pad off power theft as sales to farmers."

He added that the average Transmission and Distribution (T&D) losses of the two discoms (Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam and Dakshin Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam) after accounting for AP sales are

19%. "If the AP sales are properly metered and accounted for at the farmer's end, the true T&D losses of the discoms may be closer to 40%.

A study was carried out earlier by the agriculture department in October 2007, when AP consumption was estimated at 1,115 MU, in the event of no rains when crops need maximum irrigation. In the year 2007-08, the discoms were claiming RE subsidy for 5,639 MU, which in the span of the last 12 years has risen steadily by 65% to over 9,200 MU, without change in either the gross cropped area or the cropping pattern," he wrote in the letter.

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## Chaos outside H.P. House, 5 Cong. MLAs suspended

They blocked the Governor's vehicle



Congress MLAs trying to stop the Himachal Governor's vehicle in Shimla on Friday. PTI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHANDIGARH

Rowdy scenes were witnessed outside Himachal Pradesh Assembly in Shimla on Friday after the Opposition

MLAs sat on a dharna. I, along with Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur and other Ministers,

blocked Governor Bandaru Dattatreya's vehicle as he was about to leave the complex following his address on the first day of the budget session.

Five Congress MLAs, including Leader of the Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri, were suspended for the rest of the session till March 20. An FIR has been registered against them.

## FIR lodged



## Open minds

After online conferences circular withdrawal, the effort should be to promote interactions

The Centre has saved itself from continuing embarrassment at the international level by withdrawing the Education Ministry's ill-thought-out guidelines for holding online conferences, seminars and training sessions. The sweeping circular, issued in consultation with the External Affairs Ministry, created a bottleneck for scientists in public universities, colleges and organisations and erected new bureaucratic barriers in a pandemic-hit phase when virtual conferences are the only viable channel for researchers to collaborate with global peers. Academicians and others organising the events were, as per the January circular, required to get prior official approval and ensure that the conference topics do not relate to security of the state, border, the northeast, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and broadly, any "internal matters". Event organisers were also mandated to give preference to technological tools and channels not owned or controlled by hostile countries or agencies. The effect of such a vague and abstruse set of instructions could only be to abandon efforts to organise conferences. To their credit, Indian scientists spoke out, and the Indian Academy of Sciences sounded a warning on the order's detrimental effect on development of science, prompting a rethink.

The pandemic from last year has underscored the value of virtual collaboration for many, although it cannot be argued that it completely substitutes for face-to-face interactions, trust-building and team formation. Without hurdles posed by visas, expensive travel, physical disability and so on, thousands of scientists have been able to participate in online conferences. Attendance at such events grew by 80% in 2020 over 2019 for the Plant Biology Worldwide Summit and over 300% for the American Physical Society meeting, as also for international meetings on cancer, lasers and electro-optics. Many scientists also think a combination of post-COVID-19 physical conferences and new possibilities enabled by virtual collaborations promise to forge even stronger alliances. An entirely new avenue has also opened up for national conferences with global experts taking part that researchers and students in the smallest towns can attend. This cannot, however, happen if institutions are bound by a bureaucratic straitjacket. India has made good strides in some fields with a growing number of peer-reviewed publications, especially in chemistry and physical sciences, as the Nature Index notes. Moreover, rigorous work can help allay concerns, such as on biopiracy, by documenting natural assets. The humanities, too, need to be freed from paranoid restrictions on research topics, curbs on scholars, and the growing pressure to sanctify cultural notions of science and history. Good sense has prevailed on the issue of online conferences, and it should lead to a more liberal approach to all research.

## A colonial relic

Repeated misuse of sedition law underlines the need to scrap it altogether

A sessions court in Delhi has affirmed the belief that a dispassionate scrutiny of outlandish claims by the police is necessary for protecting the liberty of those jailed on flimsy, often political, reasons. Rejecting the purported evidence presented by the Delhi Police against climate change activist Disha Ravi, as "scanty and sketchy", Judge Dharmender Rana has granted bail to the 22-year-old arrested for nothing more than editing a document shared among a network of activists raising global support for the farmers' protests against three central laws. Even though it was quite obvious that the claim of a global conspiracy behind the unsavoury and violent incidents that took place on January 26 in New Delhi lacked credence, the order of bail is still notable for subjecting the specific charges to strict judicial scrutiny at a fairly early stage. In particular, the judge has applied the established test for a charge of sedition under Section 124A of the IPC to pass muster: that the act involved must constitute a threat to public order and incitement to violence. He found that there was not even an iota of evidence indicating that the 'toolkit', a shared Google cloud document with ideas on how to go about amplifying the protests, in any way incited violence. He was clear that there was no causal link between the violence and Ms. Ravi, a conclusion that confirmed widespread criticism that the arrest was unnecessary, and that the entire case was nothing more than a reflection of government paranoia.

The episode highlights a trend that has caused concern in recent times: the tendency of the rulers to treat instances of dissent, especially involving strident criticism of policies and laws in which particular regimes are deeply invested, as attempts to provoke disaffection and disloyalty. Hence, it is significant that the judge not only saw Ms. Ravi's activism as related to her freedom of speech and expression, but went on to say that an attempt to reach a global audience is part of that freedom. In the backdrop of the claim that those who prepared the toolkit made common cause with Khalistani separatists, Judge Rana showed refreshing clarity in maintaining that mere interaction with a group with dubious credentials could not be used to consider someone culpable. It should also be underscored that such bail orders should not be rare or special, but be routine judicial responses to cases in which there is a mismatch between the accusation and the evidence. It is by now fairly clear to everyone except, perhaps, the government and its vociferous supporters, that there is no place in a modern democracy for a colonial-era legal provision such as sedition. Too broadly defined, prone to misuse, and functioning as a handy tool to repress activism, the section deserves to be scrapped.

# The Biden touch to sober, yet substantive ties

The India-U.S. relationship may not change from the course that Trump chose, but China and rights could be issues



SUHASINI HAIDER

the Foreign Ministers of Japan and Australia.

Mr. Biden's Climate Change Envoy John Kerry also appeared on a discussion with Mr. Jaishankar, where he praised India's efforts on renewable energy and emissions, and charted an ambitious course ahead of the U.S.'s "Earth Day Summit" on April 22 (<https://bit.ly/3pZOLHM>). The State Department spokesperson also revealed plans for an "an overarching memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance health cooperation" which will deal with COVID-19 testing, vaccination and critical drug supplies.

Meanwhile, Mr. Biden's decision to lift restrictions and caps on a number of visas and green cards has no doubt relieved the Modi government of one of the constant sources of worry that India has had with the U.S. Given the list of "Priorities" for the administration listed by the White House on its website (<https://bit.ly/3kq3tXk>), it is safe to say that on a majority of issues, including COVID-19, climate, health care, immigration and restoring America's global standing, New Delhi and Washington are already engaging each other, and are on the same page.

### China on the horizon

Where then, if at all, might trouble lie? While these are still early days to hazard anything, certain preliminary indicators could provide a clue. To begin with, there is China. There is no doubt that China's aggression at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in early 2020 brought India and the U.S. closer, galvanised greater military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and what former Trump National Security Council Director Lisa Curtis called America's "moral and material support".

Events at the LAC also made New Delhi give up years of hesitation over holding Malabar Exercises for the Quad, and hold two Quad ministerial meetings in the past year. The difference this year is that the Biden administration takes charge as India and China have disengaged from their



REUTERS

heights in the Pangong Tso area, and are discussing what could be a long-drawn disengagement and de-induction of troops. As a result, the Modi government may have to be more reticent with the Biden administration as it seeks to take on China strategically. For the Biden administration too, which is walking a fine line with statements on the challenge from China as a competitor in areas such as defence, trade and technology, but also the need for cooperation in certain areas such as climate change and where it is in the U.S.'s "interests to do so" (<https://bit.ly/3uyILOq>), the messaging is likely to be more mixed than before.

Meanwhile, there will be areas where India may become collateral damage: in his latest executive order on securing America's supply chains, for example, Mr. Biden has sought action in areas such as pharmaceuticals where India is a major producer and could be hit if the U.S. insists on localising production (<https://bit.ly/3koJhoZ>). The order is especially significant given that India-Japan-Australia are already working on a trilateral Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) to counter their dependence on Chinese goods, that the U.S. is not a part of.

### Getting it right on rights

Human rights is the next area where India and the U.S. could be at odds both on the bilateral front and in the region, given Mr. Biden's commitment to put human rights "at the centre of Foreign Policy". The U.S. readout of his call with Mr. Modi held that a "shared commitment to democratic values is the bedrock for the U.S.-India relationship", and Mr. Biden and

U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris are expected to be more vocal on these issues which the Modi government has been prickly about. After four years of what former diplomat Ashley Tellis called Mr. Trump's "values holiday", the U.S. is back to commenting on issues that India considers its internal affairs and what it calls "crackdowns on freedom of speech". In the past month, the U.S. administration has weighed in on India's lifting of the Internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir, farmers' protests and the government's face-off with Twitter. It is unlikely that the Biden administration will brush away the Modi government's actions to shut down international agencies – Amnesty, Greenpeace, Compassion International – in the same way as the previous administration did.

Further afield, the U.S. will want India to partner in ensuring human rights in South Asia, particularly given its current term in the UN Security Council. Practically every call between the respective capitals has mentioned concerns over the coup by the Army in Myanmar (Burma). However, while Washington has stepped up sanctions and called for the Suu Kyi-NLD government to be reinstated, New Delhi has spoken only for the "rule of law" and democratic processes to be upheld, and the Ministry of External Affairs has laid emphasis on India's interests in the region. A similar situation could arise over Sri Lanka which faces a country-specific resolution at the Human Rights Council for alleged wartime excesses in 2009 operations against the LTTE, and India's support for its neighbour would place it closer to Beijing's position than to Washington's.

### Russia bonds, trade concerns

Other areas of possible discord overlooked (flagged) by experts will be over India's ties with Russia, in particular the arrival of the S-400 missile systems which will attract sanctions under the U.S.'s Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, a law that the Democrats in Congress pushed

through during the Trump administration. Mr. Biden's administration will seek to implement the law more stringently, calling it a "powerful tool" in its dealings with Turkey on the S-400 purchase and the Nord Stream2 pipeline project from Russia.

Trade is an ongoing concern from the Trump era, and India is still hopeful of reversing the U.S. decision to cancel its GSP status for exports. Meanwhile, the mega Indian investment plan announced during the "Howdy Modi" visit – Petronet India's \$2.5 billion stake in U.S. company Tellurian's Driftwood LNG project – has ended abruptly after the MoU signed in September 2019 lapsed.

### Afghanistan and Pakistan

On Afghanistan, New Delhi has charted an independent course from the U.S., standing firmly with the Ashraf Ghani government and resolutely refusing to engage the Taliban. This is pragmatic, but it also means the U.S. will continue to see India as "not part of the problem, not part of the solution", and seek more support from Pakistan to facilitate its exit. In particular, the U.S.'s pre-Trump formulations that conflate peace in Afghanistan in order to help its desired outcomes in Afghanistan, as its recent statement on the India-Pakistan LoC ceasefire shows, will become a sore point for New Delhi.

Above all, the shift from a year ago is likely to be evidenced by the stark contrast in Mr. Biden's personal style from that of his predecessor. While South Block mandarins no longer wake up in the morning dreading the damage control required for the latest tweet from the U.S. President, it is clear that Mr. Biden is not as big on pushing the personal connection with Mr. Modi as Mr. Trump or even President Barack Obama was. The difference will make for a more sober, but perhaps more substantive bilateral relationship in the four years ahead.

[suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in](mailto:suhasini.h@thehindu.co.in)

## Imparting direction to science in India

While it is a mixed bag as far as the metrics on scientific research are concerned, the draft policy seeks a new path



S. VARAHASIMHAN

pean Union. An index score of 1 or more is considered good. The inference for India is that the impact, and hence the citation of publications from India, should improve.

The other relevant report is on patents filed by India. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) through their Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) is the primary channel of filing international patent applications. In its report for 2019, WIPO says India filed a modest number of 2,053 patent applications (<https://bit.ly/3pYldDn>). Compared to the 58,990 applications filed by China and 57,840 by the U.S., India has a long way to go. This was the first time that China filed more patent applications than the U.S.

The Indian Government put in place the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy in 2016 to "stimulate a dynamic, vibrant and balanced intellectual property rights system". One of the objectives is human capital development (<https://bit.ly/3pYwZoe>). The mission to foster innovation, replicate it at scale and commercialise it is a work in progress consequent to the policy. However, we need hawk-eye's focus à la China which filed just 276 patent applications in 1999 but rose to become an innovation titan in 2019.

### Science policies over time

India realised early as a republic the need to use science to become a welfare state. As Robert Browning said in "Apollo and the Fates", "Tis Man's to explore... Up and down, inch by inch, with taper his reason", it behoved us to chart new frontiers in science that would suit our priorities.

**A shot at peace**  
Amidst the all-pervasive air of gloom and doom in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has come as a welcome respite to read the news of an agreement between India and Pakistan to adhere to the ceasefire of 2003 (Page 1, February 26). For far too long, the Line of Control has been breached innumerable times, leading to a loss of countless lives of innocent citizens and



There have been four science policies till now, after 1947, with the draft of the fifth policy having been released recently. India's first science policy adopted in 1958, Scientific Policy Resolution, aimed to develop scientific enterprise and lay the foundation for scientific temper. It led to the establishment of many research institutes and national laboratories, and by 1980, India had developed advanced scientific infrastructure with sufficient scientific personnel. The focus in the second science policy, Technology Policy Statement, in 1983, was technological self-reliance and to use technology to benefit all sections of the society, while strengthening research in fields such as electronics and biotechnology.

The Science and Technology Policy 2003, the first science policy after the economic liberalisation of 1991, aimed to increase investment in research and development and brought it to 0.7%. The Scientific and Engineering Research Board (SERB) was established to promote research.

In 2013, India's science policy included Innovation in its scope and was called Science, Technology and Innovation Policy. The focus was to be one of the top five global scientific leaders, which India achieved through building partnerships with States, estab-

lishing more research and development centres and collaborating in international projects such as the Large Hadron Collider in the European Union.

The draft of the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 (STIP2020), the fifth science policy that was released in January 2021 offers hope to research in India (<https://bit.ly/3d0973>): it has an ambitious vision to "double the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers, Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) and private sector contribution to the GERD every 5 years" and to "position India among the top three scientific superpowers in the next decade". STIP2020 defines an Open Science Framework which will create a "one nation, one subscription" solution that will give all individuals and institutions in India access to all top journals through a central subscription. This scheme will provide fillip to improving access to knowledge. It also defines strategies to improve funding for and participation in research. India's Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) is currently around 0.6% of GDP. This is quite low when compared to the investments by the U.S. and China which are greater than 2%. Israel's GERD is more than 4% (<https://bit.ly/3dMIWV>).

A key reason for India's low funding in R&D is the low private sector contribution. STIP2020 defines solutions to improve funding thus: all States to fund research, multinational corporations to participate in research, fiscal incentives and support for innovation in medium and small scale enterprises. These are good ideas. The new

measures should not become a pretext to absolve the Union and State governments of their primacy in funding research; the government should invest more into research.

**Key areas and focus**  
Other critical focal areas are inclusion of under-represented groups of people in research, support for indigenous knowledge systems, using artificial intelligence, reaching out to the Indian scientific diaspora for collaboration, science diplomacy with partner countries, and setting up a strategic technology development fund to give impetus to research.

Science diplomacy is at the fore now with India offering COVID-19 vaccines to many countries; formulating a policy around it will yield dividends. Support for indigenous knowledge systems should enable them to improve upon their limitations in subscribing to transparency and verifiability.

The policy seeks to define strategies that are "decentralized, evidence-informed, bottom-up, experts-driven, and inclusive". It is in draft stage and will have to be finalised and placed before the cabinet for approval. It makes the right moves and strikes the right notes to make India future-ready. More specific directives and implementation with a scientific temper without engaging in hyperbole will be key to the policy's success; and its success is important to us because, as Carl Sagan said, "we can do science, and with it we can improve our lives".

S. Varahasimhan is a history of science enthusiast based in Chennai

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### A shot at peace

Amidst the all-pervasive air of gloom and doom in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has come as a welcome respite to read the news of an agreement between India and Pakistan to adhere to the ceasefire of 2003 (Page 1, February 26). For far too long, the Line of Control has been breached innumerable times, leading to a loss of countless lives of innocent citizens and

security personnel, not to talk of disruptions to the normal lives of inhabitants in the area. One hopes that this agreement, close on the heels of the agreement of disengagement struck with China, will help both India and Pakistan to concentrate resources and attention where it is needed urgently – to scale up vaccination efforts and rebuild the economies which took a blow from the

lockdown and the loss of jobs and livelihoods for ordinary people as a consequence.  
M.P. MURALIDHARAN,  
Bengaluru

- Though the recent developments as far as the relationship that India has vis-à-vis China and Pakistan are promising, they are intriguing as well. One wonders what magic enticed the two neighbours to

suddenly change their mind as far as the border is concerned. Whatever may be the reason behind it, every move India makes from now should be with caution.  
BIJUMAN P.N.,  
Mattuthavalam, Idukki, Kerala

- No exams, all pass

The decision of the Tamil Nadu government to scrap the final examination for Classes 9, 10 and 11 in the State this academic year in

view of COVID-19 is unwelcome. Though one cannot deny the fact that online classes cannot be as effective as brick-and-mortar classes, the government could have found ways to conduct the board examination for at least Class 10, which is the basis for students to decide where to branch next. The question predominant in the minds of school administrators and parents is how the marks for

various subjects would be awarded for students. Equity cannot be ensured with their past academic records. The long and the short of it, this announcement from the government has come as a shocker for industrious students who wanted to make a mark in the examination.  
S. RAMAKRISHNASAYEE,  
Chennai

To read more letters online, scan the QR code



# Gunning for victory in Bengal

Over the past two years, communal and political violence has divided the electorate and claimed several lives in Barrackpore. **Shiv Sahay Singh** reports on the attempts by the Trinamool Congress and the BJP to polarise the electorate



Clashes break out, allegedly between the BJP and TMC activists from Kakinara, in the Bhatpara Assembly constituency where by-elections were underway, in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on May 19, 2019. (Below: BJP MP from Barrackpore, Arjun Singh, was injured during a protest in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on Sept 1, 2019. ■ PTI)

The 2019 Lok Sabha election in West Bengal is a traumatic memory for Ali Hussain Mansuri, a resident of Barrackpore, about 50 km from Kolkata. From a few days after the polls in 2019 till weeks before the Assembly polls of 2021, Mansuri went knocking on the doors of the Bhatpara police station with two complaints: one against the vandalism and looting of his shop and the other against his house being set on fire. In both the complaints, addressed to the officer-in-charge of Bhatpara police station, which have been stamped as received, Mansuri mentions "violence and *danga* (riot)" in May 2019.

Almost a month after the riots, which erupted on the day of the by-polls to the Bhatpara Assembly seat were held in Barrackpore, on May 19, the people of Darba Line returned home under police protection, but Mansuri did not. He chose to live about 500 metres away from his earlier residence near Choti Masjid. Since then, he has been going around distributing copies of the police complaints to whoever he thinks might be able to help him.

The riots killed at least seven and injured dozens of people. The causes of the deaths and violence are contentious and differ depending on which family or political party you speak to. Some attribute it to political violence, others to communal strife. But what is evident is that since then, Barrackpore has emerged as a centre of conflict. It is, like many other places in West Bengal before the polls, a region on edge.



doors. "In the jute mills, on both sides of the Hooghly, such structures are not uncommon. These common bathing spaces and common toilets are reminiscent of what was once a composite mill culture," he says.

Roychowdhury lives on the other bank of the Hooghly in similar quarters that witnessed the Telinipara riots in May 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown. The riots happened on two days: May 10 and May 12. On May 10, several shops were attacked on Ferry Ghat, largely a Hindu-dominated region. On May 12, people from the community came out in large numbers with weapons alleging that the members of the other community were not maintaining COVID-19 norms. Several houses were attacked and ransacked. Roychowdhury says these riots were manufactured; that rumours regarding the spread of COVID-19 triggered them. Social media was used to heighten the campaign and Internet was suspended for days in parts of Hooghly after the riots.

About 11 km from Telinipara is the Chinsurah Dunlop ground. This is where Prime Minister Narendra Modi landed in a chopper for a large public meeting on February 22, 2021. At the meeting, for which several trees were cut, he accused the Trinamool Congress of appeasement and alleged that Durga Puja was not allowed to be held. He promised the crowd, comprising workers of the jute mills who have been grappling with frequent lockouts and job cuts, of "development for all and appeasement for none" if the Bharatiya Janata Party is voted to power in the State Assembly elections to be held from March 27 to April 29. The crowd burst into applause on hearing this promise.

On the other bank of the river in Barrackpore, Roychowdhury and his associates Sandip Sinha Roy and Bijay Kumar Rajak gathered testimony of those affected by the violence. The outcome is a report by civil rights and research collective group AAMRA and is titled 'West Bengal: Post Ramnavami Communal Violence; Bhatpara Riot 2018-2020'.

**The communal and the political**  
It is difficult to point out when these fissures started appearing in the social fa-

bric of Barrackpore, but there were instances of communal flare-ups even before the 2019 explosion. The Hazinagar riots of November 2016, triggered by an attack on a Muharram procession, and the unrest following attacks on Ram Navami processions in 2017 and 2018 were alarms that were ignored.

Seven people were killed in the communal riots in 2019 – Ram Babu Shaw, Dharmendra Shaw, Rajesh Shaw, Prabhu Shaw, Lala Chowdhury, Mohammed Mustak and Mohammed Halim. According to the family members of these victims, some of them died in a crude bomb explosion and some were killed in police firing. Three of them, including 17-year-old Ram Babu Shaw, were *puchka* sellers (street vendors). All the deaths were reported within a 2-km radius in the Kakinara-Bhatpara area.

While the families of the victims are united in their grief, they are divided in their opinions about political parties. This is because the Trinamool Congress and the BJP leadership have reached out to the families in different ways. Mustak's son, Parvej, and Halim's son, Taibrej, got jobs as contractual workers in the West Bengal Fire and Emergency Services Department. For at least three of the five Hindus killed in the violence, the BJP MP from Barrackpore, Arjun Singh, arranged a compensation of ₹5 lakh each. Some like Shyamali Devi, Prabhu Shaw's widow, have failed to meet the criteria of compensation from either side. Shyamali, who has to take care of three daughters after her husband's death, was appointed as a contract worker in Bhatpara Municipality. But she lost her job and has not got a salary for four months after Singh lost control of the municipality following defection to the BJP.

The violence which started in May 2019 continued to rage for the next 20 months. Activists like Roychowdhury point out that it is becoming difficult to separate the communal from the political. As communal passions subsided, the area was gripped by a bloody feud over area domination, and political murders became a regular affair. While there are definite numbers on how many have been affected in the communal

riots, it is difficult to point out exactly how many people have died in the political violence. By some estimates the toll could be more than a dozen.

Even the supporters of the ruling party were not spared. In June 2019, a local Trinamool Congress leader from Nirmal Kundu, was shot dead by men on motorbikes. The incident was captured on CCTV cameras. Among the other Trinamool Congress workers killed in the political violence was Akash Prasad in November 2020. Earlier, in September 6, 2020, two people died while allegedly manufacturing crude bombs at Kamarnati in the southern fringes of Barrackpore.

## Factions

From October 2020, the Barrackpore subdivision was flooded with posters of a young, bearded man, a 35-year-old BJP youth leader. Manish Shukla was gunned down by semi-automatics on October 4, 2020, not even 100 metres from the police outpost in Titagarh. While most political murders have not created much of a ripple except for the customary tweets by political parties, the murder of Shukla, which was again caught on CCTV cameras, shocked the entire State.

But this has become more routine now. In the last week of January 2021, 35-year-old Trinamool Congress worker Rumani Khan was shot dead in Ward Number 18 of Barrackpore.

Only a month earlier, on December 12, 2020, Saikat Bhawal, a 28-year-old BJP worker, was beaten to death in Halisahar area of the subdivision.

Bhawal was distributing party posters when he was killed. The political strife has not only created divisions across families but also within families. Sagar Bhawal, Saikat Bhawal's 23-year-old brother, says that while the BJP leadership has offered monetary compensation, a local Trinamool MLA approached his sister-in-law and offered her a job in the Fire Department. "She does not stay with us anymore. We would never have accepted such an offer," he says. "My brother was the only earning member in the family. After his death there is no one to take care of me and my mother. And now the family too

is divided," he laments.

There is also friction between the Bengali and non-Bengali populations. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed her first political meeting from the Naihati Municipality building on Ghoshpara Road on May 30, 2019. She had met family members of the supporters of the Trinamool Congress who were driven out of their houses after the polls. "I remember parts of her highly charged speech," Rajak says, "including her reference to a dialogue from a Mithun Chakraborty blockbuster, 'marbo ek hane (will beat you up here)'".

Banerjee was enraged after locals had chanted 'Jai Shri Ram' at her convoy in Bhatpara area. She vented her anger against the non-Bengali speaking people of the jute mill belt saying that they were indulging in hooliganism while the State was providing them food and shelter.

## Defections and cases

Long before defections became commonplace in West Bengal politics, Barrackpore saw Arjun Singh, a four-term Trinamool Congress MLA, defect to the BJP. Singh wanted to contest the Lok Sabha polls from Barrackpore but the party decided to favour Dinesh Trivedi. Trivedi switched to the BJP and defeated Trivedi by a margin of over 14,000 votes in a contest marked by violence.

Following Singh's defection, a number of civic bodies slipped out of the Trinamool Congress's grip, but after a few months, the legislators returned to the ruling party. Political violence in the region has been marked by area domination, capture of party offices, wresting control of civic bodies, and killings.

Singh's office-cum-residence 'Major Bhawan' stands at the intersection of two jute mills, the Meghna Jute Mills and the Auckland Jute Mills, on Ghoshpara Road. By 10 a.m., more than 50 visitors gather at his place. This house was in the news a few days ago when it was attacked by crude bombs. The video was tweeted by the State BJP leadership. The house has been in the news earlier too, with the police conducting frequent raids.

At Major Bhawan, on a winter morning last year, Singh was in a hurry to visit an injured party worker, but still made time to meet the people. "The lockdown has left me with no money. Can you ask my landlord to consider my request?" a woman pleaded. Another visitor wanted him to pressure his employer so that he could retain his job. Before leaving his office, Singh also chided a party worker who had beaten up a technician. "What will you people do when we come to power," he asked.

A few days later at Dalhousie, with a smaller group of people at his lawyer's office, the Barrackpore MP talked about the criminal cases against him. "I may hold the record of having the highest number of cases against me. It had reached 96 at one point, now it has come down to 66," he said. Emphasising his century-old family connection to the jute mills, Singh said, "Barrackpore was made a prestige fight by Mamata Banerjee. If it was Singur and Nandigram that brought down the Left rule, Bar-

rackpore will be the Waterloo for the Trinamool Congress."

## Communal overtones in campaign

The campaign before the Assembly election has not only got shriller, but the communal overtones too have become more pronounced. At a rally organised on January 9, 2021, at Barrackpore, senior Trinamool Congress leaders including MP Kalyan Banerjee and Municipal Affairs Minister Firhad Hakim raked up the issue of the riots and warned that there could be riots again during the next Ram Navami. The TMC MP went a step further and referred to the Hathras gang-rape in Uttar Pradesh and Sita in one line, triggering outrage on social media.

In mid-February, Singh welcomed Trivedi, his political rival, into the BJP after the latter resigned as a Rajya Sabha MP from the Trinamool Congress. The BJP began making plans for its Rath Yatra (or Parivar Yatra), which was expected to pass through Ghoshpara Road in Barrackpore.

On February 15, at a well-attended meeting at Naihati, not far from where Banerjee had addressed the 2019 meeting, Trinamool Congress leader Omprakash Mishra referred to the harmonious coexistence of Bengali and non-Bengali-speaking populations of the region. "Fifty per cent of the people here are Hindi speaking and the remaining are Bengali," he said.

Around the same time, when the political campaign was gathering pace, activists under the banner of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights, under the leadership of Debasish Paul and Sandip Sinha Roy, rallied about 150 riot-affected victims including Mansuri to the office of the Sub Divisional Officer, demanding compensation. While the development brought some hope to Mansuri, who was called by the local authorities to submit his police complaint along with his bank account details, he decided not to return to his old home and handed over the keys of the Darba Line quarter to the jute mill administration.

On February 25, 2021 the BJP president J.P. Nadda visited Mangal Pandey Park in Barrackpore, had lunch at the home of a family of a jute worker at Gouripur Naihati, not far from Gouripur Jute Mill, which has been closed since the late 1990s. He also participated in the conclusion of the Parivar Yatra. A few weeks ago, Mansuri reopened his quilt and pillow shop in Kakinara after taking a loan of about ₹50,000. While business has started trickling in for the first time since May 2019, fears of a fresh communal flare-up continue to haunt the 64-year-old jute mill worker.

On February 25, Mansuri opened his shop with a lot of hesitation as the Parivar Yatra was supposed to pass by his shop. Later in the day, he heard from Sandip Sinha Roy that the Parivar Yatra had been denied permission on Ghoshpara Road because of violence in Kanchrapara further north. Mansuri heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Whatever has to happen will happen. I have opened the shop today. But how can we live in constant fear?"



FROM PAGE ONE

## Ramp up vaccination, Centre tells States

"COVID-appropriate behaviour promoted and strictly enforced; and the Standard Operating Procedures prescribed in respect of various permitted activities followed scrupulously," the order said. The earlier guidelines, issued on January 27, are applicable till February 28. The guidelines permitted the opening of cinema halls and theatres at a higher capacity than the 50% seating strength. Swimming pools were also permitted for use by all.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation in a circular said: "In partial modification of circular dated June 26, 2020, the competent authority has further extended the validity... regarding scheduled international commercial passenger services to and from India till 23.59 p.m. IST of March 31, 2021." However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on select routes by the competent authority on case-to-case basis, it said.

(With inputs from PTI)

## India, China agree to establish new hotline

He stressed that restoring normality to the broader relationship would first require complete disengagement and then de-escalation along the border.

"It was necessary to disengage at all friction points in order to contemplate de-escalation of forces in this sector," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) quoted him as saying. "That alone will lead to the restoration of peace and tranquillity of progress of our bilateral relationship."

Underlining how both sides have viewed differently the impact of the border crisis on the broader relationship, Mr. Wang said "there has been some wavering and back-peddling in India's China policy", because of which "practical cooperation between the two countries has been affected".

"Decades of experiences have shown repeatedly that heightening differences does not help solve problems, and that it only erodes the basis of mutual trust," he said, adding that both sides should avoid the "wrong path of mutual misgivings and suspicion, still less the path of retrogression" and "should handle the boundary question properly to prevent the bilateral relationship from sinking into a negative cycle".

"While that the two countries have boundary disputes is an objective fact, which should be taken seriously, it is not the whole of China-India relations, and it should be put at a proper place in the overall bilateral relations," he stressed.

India, for its part, made it clear to China that it is not realistic to insulate the relationship from the boundary crisis, and emphasised that in its view, peace on the border is a prerequisite for the rest of the relationship to develop.

China, however, has hit out at India's economic measures, such as banning Chinese apps and stricter curbs on investment following last year's tensions, viewing India's "whole of government" approach as going against a past consensus of containing differences while cooperating elsewhere.

Mr. Jaishankar said with the completion of disengagement in the Pangong

Tso (lake) area, both sides "should now quickly resolve the remaining issues along the LAC" and "once disengagement is completed at all friction points, then the two sides could also look at broader de-escalation of troops in the area and work towards restoration of peace and tranquillity".

Mr. Wang said the situation on the ground "has been noticeably eased" and he called for both sides "to cherish the hard-won relaxation, and work together to consolidate the progress, keep up the consultation momentum, further ease the situation, and improve the border management and control mechanisms".

The two sides also stressed need to advance the boundary talks to build up mutual trust and realise peace and tranquillity in the border areas," he stated.

Agreeing to set up a hotline so both Ministers could be in more regular contact, both sides stressed the importance of "timely" communication in the wake of last year's crisis.

This hotline will be in addition to the military hotline between the Indian Army's Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO) and China's Western Theatre Command.

Army chief General Manoj Naravane said in January last year that the proposal for military hotline, which had been mired in bureaucratic delays for years, had been accepted by both sides after all procedural issues were resolved.

The two Foreign Ministers met in Moscow in September and agreed that the situation in the border was "not in the interest of either side" and to continue dialogue and "quickly disengage".

Working out the modalities of disengagement, however, proved to be complicated and took several months. Both sides broadly agreed on a plan to disengage at the ninth round of military-level talks in January, which began to be implemented earlier this month.

On Thursday, the MEA said the completion of disengagement on the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake) last week was "a significant first step" towards resolving the remaining issues with China along the LAC.

## Two advisers for L-G

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI  
Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Director-General A.P. Maheshwari has been appointed as an adviser to Puducherry's Lieutenant Governor, two days before his superannuation from the Indian Police Service (IPS).

Mr. Maheshwari, a 1984-batch IPS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, is set to retire on February 28.

An order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said the competent authority had approved the appointment of Mr. Maheshwari as an adviser

to the L-G with immediate effect, "in addition to his regular charge as DG, CRPF till his superannuation on 28.2.2021 and as regular charge thereafter".

Former Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) Secretary C. Chandramouli was also appointed as an adviser to the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory, which was placed under President's rule on February 25. Mr. Chandramouli is a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1985 batch of the Tamil Nadu cadre.

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If voting for Kerala-140, Tamil Nadu-234 and Puducherry-30 (total 404 seats) can be conducted in a single phase, why do Assam-126 and West Bengal-294 (total 420 seats) require seven and eight phases? Are there any nefarious plans?

PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN, Congress leader

**Five-day test match in Chennai becomes a two-day affair in Ahmedabad. One-day election in Tamil Nadu gets stretched over eight phases in West Bengal. Can any of you explain this numbers game?**

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA  
CPI(M) general secretary

We wanted the polls to the 126 Assembly seats to be held in at least two phases. We are satisfied with the three phases that will be conveniently held before the exams, Bihu and Ramzan. The ECI's decision to allow people over 80 years of age to vote from home is praiseworthy

MAULANA BADRUDDIN AJMAL  
All India United Democratic Front president

Assam Assembly polls are announced and we seek your blessing to form the government again. We're grateful for your faith and cooperation in the last five years, during which Assam witnessed stupendous growth. The leadership of Hon. PM @srinarendramodi

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA, Assam Minister and BJP leader



# Polls being held in changed political landscape

The BJP's stakes are higher in the east; Congress's leadership question has led to a piecemeal strategy

NISTULA HEBBAR  
NEW DELHI

The announcement of the Assembly election schedule for the four States of Kerala, West Bengal, Assam and Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry has ushered in a set of polls that will take place on a very different political landscape from the one seen in 2016. In Tamil Nadu, the two big Dravidian party leaders – M. Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa – are no longer in the fray. In West Bengal, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has emerged as the primary opposition to the ruling Trinamool Congress, led by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a big jump from the mere three seats it clocked in 2016. In Kerala, the State with



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other BJP leaders during the party's 'Parivartan Yatra' in West Bengal on Friday. ■ PTI

an almost unbroken record of two rival fronts coming to power in alternate elections, may or may not follow its old pattern. In Assam, the BJP faces a Congress-All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) tie-up, a far cry from

when the late Tarun Gogoi, former Chief Minister, had raised the question "Who is Ajmal (AIUDF chief)?" at a press conference. In Puducherry, a scrambling Congress hopes to counter anti-incumbency against its own

government by seeking sympathy after its fall.

According to political scientist Rahul Verma, for the BJP, the stakes are higher in the eastern States of Assam and West Bengal rather than in the south, where it is part of alliances or only hopes for some improvement in vote percentage, as in Kerala. "In Assam, the BJP has a sitting government and in West Bengal, the party is the main challenger. In both States, the Central government's own push for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act has been different and sometimes contradictory. For the BJP, the polls are important in these two States as it will take further the breach that it has made into eastern and northeastern India," he said.

"For regional parties, the big question will be on just how much space to cede to the BJP, both as a rival in polls and as an alliance member, as in Tamil Nadu."

Eyebrows have already been raised at the BJP's attempted appropriation of Congress leader Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu.

For regional parties, the big question will be on just how much space to cede to the BJP, both as a rival in polls and as an alliance member, as in Tamil Nadu."

## NEWS ANALYSIS

The elephant in the room in this entire season is, in fact, the Congress's internal leadership issue. The party is not fighting with any national strategy. It is allied with the Left in West Bengal but is fighting against the Left Democratic Front in Kerala. In Assam, it has tied up with the AIUDF, and in Tamil Nadu, it

is not in a great position to bargain for seats from its dominant ally, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The strategy is, therefore, piecemeal. If the party does not do well, the Group of 23 leaders, who wrote asking for the leadership question to be settled, will appear to have justification for their demands.

The Assembly polls are largely determined by local issues and factors, with national issues not really coming into play. Therefore, while these set of polls may not exactly reveal the national mood, each party's performance, whether the BJP or the Opposition, will have a huge effect on its morale in the 2021 election in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

# Eight-phase polls on BJP's request: Mamata

Opposition parties welcome ECI's election schedule; BJP cites 'history of political violence' in State

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday questioned the reasons behind the Election Commission of India's decision to hold the Assembly election in the State in eight phases.

"West Bengal has 294 seats, why will elections be held here in eight phases? This is for the benefit of whom? There should be some rationale behind the decision," Ms. Banerjee said hours after the ECI announced the election schedule.



Gearing up: Mamata Banerjee addressing a public meeting at Sahaganj in Hooghly district on Wednesday. ■ PTI

Sabha election, when polls were conducted in seven phases.

The Chief Minister, who is also the chairperson of the Trinamool Congress, said these dates were fixed on the request of the BJP. She raised strong objections to holding polls in different phases in the same district.

In South 24 Parganas, since we are strong, elections are held in three phases ... Is it at the instructions of [Prime Minister] Narendra Modi and [Home Minister] Amit Shah," she asked.

Ms. Banerjee also raised questions on the appointment of police observers, and said one of them was de-

ployed in the State during the 2019 Lok Sabha election as well.

The Trinamool said the Election Commission should consider West Bengal "as their own State and not from the eyes of the BJP". The Chief Minister, however, said that even in the 23-day election game, she would defeat the BJP as she is from the grassroots. "I know every nook and corner of West Bengal very well and will foil all conspiracy," she said.

Welcoming the eight-phase election schedule, the BJP said that it was a matter of shame that West Bengal had to have elections in so many phases because of a history of political violence.

"Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee seems to be mistaking the Election Commission

of India with the State Election Commission, which has been working at the whims and fancies of the State government, and we have seen the results [of that] in local polls," said State BJP spokesperson Shamik Bhattacharya.

BJP leader and party observer in the State Kailash Vijayvargiya said all political parties in the Opposition had demanded that polls be spread across several phases.

The Left parties and Congress welcomed the decision, and said Central forces should be deployed in advance. Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader Mohammad Salim said the eight-phase election was a reflection of the law and order situation.

# 'Left-Cong. alliance is emerging as an alternative in West Bengal'

ECI did not give a reason for stretching the polls, says Left

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Left parties questioned the eight-phase poll schedule for West Bengal, saying the Election Commission of India (ECI) failed to give a credible justification for stretching the polls to nearly a month.

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said the ECI should have explained the reason for this,

when in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry the polls could be wrapped up in a single day and in Assam in three phases.

"These elections are going to be crucial. The overall objective today is to keep the



BJP at bay ... In Bengal, the basic alternative that is emerging, on the strength of the polls are conducted "without fear or favour". He said the party would raise important issues such as increase in cooking gas, petrol and diesel prices and growing unemployment after the COVID-19 pandemic.

the incumbent Trinamool government, said Mr. Yechury. "The anti-incumbency against the Trinamool government is feeding the BJP."

CPI general secretary, D. Raja, said the ECI should have explained the apprehensions due to which they were extending the polls over eight phases in Bengal.

Welcoming the schedule, Congress general secretary Pawan Kumar Bansal said the ECI should ensure that the polls are conducted "without fear or favour". He said the party would raise important issues such as increase in cooking gas, petrol and diesel prices and growing unemployment after the COVID-19 pandemic.

# U.S. welcomes India-Pak. ceasefire agreement

A positive step towards stability in South Asia'

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
SUHASINI HAIDER

The United States has welcomed the announcement by India and Pakistan that they would observe the 2003 ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC). The White House called for the two countries to build upon this progress and the State Department encouraged a reduction in tensions and violence along the LoC.

"The United States welcomes the joint statement between India and Pakistan: that the two countries have agreed to maintain strict observance of a ceasefire along the Line of Control starting on February 25. This is a positive step towards greater peace and stability in South Asia, which is in all shared – is in our shared interest. And we encourage both countries to keep building upon this progress," Press Secretary Jen Psaki said at Thursday's briefing.

"We welcome ... the joint statement between India and Pakistan that the two countries have agreed to maintain strict observance of a ceasefire along the Line of Control starting on February 25. We encourage continued efforts to improve communication between the two sides and to reduce tensions and violence along the Line of Control," State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Thursday.

## UN, EU welcome deal

"The Secretary-General is encouraged by the joint statement issued by the militaries of India and Pakistan on their agreement to observing the ceasefire at the Line of Control in Kashmir and engaging through established mechanisms," spokesperson for the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.

"He hopes that this positive step will provide an opportunity for further dialogue," the spokesperson said.

The European Union (EU) also welcomed the ceasefire agreement.

"This is an important step in the interest of regional peace and stability on which to build further bilateral dialogue," said Nabila Massrali, EU spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

In response to a question on the role of the U.S., if any, in brokering the agreement between India and Pakistan, Mr. Price did not identify any specific actions but articulated the general U.S. position – a reduction in tensions and a condemnation of cross-border terror as well as a dialogue on Kashmir and other issues. "I think what I can say ... is

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## TENDER

(1). PMC For Phase-II Corridor from JLN Stadium to Infopark via Kakkad  
(2) O&M, Capacity Building of Integrated Water Transport, Kochi

Tender documents will be downloaded from [www.tenders.kerala.gov.in](http://www.tenders.kerala.gov.in)

Further corrigendum & addendum will be published only on websites

SOUTHERN RAILWAY  
(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)

## E-TENDER

NOTICE NO.17-CEC/NMS-20-21-E-101038 DATED 18-02-2021

For and on behalf of The President of India, The Chief Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008 invites e-tender for the following work(s) as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in our portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) The tenderers/Contractors intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) and only online tenders will be accepted.

NAME OF THE WORK: Reconstruction of Limited Use Subway at LC No.21 at Km.581/900-582/000 between Narikudi and Trichullai stations in Manamadurai - Virudhunagar section and Balance works in LUS at LC No.42 Km 37/900 - 38/000 in between Oddanchatram and Chatrapatti stations in Dindigul - Pollachi section vide Pink Book Item No. 241 of 2020-2021 as part of Elimination of Level Crossings in Madurai Division.

Approximate Cash Value: ₹ 40107587.56

Earnest Money Deposit: ₹ 0.0

Period of Completion in Months: 6 (SIX)

Closing Date @ 15.30 hrs: 12.03.2021

For further details, please refer to website portal [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in) or contact Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Construction, E.V.R. High Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600008.

Chief Engineer (Construction), Egmore, Chennai - 600008.

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DIRECTORATE OF E.S.I.S MEDICAL SERVICES  
S. Nijalingappa Road, Rajajinagar 2nd Block, Bengaluru - 560010. Telefax: (080) 23324216  
Website: <https://esisms.karnataka.gov.in>

No.: ESIS/EGS/07/2020-21 Date: 25.02.2021

## SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATIONS

Short Term Tender Notifications for Procurement of Various Departmental Equipments to various ESIS Hospitals and Diagnostic Centers as per the ESIC approval under PIP-2020-21.

(Tender-A, Tender-B, Tender-C, Tender-D)

(1) Tender Reference:

ESIS/EGS/07(Tender-A) /2020-21, Dt: 25.02.2021.

ESIS/EGS/07(Tender-B) /2020-21, Dt: 25.02.2021.

ESIS/EGS/07(Tender-C) /2020-21, Dt: 25.02.2021.

ESIS/EGS/07(Tender-D) /2020-21, Dt: 25.02.2021.

(2) Tender Details Available in e-tender from:

Dt: 01.03.2021, 11:00 a.m.

(3) Pre-Bid Meeting: 02.03.2021 at 11:00 a.m.

In the Office of the Directorate, ESIS M Services, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560010.

(4) Last Date for Receipt of Tender Document / Tender Submission Through e-Procurement Portal System Only: 08.03.2021 with in 4:30 p.m.

(5) Date of Opening Technical Bid: 10.03.2021 at 11:30 a.m. in the Office of the Directorate, ESIS M Services, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-10.

(6) Place for Opening of Tenders through e-Procurement Portal: Directorate of ESIS Medical Services, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560010.

(7) Further detail information about the Tender visit e-Procurement Portal at <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> and Department Website <https://esisms.karnataka.gov.in>

(8) Address for Communication: Director, ESIS Medical Services, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560010.

Sd/-, Director  
ESIS Medical Services

DIPR/DDU/LC/2934/2020-21  
HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19? CALL APTHAMITRA ON 14410

Wear Mask  
Follow Physical Distancing  
Maintain Hand Hygiene

COUNCIL OF ARCHITECTURE  
(A statutory Authority of Government of India under Architects Act, 1972)  
India Habitat Centre, Core 6A, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor,  
Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

## EXAMINATION NOTICE: NATA 2021

File No./CA/NATA/2021/01

# Select a vaccination centre, book appointment

If unable to register in advance, phase 2 also allows walk-in jabs after registering on-site at identified centres

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
The Union Health Ministry on Friday announced options for advance self-registration, on-site registration and facilitated cohort registration for potential beneficiaries of the second round of COVID-19 vaccinations starting on Monday.

The second round will cover those aged 60 and above and those 45-plus with comorbidities.

## Simplified process

Giving details of the simplified process of registration through three routes, the Ministry said the beneficiaries would be able to self-register in advance by downloading the Co-Win 2.0 app or through other IT applications such as Arogya Setu.

The app will show a list of government and private hospitals serving as vaccination centres with the date and time of the available sche-

## How to sign up

The three methods of registering for the second phase of COVID-19 vaccination, which will cover those over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with comorbidities



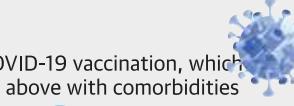
**SELF-REGISTRATION IN ADVANCE:** Beneficiaries can use the Co-Win 2.0 or Arogya Setu apps to book an appointment by choosing a COVID vaccination centre (CVC) from the list of government and private hospitals and a suitable date and time



**ON-SITE REGISTRATION:** Beneficiaries can walk into an identified CVC and get registered on-site for inoculation



**FACILITATED COHORT REGISTRATION:** Specific dates will be decided by the State/U.T. government for vaccinating specific target groups



**REQUIRED ID PROOF:** Any one of the following: Aadhaar, electoral photo identity card or a photo ID card specified at the time of registration. For beneficiaries aged 45-59 years, a certificate of co-morbidity signed by a registered medical practitioner, and for health and frontline workers, an employment certificate or official ID card is required

these certificates can also be taken from the vaccination centres," the Ministry said.

## Free of cost

The vaccination will be free of charge at the government vaccination centres and the beneficiary will have to show a photo ID document for proof of age (preferably Aadhaar card or voter card) and certificate of comorbidity (if required).

Those taking the vaccine at any designated or empanelled private health facility will have to pay a pre-fixed charge.

The Ministry has directed the States and Union Territories to keep a vaccination scale-up plan ready both within the government and private facilities and also the number of vaccine doses administered.

It added that all beneficiaries, regardless of the mode of access, must be advised to carry any one of the photo

ID document: Aadhaar Card, voter ID card, photo ID card specified at the time of registration in case of online registration (if not Aadhaar or voter card), certificate of comorbidity for citizens in age group of 45 to 59 (signed by a registered medical practitioner).

Employment certificate or official identity card (either but with photo and date of birth) is required for healthcare and frontline workers.

"The fundamental shift in this phase is that citizens in the identified age groups, as also those healthcare workers and frontline who have been missed out or left out of the present phase of vaccination, can select vaccination centres of their choice. Also private sector hospitals will be involved as COVID vaccination centres to harness their potential to expand the vaccination capacities," the Ministry said.

highest of 8,702, followed by Kerala (3,677) and Punjab (563), the Ministry said.

As many as 120 deaths were reported in the 24 hours and six States accounted for 85.83% of them. Maharashtra saw the highest of 56, followed by Kerala (14) and Punjab (13).

"Also, 20 States/UTs have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours. These include Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, J&K, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand. India's cumulative recoveries stand at 1,07,50,680 on Friday, with 12,179 recoveries in the last 24 hours. The gap between the total recovered cases and the active cases is constantly rising and stands at 10,594,694 today," said a Ministry release. Of the recovered cases, 85.34% were concentrated in six States. Kerala reported the highest number of single day recoveries (4,652).

# No vaccination sessions to be held this weekend

Time to be used to upgrade IT system

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
COVID-19 vaccination sessions will not be scheduled on this Saturday and Sunday because of IT system transition from Co-WIN 1.0 to Co-WIN 2.0, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

India's total active COVID-19 case load was 1,55,986 on Friday and this was largely due to a surge in daily new cases in some States and Union Territories, it stated.

Twenty-one States and Union Territories, including Jammu and Kashmir (820), Andhra Pradesh (611), Odisha (609), Goa (531), Uttarakhand (491) and Bihar (478), have fewer than 1,000 active cases.

The country reported 16,577 new cases in the 24 hours up to 8 a.m. on Friday and 86.18% of them were from six States. Maharashtra continued to report the

## Naudeep Kaur released from Haryana jail

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH  
Labour rights activist Naudeep Kaur was on Friday released from a Haryana jail after the Punjab and Haryana High Court granted her bail in a case in which faces charges of attempt to murder, rioting among others, in an incident at Haryana's Kundli of Sonipat district.

The 24-year-old activist, who was in the Karnal jail, was released after the bail order. Her counsel Arshdeep Singh Cheema told *The Hindu* that she was released late in the evening. She was arrested by the Sonipat Police on January 12.

Justice Avneesh Jhingan observed in his order that while dealing with the bail application, it would not be appropriate for the court to go in detailed discussion with regard to merits of the allegations.

# Second wave of infections unlikely: expert

Model predicts around 60% exposure so far

### JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

A recent surge in infections notwithstanding, India is unlikely to see a "second wave" in infections, says Manindra Agrawal, Deputy Director, IIT, Kanpur, and one of India's leading mathematicians who is involved with the National 'Super Model' initiative led by the Department of Science and Technology.

As on Friday, India has confirmed a little over 11 million infections since March 2020 of which 1,52,895 were active ones. Professor Agrawal told *The Hindu* that based on the model, this would at most rise to 11.3 or 11.5 million infections by April 2021 – or about 3,00,000-5,00,000 new confirmed infections over the next 10 weeks (approximately).



Rapid check: Health workers waiting to take swab samples from train travellers in New Delhi. ■ AFP

He and other scientists are working on a formal update of the model but were awaiting confirmed data on recoveries for the next two weeks, he said.

The current wave of infections – averaging 13,000-16,000 new confirmed infections a day since February 23 – was primarily being led by Maharashtra and would not last beyond "two-three weeks" in March, he said.

The reason, he said, is because around 60% of India's population had already been exposed to the virus and the country had reached herd immunity, or where the number of susceptible individuals were too few to allow the virus to exponentially grow.

Whether herd immunity levels have been reached is moot, because the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reported that only

21% of Indians were estimated to have been infected, as per its third national serological survey conducted from December 17 to January 8, 2021. The Super Model's estimate is about thrice that number.

"The ICMR numbers are based on the numbers in whom antibodies have been detected. But we know now that antibody levels can wane but still be enough to confer

immunity. Given the relaxations in movement since months, only 20% exposure cannot explain the confirmed symptomatic infections, active cases and recoveries that we now see," he added.

He said the resumption of local train travel in Maharashtra and the increased contact between persons was a reason for the renewed spike last week.

# Panel seeks more data to clear Sputnik V

### N. RAVI KUMAR

HYDERABAD

A Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has sought more data on Russia's Sputnik V vaccine candidate in children aged 5-18 years, to submit efficacy and safety data of ongoing Phase III clinical trial in adults along with the age subgroup analysis.

The SEC meeting asked Covaxin maker Bharat Biotech, which sought permission to conduct phase III clinical trial of the vaccine candidate in children aged 5-18 years, to submit efficacy and safety data of ongoing Phase III clinical trial in adults along with the age subgroup analysis.

**20 mn doses for Brazil**  
On Friday, Bharat Biotech said it has signed an agreement with Brazil for supplying 20 million doses of Covaxin.

Under the deal worth 1.6 billion reals (\$290 million), the vaccine will be delivered in the second and third quarter of 2021. "There is a strong interest in Covaxin from many countries and the company is fully committed to ensuring supplies promptly and efficiently," a statement from the Hyderabad-based vaccine maker said.

# PSU banks, insurers important'

They will play a key role even as govt. continues with banking reforms: PM

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

While the government was promoting private enterprises wherever possible, India still needed an effective presence of public sector banks and insurers and the government would continue with banking reforms to strengthen the financial system, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday.

"Our top priority is to ensure that the depositor as well as the investor experiences trust and transparency. The old ways and old systems of banking and non-banking sectors are being changed," Mr. Modi said,



Narendra Modi

pointing to the 'severe harm' done to the banking and financial sector 10-12 years ago in the name of aggressive lending.

Mr. Modi was addressing a webinar on effective implementation of Budget provi-

sions regarding financial services.

The government, he said, had taken steps to free the country from a 'non-transparent credit culture' where non-performing assets (NPAs) were brushed under the carpet.

"We understand the uncertainties of the business and recognise that every business decision is not undertaken by bad intentions. In such a scenario, it is the responsibility of the government to stand by business decisions taken with clear conscience, we are doing this and will continue to do so," he stated.

The new policy of disinvestment of public sector enterprises covered the financial sector as well, and private enterprises were being promoted wherever possible, he noted.

"Still, along with this, an effective participation of the public sector in banking and insurance is still needed by the country. To strengthen the public sector, equity capital infusion is being emphasised. Simultaneously, a new ARC (asset reconstruction company) structure is being created which will keep track of the NPAs of banks and will address loans in a focussed way," he said.

The court's intervention came on a writ petition filed by one of India's largest insurance firms, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company, on the plight of victims who have been waiting for documents in Motor Accidents Claims Tribunals.

The instant case was registered by NIA based on information about an Al-Qaeda inspired module sprouting and operating in States of West Bengal and Kerala under the leadership of Murshid Hasan and that the members of this module were in an advanced stage of conspiracy to execute terrorist attacks in different parts of the country. In well-synchronised raids conducted on 19.9.2020 in the States of West Bengal and Kerala, nine terrorists were arrested," the NIA said in a statement.

The accused have been identified as Murshid Hasan, alias Sofiq, Mosaraf Hossain, Mainul Mandal, Lea Yean Ahmed, alias Leion, Najmus Sakib, Iyakub Biswas, Samim Ansari, Abu Sufian, Atiur Rahman, Al Mamun Kamal and Abdul Momin Mandal. They were booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the UAPA (Unlawful Activities [Prevention] Act) in a case registered last year.

The creamy layer should be excluded, the plea said.

# SC exploring avenues to offer quick relief to accident victims

It moots national grid for submission of claims, payments

### KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is exploring the creation of a nationwide online mechanism to help road accident victims and their families get compensation within a short time of the accident.

A Bench led by Justice S.K. Kaul is considering various avenues to speed up the compensation process, including the setting up of a national grid to seamlessly disburse compensation across States to the online submission of police records and accident claim documents in Motor Accidents Claims Tribunals.

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Compensation delays increase trauma related to accidents, the plea said.

The Act requires "contemporaneous" collection and verification of information about an accident. Delay would destroy crucial and important evidence. The company argued that delay also adds to the trauma.

Advocate Vipin Nair intervened to argue that Supreme Court's own Artificial Intelligence Committee, headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, has also been considering a virtual mechanism to speed up the compensation process.

Acknowledging the submission that it was time to embrace technology to improve justice administration especially during the time of a pandemic, the Bench asked Additional Solicitor General Jayant Sud to hold a virtual conference with stakeholders on the issue.

# Gelatin sticks brought near Ambani's house in stolen SUV

### PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The vehicle found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai that contained explosives, had been stolen last week, the police said on Friday, adding that a letter found inside said the incident was another "glimpse" of things to come.

The National Investigation Agency has started a parallel probe, a senior official

said here. The SUV with around 2.5 kg of gelatin sticks was found parked on Carmichael Road near 'Antilia', the multi-storey residence of Mr. Ambani on Thursday evening. There was no assembled explosive device, detonators or batteries inside, the police said.

CCTV footage showed that the SUV drove to the spot in the early hours of Thursday, and its driver left in another SUV.

# U.S. activists to raise funds to help farmers

They will also write to Joe Biden

### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Farm unions of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha hosted a seven-hour global webinar to build international pressure against the Centre to repeal the three farm reform laws.

Apart from members of the Indian diaspora, American farm and labour activist leaders pledged their support, promising to raise funds and to lobby with U.S. President Joe Biden on the issue.

Punjab farmers, and the farmers in India, are really fighting for every single small farmer in the world, so we have to get behind them and have to raise money for them so that they can keep their movement

going," said Dolores Huerta, co-founder of United Farm Workers of America and



## Instapick

**Lokame Tharavadu:** Kochi-Muziris Biennale's street art usually has thousands of visitors taking to social media. While the art festival didn't happen last year, the murals will be back, this time in Alappuzha. Lokame Tharavadu ('The world is one family'), an exhibition organised by KMB and artist Bose Krishnamachari, will see 267 Malayali artists coming together. March 10 to 31. @lokametharavadu



## Talking point

**Golden Globes:** The 2021 awards season is off to a delayed start. The first big show, the Globes, has Tina Fey and Amy Poehler returning as hosts for the fourth time. The event will be bicoastal, with Fey in New York and Poehler in LA. This year has seen some surprise nominations (*Emily in Paris*) and notable snubs (*I May Destroy You*). On March 1, 6.30 am IST. @goldenglobes on Twitter



SREEJITH KUMAR

## SPIT TAKE

# Petrol high

What rising fuel prices have to do with horses, horseradish and aromatic biryani

and this resulted in a decline in the ancient divorce rate.

Unfortunately for us, the diabolical Arabs, bent on destroying our family structure, built an underground tunnel into our ancient land via Kerala, bribed the caretakers with aromatic biryani, and took the formula and our massive oil stocks away. They named it pe-

trol, and hid it under the desert sands. And that was how, we, the rightful owners of this invention, became slaves of the Arabs and their second cousins, the Mughals. (And that is why, to this day, we order six lakh biryanis per minute on Swiggy.)

Cut to the present: petrol prices are skyrocketing. The 'librus',

tukde-tukdes, urban naxals and *andolanjees* are going on and on about it. That's because they don't get the narrative. They don't see the chronology.

I say the price of petrol is not high enough. Here's why. When the price of diamonds goes up, do we crib? Similarly, when Akki ups his fee, a Merc becomes more expensive or Sundar Pichai gets a salary hike, do we see it as a problem? No. We celebrate it. We put those things on the Forbes list. Let's put our beloved land on the Forbes list of Number One in Petrol Prices. What better way for us to be perceived as a rich country, I say?

That apart, I see the price rise as a masterstroke. Here's why. If we steadily increase the price of petrol

every month, this is what will happen.

In the beginning, people will make up for the shortfall by driving their vehicles for a bit and pushing them manually for a bit. Result: all our vehicles automatically become hybrid vehicles, pollution will lessen, Greta Thunberg will shut up, our population will become fitter, gyms will close down, and Malaika, Ananya and Janhvi will be on the roads. Not in a bad way. But pushing their BMWs.

Next, when the petrol prices become so high, as I hope they will, people will stop buying petrol altogether. And horses will come back in a big way. Imagine the scene. It'll be like the Golden Age of the Gupta tajis all over again.

Where are we going to get so many horses for such a large population so quickly? I'll answer that Nehruvian question even before you ask it. Babaji, always ahead of the game, would have developed horse's eggs by then in his lab, using a patented mix of horseradish, peacock tears and duck flatus.

Each family will buy the required number of horse's eggs and hatch them in their 2BHKs. The little ponies will make great playmates for the children. And when schools reopen, the entire family can ride off in different directions. Daddy to the bar, Mummy to office, and little Chintu and Meghavarshini to school to learn to be patriots.

Good times, I tell you, good times.

KRISHNA SHASTRI DEVULAPALLI IS A SATIRIST. HE HAS WRITTEN FOUR BOOKS AND EDITED AN ANTHOLOGY.



## Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other events you just can't miss.

### Barack and The Boss

Listen in as former US President **Barack Obama** and musician **Bruce Springsteen** trade stories and discuss race and class in America. **Renegades: Born in the USA**, a new eight-episode podcast, has the two friends teaming up, and fun moments like them ditching the Secret Service for a joyride in Springsteen's Corvette. On Spotify. Meanwhile, another podcaster, **Emily Morse**, is creating a buzz with her course on the education platform, MasterClass. The American sex therapist says people are now "ready to prioritise pleasure".

### For cheesecake fans

Celebrity chef **Pooja Dhingra** or 'the Macaron Lady' is back with a workshop on eggless cheesecakes. Dessert lovers will learn to make two versions of the treat: Nutella and Basque. On February 27 at 4 pm. ₹1,770. If you are set on poetry, Finding your Voice, a workshop conducted by spoken word poet, artist and author **Megha Rao**, may do the trick. Participants will learn basic exercises and experiment with form. ₹499. On February 28 at 11 am. Tickets for both the online workshops on insider.in

### A movie outing

Enjoy watching an exclusive series of internationally acclaimed **Mexican films** brought by the Embassy of Mexico in Delhi in collaboration with India Habitat Centre. The four contemporary Spanish movies with English subtitles include three dramas and one documentary. **The Dove & The Wolf, Workforce, VISA To The Paradise and Our Time** will be screened from February 27 to March 2 respectively, at 7 pm daily, at Stein auditorium, IHC, Lodhi Road. Make your reservations at [https://www.habitatworld.com/events-update](http://www.habitatworld.com/events-update)

### The concert experience

Sarod maestro **Ustad Amjad Ali Khan** has a new album, **Navras** (nine emotions), and will celebrate it with a virtual concert. The free performance is presented by Teacher's Glasses, which is behind the Teacher's Genuine Stories series. On February 27 at 7 pm. For those who prefer the soft rock stylings of John Mayer, Mumbai-based composer **Clinton Cerejo** and singer **Bianca Gomes** aka **Shor Police** will be performing their renditions of his hits. ₹99. On February 27 at 9 pm. Register on insider.in for both online events

### Gucci x I was a Sari

Social enterprise **'I was a Sari'** and luxury brand **Gucci** have come together to offer women a free course on embroidery. Called 'Now I Can', it is available on digital platform Udemy. Email [@iwasasari.com](mailto:@iwasasari.com) to join. Another collab is by online music guide Wild City and art and music nonprofit MUTEK-SF. **Culture Connects**, a yearlong creative series which began this month, will explore coding on (March 2), how to start a business (March 3), and a radio station (March 4). At Cultural Explosion@ACND on Facebook.

### Gaurav Gupta's sunset

For his Spring Summer 2021 Couture 2021 collection, **Gaurav Gupta** has taken inspiration from Greek mythology - the Hesperides or the nymphs of the sunset - and moves the set outdoors. Silk crepe, organza and georgette meet sequins and glass beads to mimic sunsets and dawn. Feb 27, 11 am, [@gauravguptaofficial](https://gauravguptaofficial) on Instagram. Also, **Milan Fashion Week** is underway till March 1. Giorgio Armani and Salvatore Ferragamo will be showing on Feb 27 and since all shows are digital, check out the designers' YouTube channels or Instagram.

### Gold in my biryani

Dubai restaurant **Bombay Borough** got biryani lovers everywhere debating its new dish, Royal Gold Biryani, reportedly the world's most expensive. Priced at about ₹19,694, it comes topped with grilled meats decorated in 23 carat edible gold leaf. Let's not forget that the city is also home to the decadent Black Diamond ice cream. A few years ago, **Scopi Cafe** made headlines for this ice cream with Italian truffles, Iranian saffron and 23-carat gold. Turns out Scopi will be opening at Time Out Market Dubai this season.

## WORLD WILDLIFE DAY, MARCH 3

# Back in Bera

Wildlife enthusiast Sundeep Bhutoria on the first book on Rajasthan's famed 'Leopard Country'

NIDHI ADLAKHA

After 2020's *Calcuttascape: Musings of a Globetrotter*, Rajasthan-born Sundeep Bhutoria has a coffee table book dedicated to the famed leopards of Bera. While the former is a compilation of the social activist's columns and blogs, *Bera Bond* takes us through his journey in 2016 – into the leopard colony in the forests of Rajasthan.

The land where the big cats have been cohabiting with humans for over a century offered a "unique learning of coexistence and harmony that was both beautiful and bewildering", says Bhutoria. With stunning photographs and inside stories – in his introduction, actor-writer Victor Banerjee paints a picture of a 'Marwari cowboy' courtesy Bhutoria's jodhpurs and Stetson hat – the book was compiled during lockdown. The writer credits Bera-based conservationist and photographer Shatrunjay Pratap Singh, who was his guide.

Edited excerpts from an interview:

A snapshot from the book  
• SHATRUNJAY PRATAP SINGH

### Snapshots from Bera...

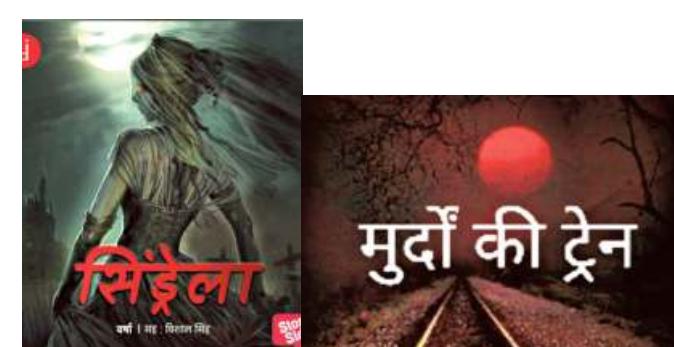
■ One of the highlights of my stay was being able to name a leopard cub, at the request of the locals. I named it Gullu.

In Bera, the sunsets are breathtaking, and it is the angle at which the sun goes down or even the colour of the sky. It is the fruit bats that fill up the night sky just as the sun is about to sink into the horizon. They are noisy and smelly, and are attracted to fermenting fruit, but thousands of them in the sky is a sight to behold!

### What did you learn from Shatrunjay Pratap Singh?

■ The best thing about travelling with Shatrunjay was his ability to spot a leopard camouflaged against the landscape. He would just pass me the telescope and say something like, "After three rocks, there is one," and then I would be able to see it. Leopards are reclusive animals, so they're a lot harder to spot.

₹750 on [amazon.in](https://amazon.in)  
Read the full story on [weekend.thehindu.com](https://weekend.thehindu.com)



AParna Nairnai

Ranjeet Pratap Singh (32), co-founder and CEO of Pratilipi, a home-grown storytelling platform, and Sumit Menaria, one of its star authors, share few similarities. While Singh is an engineer who grew up in Fattepur, a small village in Uttar Pradesh, Menaria – whose novel is scheduled to be published in the first week of March – is a chartered accountant who hails from Udaipur in Rajasthan. What bonds the two, however, is a love of books. And Pratilipi.

The idea for the storytelling platform had gestated for many years, says Singh. While studying engineering in Bhubaneswar, he had found that not only was the availability of Hindi content (offline) limited, it was also practically nonexistent online. "I would crib that it should be my choice to read something in English; not because of lack of access," he says, recalling that the pursuit of a career had him pushing aside thoughts about how to resolve the problem. But when he quit an unchallenging job a few years ago, he got thinking. And Pratilipi (Sanskrit for 'copy') was born.

Incorporated in 2015, it now boasts 3 lakh writers in 12 Indian languages, including Hindi, English, Urdu and Odia, and has over 2.5 crore readers. "The idea behind it was very simple. We wanted to build a platform where anybody can publish their work, in any language, set in any place. While there is some public domain content [such as Jane Austen's works], 99% is fresh, con-

temporary content published by new writers," he says. The most popular format is the long story/novel.

### The 'write' stuff

Menaria (29), who joined Pratilipi in 2017, started by writing poems and short stories. Following good reviews, she wrote a novel in Hindi, *Tashree: Don't Look into Her Eyes*. Its success – with a total readership of 74,924 and a rating of 4.7 – has led to the book deal with Bhopal-based Manjul Publishing House and a comic book with Pratilipi Comics (launched in February 2020). "It isn't the usual love story," says Menaria, who was pleasantly surprised by the response to *Tashree*, a spiritual-thriller featuring a college girl.

Incidentally, thrillers and romances do well on the site. Did 2020's downtime reveal any new trends? "If you

### Bells and whistles

In December 2019, Singh started Pratilipi FM, which includes readings of stories on the Pratilipi app, and podcasts in Hindi and English. Readers can show their appreciation for their favourite stories/authors by choosing from a variety of virtual gifts that hold a monetary value, in the form of Pratilipi coins. The coins can be cashed in by the author.



(From far left) Book covers of *Cinderella*, *Murdo Ki Train*, *Tashree: Don't Look into Her Eyes* and *Bujgav*; Sumit Menaria and (below) Ranjeet Pratilipi



# Calling homegrown writers

look at the various regions and languages, there are a lot of differences in what genres people like. But at the top are suspense/thriller, romance and horror," says Singh, who used to devour *Champak* and *Nanhe Samrat* as a boy before moving on to classics by Premchand and Nirala. He says historical fiction also got a boost during the lockdown.

### Making story lists

Interestingly, Pratilipi gathers data about everything, including where someone stopped reading a book. "We try to focus on [good] content, which is why the completion rate is one of the most important parameters."

Any work uploaded on the site has to be original or something that the writer owns the copyright to. "Also, any content that goes against Indian laws is not allowed, such as pornography and hate speech."

I had come across a story that seemed to violate one of these norms. "Readers can flag anything that violates our terms of service, and our content moderation team will take it down," he says, adding that they have internal checks as well.

### Web series next

Pratilipi recently announced a partnership with entertainment company Yali DreamWorks to develop and co-produce a web series based on a book trilogy – *Murdo Ki Train*, *Shaitan Se Samjhauta* and *Niya* – by Varsha Srivastava. There are other big plans too. "Along with Storytel and Manjul, we have an exciting licensing opportunity that I cannot talk about just yet," says Singh.

Meanwhile, people have been contacting Menaria for advice. "I tell everyone to start writing and to put it on Pratilipi." Having finished his second novel, *Anamika*, last year, this is sound advice, indeed.

# 'I don't belong anywhere'



Actor Manoj Bajpayee explains why he thinks like a migrant and talks about tackling a different genre in his upcoming film, *Silence Can You Hear It*

SUBHA J RAO

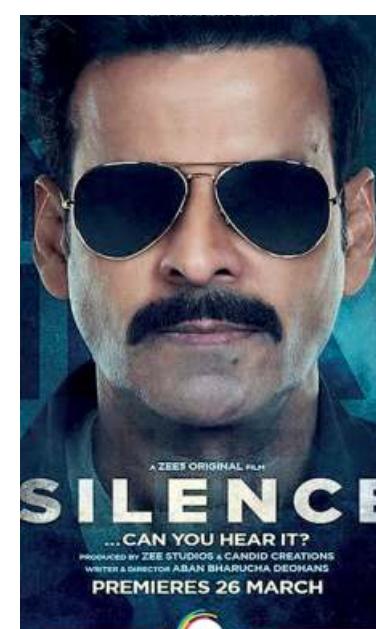
Over the years, actor Manoj Bajpayee has turned into Mr Reliable, one of those rare actors who can rise above a bad script and lend it some semblance of respect. Give him a well-written role though, and a sensitive director, and you can see him transform on screen – like he did in *Gali Guleyan*, *Bhonsle* and even Amazon Prime's *The Family Man*. In his next outing on Zee 5, *Silence Can You Hear It*, co-starring Prachi Desai and Arjun Mathur, we'll see him playing a cop investigating the mysterious disappearance of a woman.

Bajpayee, the son of a farmer, has often said he thinks in Bhojpuri. Last September, he made headlines for rapping the number 'Bambai main ka ba', highlighting the plight of migrant workers. "The mindset of a migrant never changes, no matter how much you earn, how big a property you live in, how happy a family you have. It is a feeling of not belonging anywhere. It hangs in the air, neither here nor there. I've gone through that feeling," he says, adding that this may be why he continues to try new things.

Edited excerpts from an interview done over voice notes, rich with his trademark pauses:

**Your thoughts on *Silence Can You Hear It* and how you respond to the mystery/thriller/horror genre?**

■ This is one genre I've not done and the script is fantastic. I've worked with Kiran Deohans [producer], who was the cinematographer of *Aks*. He's prolific and his wife, Aban, had been wanting to direct a feature for a long time. She loves this genre and when she pitched the film to me, I wanted to do it as an actor and a friend. The expe-

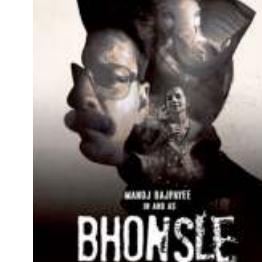


rience of making it was amazing: the lively cast, the fun, the hard work. Reports from the edit room are encouraging too.

**You lost weight and immunity when shooting for *Gali Guleyan* and said you felt you were becoming the performance. Are you involved at this level for every role?**

■ When I am working on a film, that's the only life for me at that point of time, and whatever that character demands we all go the extra mile to give it.

My character in *Gali...* of a shopkeeper who observes people through a hidden camera, was one such. I could not afford to hold back. It [the character] was screaming out loud, so I had to go ahead and experiment, internally and externally. Somewhere



(Clockwise from top) The poster and still from *Bhonsle*, the poster from *Silence* and Bajpayee

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

on the 28th or 29th day, I started experiencing the sound of a whistle in my mind.

I knew something was not right and we still had six days to go for my portion to get over. I requested Dipesh Jain [the director] to wrap up my scene in time and he, along with the producer, were very careful.

I was almost on the verge of a breakdown and no one knew how to help. Dipesh kept getting me cold drinks to cool me down [laughs]. This, when all I possibly needed was to be put to bed and told to sleep. But it is worth it in the end.

**This itch to perform, can you describe it?**

■ I don't know how to think of anything else, nor do I know when this madness of playing a character will go away. When I shoot, I don't stay at home. I stay in a faraway hotel, so I

can be secluded and in character. I don't take messages or do interviews. I am not available to anyone but my family – we speak over the phone once or twice a week. They understand that the roles I do require this kind of aloofness and I am blessed that way. This itch is not an itch; it is a full-blown disease. I can't describe it, but I feel complete fulfilment when I do a good scene. I feel a joy I don't feel otherwise.

**You've often said you don't like nostalgia – everyone's comfort zone.**

■ Living in the past makes you still. You're mentally always trying to go back, and it discourages you from being happy in the present or to look forward to a greater experience. I go back to my village [Belwa in Bihar's West Champaran], and realise that my feelings are not the same. They belong to a different time, age and atmosphere, and cannot be repeated.

**Can you go back and watch your work without critiquing it?**

■ I mostly don't watch my work as I'm too blunt and brash a self-critic. I have respect for reviewers and critics, but I look at things very differently. Craft is something I've always worked on – my voice, speech, diction, the sur. I look for the small rhythms, small gestures, the notes in speech.

I am very finicky, and brutally frank [with myself] so I don't need anyone else to criticise me.

**Having been in the industry for so long, does OTT help you carve new paths?**

■ I came into the industry in the 90s. Doing one film your way was so difficult, like you were asking for the sky. Now, with OTT, there are so many offers, so many talented newcomers, superlative performers such as Pratik Gandhi, Pankaj Tripathi, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah, Jaideep Ahlawat and Rajkumar Rao. I am very glad they are doing well and creating a body of work they will be proud of.

That has been my focus – creating a filmography that will give me some kind of satisfaction that I've done well.

*Silence Can You Hear It* premieres on Zee5 on March 26.

## FOOD SPOT

### Delightful Awadhi FEAST

Khansaama's kitchen in the Walled City is recreating Kallan Bawarchi's magic recipes and delivering in Delhi NCR



RAHUL VERMA

It was a matter of 'izzat' or prestige, we'd been told. A friend's son had got married, and the bride's party was coming from Lucknow for a reception in Delhi. Now Lucknowwallahs, as we know, are fiercely proud of their cuisine and convinced that nothing beats Awadhi food. But we Dillwallahas have our pride, too. So we were told by the groom's family that we had to ensure the food served at the wedding reception would leave everyone licking their fingers.

What does one do in a situation like this but knock at the doors of Kallan Bawarchi? Kallan Bawarchi was one of the best ustads of Old Delhi and he agreed to take care of the food. Those who have had his korma and biryani still go ecstatic about it. The reception, I am happy to say, had a table that people recalled for years after that.

Kallan is no more, but his descendants haven't forgotten the magic that he wielded with his karahi and degh. They are still cooking delicious Delhi dishes, as I learnt some days ago.

I received a message from an outlet called Khansaama last week. They offer different kinds of non-vegetarian delicacies from the walled city, and deliver in Delhi NCR. The food is cooked by three chefs that Khansaama has engaged. Kallan Bawarchi's dishes are among the dishes that it offers.

The food, indeed, has all the flavours that Old Delhi is known for. The meat in the korma was tender,



**ROYAL TREAT** Mutton seekh kabab from Khansaama's kitchen

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and the gravy had the mildly sweet taste of fried onions. I loved the stew – meat cooked with yoghurt and onions, and flavoured with red chillies, green chillies, black pepper, cardamom and ginger. The achari gosht – with its tangy, pickle-like taste – was noteworthy as well, and the nihari was good, too. The gravy had soaked in all the flavours of the meat and spices, and I enjoyed it thoroughly, as I dipped a piece of the sweet khamiri roti into the gravy.

The seekh kabab, however, needs to be addressed. It was much too dry and rubbery. Seekh kababs can lose their taste if not eaten soon after being taken off the grill. They are best when moist and soft – and hot!

Khansaama was started last year, in the midst of the pandemic, and is going strong. The kitchen, one of the owners Sameer Ahmed tells me, is in Pahari Bhojala in Old Delhi. For orders, you have to call 9311611317 or 8595831317. The food is delivered in earthenware handis, which Khansaama tells us can be used later for plants.

The rates are reasonable. They have some special platters that are value for money. A meat platter for two (₹ 1,399) consists of korma, nihari, stew, biryani, kabab, rotis and dessert. The platter for two with chicken dishes is for ₹ 1,050. The Khansaama thali is for ₹ 499 – and consists of biryani, korma, nihari, kabab, gulab jamun, a khamiri roti and a roomali roti. You can order a full plate or a half plate of the dishes – korma and nihari (₹ 499/₹ 265), biryani (₹ 500/₹ 285), mutton stew (₹ 499/₹ 265), chicken achari (₹ 380/₹ 215). Shahi tukda is for ₹ 65.

I had a bit of the shahi tukda and went back into time. A community meal now seems like an event from another age. Meanwhile, though, there is always Khansaama.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

## Your ultimate Gulmarg ski guide

What to do (and avoid) on the slopes before the season comes to a close

### Dos

**1 Book the ski instructor in advance:** While reserving your stay and transfers, definitely book the ski gear and instructor too. Trying to haggle one into submission right on the slopes is the piste version of trying to score in the rock concert mosh pit.

### 2 Wax your skis:

Well, you won't do it yourself but make sure they do. It is either that or wondering why your skis are flagrantly defying gravity, staying put, and refusing to slide downhill.

### 3 Pack your stash:

Alcohol in Gulmarg is rarer than a warm sunny day so BYO it. The two bars in the village are too far a trek for an evening, especially after a day of skiing, and it is not entirely fun wondering along the way whether the fall that cracks your skull will be on account of the drunkenness or that very slippery icy stretch of 2 km. Add to this stash some knee and ankle braces or other supports, and pain and anti-inflammatory medicines too.

### 4 Porters:

You will need one, inhumane and feudal as it might feel. It is either that or lug your skis everywhere (the slopes are far from most hotels) and also, if the ski lift is crowded, the same porters can help bring them back to the top as you climb up the same slope in ski boots, which is honestly more tiring than the skiing lessons.

### 5 Slang:

Pow, powder, carve, shred, rip, gnar... learn these words and punctuate your evening banter with them. Keep switching it up for variety. There is little by way of entertainment once you are done skiing for the day.

### 6 Toilets:

Well, there is one somewhere but it is too darned slippery to navigate in ski boots, like a looming lawsuit if anyone cared for human life here, or even basic amenities for that matter. So try and not drink or eat too much, and if you really need to go use one, best to call it a day and head back to the hotel.

### Don'ts

**1 Don't expect great food:** Gulmarg serves up high cuisine with the 'high' having nothing to do with "elevated, as in art form" but purely geographical since you are eating at 14,000 ft. Maggi in all its imaginative avatars and some parathas are pretty much standard so if you want good food, well, wait till after you leave. The only decent food (pizzas, rolls and burgers) is at North Wind Cafe, and espressos and cakes at Black Bear Brew.

### 2 Be a bomber:

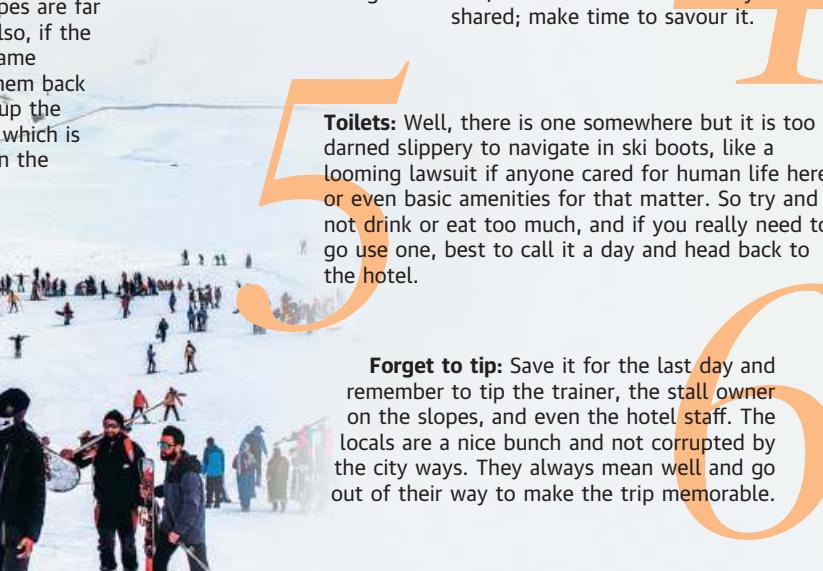
Everyone wants to go to phase I and II of Gulmarg (which are the intermediate and advanced slopes), but nobody wants to tear their ACL. So spend your time on the bunny slopes honing the basics because it is brutal up there. Your social feed will survive even if you don't have a slo-mo shot of scanning the horizon from the top of the mountain; but attempt them without proper training, and chances are some of your joints may not.

### 3 Pre-game:

Reserve the shots for après-ski; don't tank up before. It is not cool and quite dangerous. Also, alcohol is rare as I already shared; make time to savor it.

### 4 Forget to tip:

Save it for the last day and remember to tip the trainer, the stall owner on the slopes, and even the hotel staff. The locals are a nice bunch and not corrupted by the city ways. They always mean well and go out of their way to make the trip memorable.



M ND-NDE

M ND-NDE

## Sri Lanka to allow burial of virus victims

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka on Friday cleared the burial of COVID-19 victims, reversing its nearly year-long policy of mandatory cremations that the country's Muslim community denounced.

The change in the government's position follows Pakistani PM Imran Khan's recent visit, when he reportedly urged the Rajapaksa administration to respect Muslims' burial rights. "While Health Minister Pavithra Wanniarachchi did not give a reason in her announcement reversing the ban, official sources said Khan had raised the subject with both President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and PM Mahinda Rajapaksa during his trip," AFP reported.

"I thank the Sri Lankan leadership & welcome the Sri Lankan govt's official notification allowing the burial option for those dying of Covid 19," Mr. Khan wrote on Friday.

In April, a month after the pandemic struck Sri Lanka, the government banned burials of victims, based on unsubstantiated claims that the practice might contaminate groundwater, further spreading the virus. Despite senior virologists terming the claim baseless, and the World Health Organization permitting both, burials and cremation, the government stuck to its position.

Several members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had raised the issue, both in Sri Lanka and at global fora, including the 46th session of the UNHRC. As many as 15 OIC countries are among the 47 current members of the Council, and will soon get to vote on a contested resolution on Sri Lanka.

## India cannot abandon us, says Sri Lanka

Foreign Secretary says Colombo hopes for 'proactive' and 'constructive' commitment from India at HRC

MEERA SRINIVASAN

COLOMBO

Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)." His appeal comes at a time when Indo-Lanka bilateral ties have come under strain, following a series of decisions taken by Colombo on development projects involving India and China.

On whether Sri Lanka would consider India's possible abstention at the Council as support, the Foreign Secretary said he hoped for "proactive" and "constructive" commitment, rather than abstention, which is "neither here, nor there."

All the same, seeming prepared for adoption of the likely hostile resolution, he said: "It's difficult for a country from the Global South to win the vote... because of the Council's double standards and hypocrisy," he said, pointing to rights abuse and police brutality in the developing world.

Punitive measures like an economic sanction would hurt the people more than the government, Mr. Colombe said, arguing that reconciliation mechanisms must be evolved within the country. "We can't do anything just because someone points a gun at our head and says, okay reconcile. It will never happen." Asked how the government might address the evident trust deficit within the country – the minorities have repeatedly expressed scepticism on domestic programmes that are yet to deliver – he said communities torn apart in a 30-year war would take time to reconcile.

### India's vote

It remains to be seen how India might vote on the Sri Lanka resolution that draws from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's damning report on Sri Lanka's "alarming path towards recurrence of grave human rights violations", which Colombo has



Admiral Jayanath Colombe (retired). ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

categorically rejected. With the Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe government co-sponsoring the 2015 resolution, a vote was not required.

At the Interactive Dialogue on Sri Lanka at the Council last week, India reiterated Mr. Jaishankar's message in Colombo in January, and called upon Sri Lanka to take necessary steps for addressing Tamils' "legitimate aspirations", including through the process of reconciliation and full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution.

But the Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary indicated a preference for a clean break from existing laws. It is "high time" Sri Lanka had a new, "people-centric" Constitution, he said, underscoring the need to "move on". "It is going to be challenging to abolish provincial councils, rather we should empower them to deliver," he said, amid persisting calls from some in the Rajapaksa government and its support base for their abolition.

All the same, the Foreign Secretary does not see the existing 13th Amendment as a solution. The 13th Amendment came about with the

aim of ending the violence and developing war-affected areas, he said, of Sri Lanka's only legislative guarantee so far on power devolution to the provinces, including those with a Tamil majority.

"Let us look back and see whether any of those two main objectives were achieved because of the 13th amendment. The answer is no. The war dragged on until 2009, and much more killing took place after 1987. And then, development could not take place through the Provincial Council system," Mr. Colombe said, even as Tamil parties continue demanding full implementation of the 13th Amendment since the civil war ended in 2009.

Despite Tamil parties seeking greater power devolution within an "undivided, indivisible Sri Lanka", as senior Tamil leader R. Sampanthan unfailingly states, Mr. Colombe views their demands as leaning towards separation, "although they do not use the Tamil Eelam word."

"When you say that you want a federal state, you want more devolution of powers, you want police powers, you want land powers, right? So that means you

are asking for almost a separate state," he said, referring to powers that the 13th Amendment envisaged, but the Centre is yet to part with.

"I personally feel that India also should not really harp on the same thing that prevailed in 1987, because the dynamics have changed. India is concerned about the Tamils living in Sri Lanka, rightfully so, because there is a sizeable Tamil population in India, nothing wrong in it."

Flagging Sri Lanka's foreign policy "dilemma", he observed that a developing country should be able to make decisions based on economics, based on needs, but unfortunately, a country like Sri Lanka "is not free" to make that decision. "Before we make even an economic decision, we have to think of the strategic consideration of the powers in the Indian Ocean Region," he said, of being "sandwiched" between the two factors.

### Major power game

"Now, where should we draw the line? Should we say, okay, north of this line is to country A, and south of this country could be country ABCD? Is that what we want?" he asked. Sri Lanka, a "small country" spanning some 65,000 sq. km, was seeing how best it can maintain neutrality, he said, while staying away from "the major power game", maintaining friendly relations for economic purposes with all the countries, and keeping India's strategic security concerns in mind. "That will determine our foreign policy, and we are determined to balance these factors."

On Pakistani PM Imran Khan's recent visit to Colombo, he said it should not be seen as Sri Lanka attempting "to join a bloc" or country, against others. "It is a bilateral visit."

any casualties.

Several large groups of armed men operate in Zamfara State, described by the government as bandits, and are known to kidnap for money and for the release of their members from jail.

We are angered and saddened by yet another brutal attack on schoolchildren in Nigeria," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF representative in the country. "This is a gross violation of children's rights and a horrific experience for children to go through." He called for their immediate release.

Nigeria has seen several such attacks and kidnappings over the years, notably the mass abduction in April 2014 by jihadist group Boko Haram of 276 girls from the secondary school in Chibok in Borno State. More than a hundred of the girls are still missing.

Friday's attack came less than two weeks after gunmen abducted 42 people, including 27 students, from the Government Science College Kagara in Niger State. The students, teachers and family members are still being held.



Frantic search: Parents looking for their children at the school in Jangebe, Nigeria, on Friday. ■ AFP

## Gunmen abduct 317 Nigerian schoolgirls

They also attacked a military camp

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAGOS

Gunmen abducted 317 girls from a boarding school in northern Nigeria on Friday, police said, the latest in a series of mass kidnappings of students in the West African nation.

Police and the military have begun joint operations to rescue the girls after the attack at the Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe town, according to a police spokesman in Zamfara State, Mohammed Shehu.

One parent, Nasiru Abdulla, said that his daughters, aged 10 and 13, are among the missing.

"It is disappointing that even though the military have a strong presence near the school they were unable to protect the girls," he said. "At this stage, we are only hoping on divine intervention."

Resident Musa Mustapha said the gunmen also attacked a nearby military camp and checkpoint, preventing soldiers from interfering while the gunmen spent several hours at the school. It was not immediately clear if there were

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राष्ट्र के खाद्य सुरक्षा प्रहरी

FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA

16-20, Barakhamba Lane, New Delhi - 110001

RECRUITMENT NOTICE

The Food Corporation of India (FCI), One of the largest Public Sector Undertakings ensuring the food security at the Nation, invites only ONLINE APPLICATIONS for the posts of ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER (GENERAL ADMINISTRATION / TECHNICAL / ACCOUNTS / LAW) and MEDICAL OFFICER for its Offices spread all over the Country from eligible candidates who fulfil the prescribed qualification, age, experience etc.

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RECRUITMENT NOTICE

## MARKET WATCH

	PRICE	CHANGE
Sensex	49,100	-3.80
US Dollar	73.47	-1.43
Gold	4559.50	-0.78
Brent oil	66.21	-0.86

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	675.90	-28.40
Asian Paints	2277.20	-96.55
Axist Bank	724.80	-45.85
Bajaj Auto	3798.70	-146.10
Bajaj Finserv	9645.60	-615.85
Bajaj Finance	5264.90	-265.05
Bharti Airtel	556.30	-22.85
BPCL	449.85	-11.70
Britannia Ind	3363.75	-41.25
Cipla	787.05	-22.10
Coal India	152.20	-3.90
Divis Lab	3363.10	-76.95
Drd Reddys Lab	4426.55	-53.60
Eicher Motors	2498.60	-53.35
GAIL (India)	141.80	-9.00
Grasim Ind	1200.80	-69.65
HCL Tech.	909.45	-19.80
HDPC	2539.40	-145.30
HDPC Bank	1534.40	-72.00
HDPC Life	700.65	-32.85
Hero MotoCorp	3224.00	-210.40
Hindalco	340.25	-10.45
Hind Unilever	2132.05	-31.25
ICICI Bank	597.75	-30.25
IndusInd Bank	1062.95	-46.80
Infosys	1253.30	-21.25
Indian Oil Corp	98.05	-2.85
ITC	203.85	-5.30
JSW Steel	395.45	-26.30
Kotak Bank	1780.35	-115.15
L&T	1442.50	-63.95
M&M	806.40	-52.60
Maruti Suzuki	6866.15	-64.20
Nestle India Ltd.	16101.60	-12.30
NTPC	107.30	-0.70
ONGC	111.00	-8.05
PowerGrid Corp	214.30	-13.25
Reliance Ind	2085.80	-58.55
SBI Life	866.90	-5.50
State Bank	390.15	-17.10
Shree Cement	26501.70	-949.20
Sun Pharma	594.60	-14.95
Tata Motors	322.95	-10.20
Tata Steel	715.15	-27.75
TCS	2894.30	-101.00
Tech Mahindra	918.85	-38.95
Titan	1406.90	-27.55
UltraTech Cement	6115.00	-268.30
UPL	561.55	-31.45
Wipro	410.30	-11.00

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.27	73.59
Euro	88.8	89.19
British Pound	102.29	102.74
Japanese Yen (100)	68.96	69.27
Chinese Yuan	11.33	11.38
Swiss Franc	80.88	81.24
Singapore Dollar	55.14	55.41
Canadian Dollar	57.94	58.19
Malaysian Ringgit	18.08	18.18

Source: Indian Bank

## Natco Pharma unveils drug to treat epilepsy

HYDERABAD

Natco Pharma has unveiled Brivaracetam tablets, indicated for treatment of epilepsy, under the Brectia brand in the country.

## India 'out of recession', GDP grows 0.4%

Agri stays resilient, manufacturing returns to growth; NSO widens FY21 estimate to 8% contraction

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's economy resurfaced to growth territory in the third quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2020-21, clocking a 0.4% rise in the gross domestic product (GDP), as per data from the National Statistical Office (NSO).

GDP had shrunk in the first two quarters by 24.4% and 7.3% as per revised data, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, marking a technical recession. The NSO has also revised its advance national income estimates for FY21 to project an 8% decline in GDP, compared with the 4% growth seen in FY20. The NSO had earlier estimated a 7.7% shrinkage for FY21.

The Finance Ministry termed the 0.4% real GDP growth in Q3 as a return to the pre-pandemic times



**Ray of hope:** In Q3, manufacturing GVA grew 1.6% after dipping 35.9% and 1.5% in the first two quarters. ■ REUTERS

positive growth rates' and a reflection of a 'further strengthening of V-shaped recovery that began in Q2'.

India's farm sector remained resilient, clocking a 3.9% growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy

in the October-to-December quarter, after recording a 3.3% and 3% rise in the first two quarters, respectively.

For the full year FY21, the NSO expects only two sectors to record positive growth in GVA – agriculture

## Core sector output rises 0.1% in January

Power, fertilizers, steel aid growth

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

India's eight core sectors recorded a meagre 0.1% rise in output in January, propped up by a 5.1% rise in electricity, 2.7% growth in fertilisers and 2.6% growth in steel production, even as the other five sectors contracted.

The core sectors had recorded a marginal growth of 0.2% in December, as per updated data, compared to a 1.3% contraction estimated earlier. Core sectors have an almost 40% weightage in the index of industrial production, and economists expect overall industrial output to record less than 1% growth in January.

"This anaemic growth is a concern as this reflects physical production that has now declined by 8.8% for the year," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist, Care Ratings.

"Therefore, while the monetary value-added number has been positive, the same does not hold here," he added.

"Cement has now degrown for three months which is disappointing as this reflects developments in the construction sector which was expected to pick up," said Mr. Sabnavis. "The mood in the real estate sector has not recovered as the focus is on disposing off inventory rather than going in for new projects," he added.

## Fiscal deficit soars to ₹12.34 lakh cr.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Central government's fiscal deficit soared to ₹12.34 lakh crore, or 66.8% of the revised Budget estimates at the end of January of the current fiscal.

The fiscal deficit at the end of January in the previous financial year was 12.85% of the Revised Estimates (RE).

In the current fiscal ending March 31, the fiscal deficit is likely to touch ₹18.48 lakh crore, or 9.5% of the GDP. In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit stood at ₹12,34,004 crore at the end of January 2021, as per the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

and electricity, gas, water & other utilities (1.8%).

Overall GVA is expected to contract 6.5% in the year, led by an 18% dip in trade, hotels and other services, a 10.3% decline in construction, and an about 9% fall in mining and manufacturing GVA.

In Q3, manufacturing, construction and financial, real estate and professional services staged a return to growth for the first time in the year after two bad quarters. Manufacturing GVA grew 1.6% after dipping 35.9% and 1.5% in the first two quarters. Construction saw the sharpest recovery – with GVA rising 6% after falling 44.4% and 7.2%.

Services including trade, hotels, transport and communication remained in trouble, with GVA declining 7.7%, though it was better

than the -47.6% and the -15.3% reading in Q1 and Q2.

The Finance Ministry said the resurgence in manufacturing and construction augured well for them to drive growth in FY22 and added that services, which account for more than 50% of India's GVA and the biggest source for pushing consumption, had done remarkably better in Q3. "Real GVA in services has also improved from a contraction of 21.4% in Q1 to a negligible contraction of 1% in Q3," the Ministry said.

"Given the uncertainties around investments and exports, recovery prospects... hinge critically on uptick in private consumption... one would expect support from public policy," said Siddhartha Sanyal, chief economist and head of research, Bandhan Bank.

## Sensex sees worst day in 10 months, sinks 3.8%

Global bond yields soar, rupee plunges



last year. On the Sensex chart, all 30 constituents ended in the red, with eight scrips logging declines of more than 5%. The rupee tumbled 104 paise to 73.47 against the U.S. dollar.

Investors also turned cautious ahead of India's third quarter GDP data release, while keeping an eye on simmering tensions between the U.S. and Syria.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 3.8% or 1,939.32 points to 49,099.99 – its worst one-day fall since May 4. The broader NSE Nifty plunged 568.20 points or 3.76% to 14,529.15 – the biggest single-day drop since March 23

## NSE defends response to shutdown

## REUTERS

MUMBAI

The NSE on Friday defended its reopening of the market after an unexpected shutdown this week, amid criticism about how it handled the situation.

"This communication was done only after there was visibility and clarity on resumption of services and any prior communication would not have been appropriate," the NSE said in a statement. The exchange also said it decided to continue with its primary systems and not activate its disaster recovery site on Wednesday after evaluating all options to resume trading "at the earliest with least disruption."

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

With the next review of the flexible-inflation targeting (FIT) framework coming up soon, the Reserve Bank of India, in the Report on Currency and Finance for FY21, said the current inflation target of 4% with a +/- 2% tolerance band is appropriate for the next five years.

The RBI said the period of study in this report was from October 2016 to March 2020 commencing with the formal operationalisation of the FIT framework in India but excluding the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, in view of data distortions.

The report said trend in



flation had fallen from above 9% before FIT to a range of 3.8-4.3% during FIT, indicating that 4% is the appropriate level of the inflation target.

The report said an inflation rate of 6% is the appropriate upper tolerance limit for the target.

"A lower bound above 2%

can lead to actual inflation frequently dipping below the tolerance band while a lower bound below 2% will hamper growth, indicating that an inflation rate of 2% is the appropriate lower tolerance bound," it said.

It said during the FIT period, monetary transmission had been full and reasonably swift across the money market but less than complete in the bond markets.

"While there has been an improvement in transmission to lending and deposit rates of banks, external benchmarks across all categories of loans and deposits could improve transmission further," it said.

## Micromax to unveil 5G phone

## YUTHIKA BHARGAVA

BHIWADI

In a bid to regain a foothold in the highly-competitive Indian smartphone market, Micromax plans to introduce 4-5 devices every quarter, including an 'aggressively-priced' 5G device this year, co-founder Rahul Sharma said.

The models would be priced between ₹7,000 and ₹25,000.

"We currently have two products, and the response to them has been dream worthy," said Mr. Sharma.

Asked about the company's plans to introduce a 5G device, the Micromax co-founder said work on the model was already in advanced stages and it would be unveiled in the second half of the year.

## Coffee output may drop as rain lashes plantations

Arabica, robusta production impacted

## MINI TEJASWI

BENGALURU

Untimely rains and hailstones that lashed plantations in the last six days causing large-scale berry dropping is expected to impact arabica and robusta coffee production by 30% for the 2020-21 crop year, as per estimates by planters.

According to Coffee Board's post-monsoon estimates, during the crop year 2020-21, India was expecting an arabica production of 1.02 lakh metric tonnes (MT) and robusta production of 1.24 lakh MT.

India's total coffee output for the year was estimated at 3.42 lakh MT against last year's 2.98 lakh MT.

"As of now, we lost over 30% of our arabica coffee due to rains in January. Also

# An ever-learning master of his art

Ashwin seeks 'another gear' in his pursuit of improvement after scaling Mt. 400

## ENGLAND IN INDIA

**AMOL KARHADKAR**  
AHMEDABAD  
One game at a time.  
I don't look too far ahead.

These are the cliches associated with modern-day India cricketers, whenever they are asked about their personal targets. But R. Ashwin is different. Not just on the pitch but off it as well.

It's his artistry with the red cherry that makes him stand out on the field of play whenever he wears India's jersey. Perhaps it's the confidence he derives from his on-field exploits that leads to the eloquent engineer from Chennai talking nonchalantly about his personal targets.

No wonder then that after becoming only the fourth Indian – and the second-quickest in the world in terms of Test appearances – to scale Mt. 400 during the two-day win over England in the third Test, Ashwin had no qualms saying "I won't be surprised if I surpass myself in the future as well".

One of Ashwin's strengths is his ability to assess the conditions and bowl accordingly. It was evident during the pink-ball Test at Motera, where he and left-arm spinner Axar Patel ran through England's hapless batsmen twice in less than two days.

Realising that only the odd ball was turning viciously, he convinced Axar to bowl



**Buzzing:** Ashwin has been largely instrumental in India clawing back from the first Test reverse and winning the next two. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

wicket-to-wicket lines and it reaped huge dividends.

Add to that his mastery of subtle variations, and Ashwin becomes virtually unplayable in Asia. Ollie Pope, the England youngster, is unlikely to forget how he was flummoxed by Ashwin from either side of the umpire in both the innings during the third Test.

Having joined the 400-club at 34, an age when spinners are conventionally supposed to be at their peak, it was pertinent to ask the man whether he feels that he is bowling at his best right now.

"This question has been asked quite a few times in my

**G**ot to give their spinners credit. Obviously, Ashwin is a world-class spinner, second fastest to 400 wickets which is fantastic. We are up against a class act. Axar was very accurate. To hit the middle-stump off the first ball showed how accurate he was

CHRIS SILVERWOOD, England head coach

career. In 2015-16 people were asking me the same thing when I went through that lovely phase in '15-16-17. And now people are asking the same," he told Star Sports on Thursday.

"One thing is for sure – I have always looked to improve and every time I have thought I have bowled well, I

have always found another gear. So I'll not be surprised if I surpass myself in the future as well."

If Ashwin indeed switches to a higher gear over the next few years, you can rest assured that both opposition batsmen and statisticians will have an even harder time keeping up with him.

I

ASHWIN ACHAL  
BENGALURU

Former India cricketer and Karnataka captain R. Vinay Kumar announced his retirement from international and First Class cricket on Friday. Vinay played one Test (against Australia at Perth in 2012), 31 ODIs and nine T20Is. The 37-year-old last featured for India in the limited-overs home series against Australia in 2013.

Vinay was an outstanding performer in his 17-year domestic career. He scalped 504 wickets in 139 First Class matches, and is the highest

wicket-taker among fast bowlers in Ranji Trophy history. He also has 225 and 194 wickets in List-A and T20 matches respectively. With the bat, he scored two centuries and 17 fifties in First Class matches.

### Successful tenure

His most significant achievement came during his tenure as Karnataka captain, when he led the side to back-to-back treble winning seasons in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Vinay time and again lifted the spirits of the Karnataka team with his never-say-

die, workhorse attitude. In 2019, after an immensely fruitful and long association with Karnataka, Vinay joined Pondicherry.

He also represented Kochi Tuskers Kerala, Kolkata Knight Riders, Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore in 11 IPL seasons.

Vinay came from a humble background, as a promising junior cricketer in his hometown Davanagere.

In 2010, Vinay made his India debut, taking the wickets of Sanath Jayasuriya and Kumar Sangakkara in a T20I against Sri Lanka at Gros Islet (St. Lucia).

vision league in Bengaluru. The next season, Vinay represented powerhouse first division team Swastic Union CC (I). He soon made his Karnataka debut, in a Ranji Trophy match against Bengal in 2004. The Bengal duo of Rohan Gavaskar and Sourav Ganguly count as Vinay's first wickets in domestic cricket – an auspicious start indeed.

In 2010, Vinay made his India debut, taking the wickets of Sanath Jayasuriya and Kumar Sangakkara in a T20I against Sri Lanka at Gros Islet (St. Lucia).

+

### THE VINAY KUMAR FILE

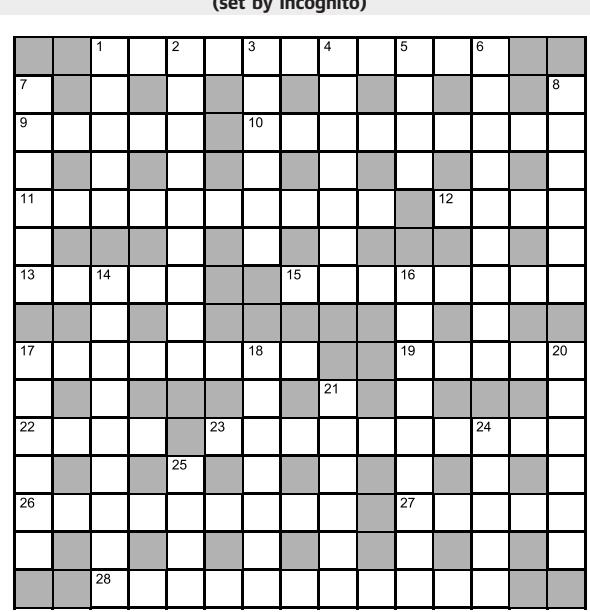
Batting	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	SR	50s/100s
Tests	1	2	11	6	5.50	45.83	0/0
ODIs	31	13	86	27*	9.55	58.90	0/0
T20Is	9	1	2	2*	-	50.00	0/0
First Class	139	181	3311	105*	22.07	48.25	17/2
List A	141	84	1198	82	21.78	89.80	4/0
T20s	181	91	861	68	15.37	125.69	1/0
Bowling	M	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	SR	5WI
Tests	1	1	1/73	73.00	5.61	78.0	0
ODIs	31	38	4/30	37.44	5.94	37.7	0
T20Is	9	10	3/24	24.70	7.84	18.9	0
First Class	139	504	8/32	22.44	2.83	47.4	26
List A	141	225	5/34	24.39	4.82	30.3	3
T20s	181	194	4/4	25.09	7.85	19.1	0



Vinay Kumar.  
■ FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

## TH CROSSWORD + 13182

(set by Incognito)



- ACROSS
- 1 Makings up: "Big African was dancing round tent in the beginning" (11)
- 9 Wood-workers drop fishes and go in (5)
- 10 P.M.'s address? It can be seen on attacking play-maker's jersey! (6,3)
- 11 Cheat soldier after trial of participant in competition (10)
- 12 Pie crust's colour? (4)

Never go off the grid.  
We are digital now. Come solve online.  
at <https://rgo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCA TO PLAY  
No. SSS999 Distribution: www.mightyfingers.com

- 13 Colonel left Coolidge confused about famous footballer's first name (5)
- 15 How and why cheap lyrics may be had? (3,1,4)
- 17 Radio broadcast around beginning of night in New York gives type of food suitable for lactose intolerant people (3-5)
- 19 Snakes behind girl's pants (5)
- 22 Bars watering holes (4)
- 23 Trainee, irritated about poor payment initially, acquires some craftsmanship... He learns on the job (10)
- 26 Shelved new ideas after dial repair (4,5)
- 27 Totally sick after consuming sodium (2,3)
- 28 Excitedly Edgar licked flapjack (7,4)
- DOWN
- 1 Fun to include a bit of tomfoolery and love on sofa bed (5)
- 2 Destroyed barnacle around second of month in Spanish port city (9)
- 3 Burn rebellious vigilantes after irritated Slav leaves (6)
- 4 Endlessly, Maradona miss-spelt his middle name (7)
- 5 Thing stored by cosmetician on retirement (4)
- 6 Ford damaged gate... angry? (3,6)
- 7 What the duellers did, perhaps, protected by barriers (6)
- 8 Peace-keeper's guns are damaged and neglected (6)
- 14 Giving title to big Lennon composition (9)
- 16 Secular gent in America protects country (9)
- 17 Lion is excited about tailless animal in Naples sports club (6)
- 18 Answered, "El Pibe de Oro is confused after loss of damaged oboe" (7)
- 20 Hell on board, when these start coming in (6)
- 21 Picnic stroll (6)
- 24 Imagine India is missing in picture (5)
- 25 Seatrain regularly displays an item of clothing (4)

# Tamil Nadu keeps hopes alive

Aparajith, Shahrukh and Kousik star in win over Jharkhand

## HAZARE TROPHY

### SPORTS BUREAU

INDORE

Tamil Nadu kept alive its slim hopes of qualification with a 67-run win in its fourth match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy (Elite Group B) over Jharkhand on Friday.

Electing to bat, Tamil Nadu made 266 for seven with half-centuries from opener B. Aparajith (57, 105b, 6x4), M. Shahrukh Khan (51, 47b, 3x4, 3x6) and J. Kousik (55, 40b, 7x4, 2x6).

In reply, Jharkhand could manage only 199 for nine in 50 overs as left-arm spinner M. Siddharth took three wickets (3/33) while Aparajith and medium-pacer R. Silambam chipped in with two each.

Earlier, TN was struggling at 131 for five when Aparajith, who held fort at one end, was dismissed. Shahrukh and Kousik then added 50 for the sixth wicket.

R. Satish Kishore (29 n.o.) and M. Mohammed (20 n.o.) then chipped in with valuable contributions towards the end, the former adding 55 for the seventh wicket with Kousik.

In the other Group B match, Madhya Pradesh thrashed Andhra by 98 runs riding on Rajat Patidar's 61-ball 102 (8x4, 5x6). Asked to bat, MP made 316 for eight after openers Abhishek Bhandari (49) and Shubham Sharma (78) put on 105 for the first wicket.

## To the fore: B. Aparajith laid the foundation for Tamil Nadu's match-winning total against Jharkhand. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Tamil Nadu 266/7 in 50 overs (B. Aparajith 57, Shahrukh Khan 51, J. Kousik 55) bt Jharkhand 199/9 in 50 overs (Virat Singh 49).

### Delhi to host knockouts

■ March 7: Pre-quarterfinal

(Eliminator); March 8 & 9:

Quarterfinals; March 11:

Both semifinals; March 14:

Final.

■ All matches at New Delhi.

### Saturday's matches

■ Elite D (Jaipur): Himachal vs Pondicherry; Rajasthan vs Mumbai; Delhi vs Maharashtra, all at 9 a.m.

■ Elite E (Kolkata): Saurashtra vs Chandigarh; Haryana vs Services; Bengal vs Jammu & Kashmir, all at 8.45 a.m.

■ Plate (Chennai): Nagaland vs Manipur; Assam vs Sikkim; Uttarakhand vs Mizoram; Meghalaya vs Arunachal Pradesh, all at 9 a.m.

Tamil Nadu 255/7 in 50 overs (Sakthi Gani 48, Babul Kumar 78) lost to Odisha 258/3 in 48.1 overs (Shantanu Mishra 76, Sandeep Pattnaik 64, Kartik Biswal 53 n.o., Ankit Yadav 43 n.o.); Uttar Pradesh 346/6 in 50 overs (Priyanshu Garg 115, Akashdeep Nath 93) bt Railways 276 in 46.1 overs (Shivam Chaudhary 107, Saurabh Singh 51, Shivam Mavi 4/51).

# 'Hurricane' Yusuf calls time on career

Was part of Indian teams which won the 2007 World T20 and 2011 WC

THE YUSUF PATHAN FILE							
Batting	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	SR	50s/100s
ODIs	57	41	810	123*	27.00	113.60	3/2
T20Is	22	18	236	37*	18.15	146.58	0/0
First Class	100	158	4825	210*	34.46	85.99	20/11
List A	199	175	4797	148	33.78	110.42	28/9
T20s	274	243	4852	100	27.56	139.34	21/1
Bowling	M	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	SR	5WI
ODIs	57	33	3/49	41.36	5.49	45.1	0
T20Is	22	13	2/22	33.69	8.61	23.4	0
First Class	100	201	6/40	32.67	2.94	66.5	14
List A	199	124	5/52	41.39	5.10	48.6	2

## TV PICKS

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 11 p.m., 8.30 p.m., 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Sunday)  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m., 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Sunday)  
**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.

## NBA



## Milwaukee Bucks outlast New Orleans Pelicans

MILWAUKEE  
Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 38 points, Khris Middleton added 31 and Milwaukee Bucks outlasted New Orleans Pelicans 129-125 on Thursday. It was the fourth straight win for the Bucks.  
**The results:** Milwaukee Bucks 129 bt New Orleans Pelicans 125; Brooklyn Nets 129 bt Orlando Magic 92; New York Knicks 140 bt Sacramento Kings 121; Denver Nuggets 110 lost to Washington Wizards 112; Memphis Grizzlies 122 bt LA Clippers 94; Philadelphia 76ers 111 bt Dallas Mavericks 97.

## Prajnesh enters semifinals

NUR SULTAN (KAZAKHSTAN)  
Fourth seed Prajnesh Gunnneswar beat Martin Klizan of Slovakia 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the \$10,410 Challenger tennis here on Friday. He will play Jurij Rodionov of Austria in the semifinals.

## FIFA ends bribery case against Beckenbauer

GENEVA  
FIFA's ethics committee has closed a bribery investigation against German great Franz Beckenbauer because of a statute of limitations. Beckenbauer and other German officials who helped organise the 2006 World Cup had been subject to an investigation since 2016. A 10-year limit on bribery prosecutions were included in the rules amended in 2018. AP

## CAS cuts Umar Akmal's suspension to one year

KARACHI  
Umar Akmal will be able to resume his career after the CAS reduced his suspension to 12 months and imposed a fine of (P)₹42.5 lakh for breaching the Anti-Corruption Code. The PCB had suspended Umar for three years on February 20 last year for not reporting approaches for spot-fixing in the Pakistan Super League. PTI

## 'Success in singles will follow soon'

Ankita says she wants to build on the experiences from playing in doubles

## TENNIS

N. SUDARSHAN  
BENGALURU

Last week, Ankita Raina became India's first WTA champion since Sania Mirza, when she won the doubles title at Phillip Island Trophy in Melbourne partnering Russia's Kamila Rakhimova. The 28-year-old spoke to *The Hindu* about her memorable time in Australia, during which she made her Grand Slam main draw debut and broke into the top-100 in doubles. Excerpts:

How happy are you following your maiden win?

It means a lot. Winning a tournament at this level for the first time gives you great confidence. I have many fun memories on court with my partner. I enjoyed it.

You are the third woman after Sania Mirza and Shikha Uberoi to enter the top-100 in doubles while representing India. How is the feeling?

I feel proud and honoured. It's because of the hard work of my team and sacrifices of my family that I have got this far. My goal is to play main draw of all Slams this year. I was able to do it once in dou-



**Joyous occasion:** Ankita Raina, right, with Russia's Kamila Rakhimova after winning the Phillip Island Trophy doubles in Melbourne recently. ■ TENNIS AUSTRALIA

bles. Now I want do it in singles and break into the singles top-100 just like how I did in doubles.

How will this result change things and will you start expecting more from your doubles play?

I've always played both doubles and singles in juniors and pro circuit, and doubles has always helped my singles game and performance. So, I don't think it'll put more pressure. How it will change things.... I feel the same [succ-

cess] will follow in singles soon!

How was the overall Australian Open experience, starting from the qualifiers in Dubai?

It's been such a learning experience. So many mixed emotions and many firsts. In Dubai, I got to the final qualifying round [in singles] and lost a close match. It was the farthest I'd gone in a Slam. I enjoyed my hits during quarantine with my cohort partner. Also having one of

my coaches from my academy, Utsav Mukherjee, really helped and I'm thankful to him.

Is this the best start you have had to a season? How are you looking to build on it?

Yes. I made the main draw of a Slam. So definitely it's been the best and winning my first WTA! Going forward, I'm going to speak to my coach and tell him about the things I noticed in my game that needs work. The idea is to keep continuing the process.

## Pradeep upsets Aditya, makes over-35 final

## ITF SENIORS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Pradeep Pant beat top seed Aditya Khanna 6-4, 6-3 to make the over-35 final of the PHDCCI-ITF seniors tennis tournament at the DLTA Complex on Friday.

In the final, Pradeep will face Aditya's elder brother Ashish Khanna, who beat Avinash Kunwar 6-4, 6-4.

In the over-55 event, Chandra Bhushan and Nagaraj Revanasiddaiha set up a title clash and combined to clinch the doubles trophy.

**Double delight**  
It was a double delight for A.J.S. Chhatwal in the over-65 event as he beat Surinder Sharma 6-1, 6-2 for the singles title, and combined with Ravi Singh for the doubles trophy.

## The results:

**Over-35: Semifinals:** Pradeep Pant bt Aditya Khanna 6-4, 6-3; Ashish Khanna bt Avinash Kunwar 6-4, 6-4.

**Doubles (final):** Aditya Khanna & Ashish Khanna bt Swardeep Dhodi & Mukesh Kumar 6-3, 6-3.

**Over-45: Semifinals:** Shankar Krishnaswamy bt Rohit Rawat 6-3, 7-6(2); Preetam Yashwant bt Anshul Bagai 6-1, 6-3.

**Doubles (final):** Jagdish Tawar & Preetam Yashwant bt Manish Aggarwal & Anshul Bagai 6-4, 6-1.

**Over-55: Semifinals:** Chandra Bhushan bt Ajeet Bhardwaj 6-2, 6-1; Nagaraj Revanasiddaiha bt Sanjay Kumar 6-2, 6-2.

**Doubles (final):** Chandra Bhushan & Nagaraj Revanasiddaiha bt Raveen Chaudhary & Pawan Jain 6-3, 6-0.

**Over-65: Final:** A.J.S. Chhatwal bt Surinder Sharma 6-1, 6-2.

**Doubles (final):** A.J.S. Chhatwal & Ravi Singh bt Bhag Nand Singh & Surinder Sharma 6-4, 6-2.

## Cavallini expected to score in feature event

BENGALURU: Cavallini, who is in fine nick, is expected to score in the Sriyankadatta Narasimha Rao Wadiyar Memorial Trophy (1,200m), the feature event of the races to be held here on Saturday (Feb. 27). False rails (width about 3.5m from 1,600m to the winning post) will be in position.

**1 BULL TEMPLE PLATE (DIV. III)**, (1,200m), rated 15 to 35, 1:30 p.m.: 1. Zehnaseeb (3) Arvind K 60, 2. Altamonte (12) Vivek 58.5, 3. Artemisia (5) Zervan 58.5, 4. Awesome Princess (10) Rayan 58.5, 5. Belli Deepa (4) R. Pradeep 58.5, 6. Capable (8) S. Sunil 58.5, 7. Carmine (7) Shreyas Singh 58.5, 8. Copper Sunrise (1) Antony 58.5, 9. Princess Jasmine (6) Sai Vamshi 58.5, 10. Tiffany (9) Trevor 58.5, 11. Polar Express (11) S. Saqlain 57, and 12. Hitomi Sakuma (2) R. Ravi 56.5.

**1. COPPER SUNRISE, 2. CARMINE, 3. ARTEMISIA**

**2 NETHRATHAVI PLATE (DIV. II)**, (1,400m), rated 15 to 35, 5-y-o & over, 2:00: 1. Sadagaat (1) Shobhan 60, 2. Desert Rose (10) Nazeru 59.5, 3. Glorious Dancer (7) Jagadeesh 58.5, 4. Hawking (2) T.S. Jodha 56, 5. Paradiso (9) Arshad 55.5, 6. Jan Zizka (4) Antony 55, 7. Ultimate Power (6) Vaibhav 55, 8. Happy Dancing (5) S. Mubarak 54.5, 9. Daring Sweetheart (3) R. Pradeep 53.5, 10. Eco Friendly (8) S. Saqlain 53.5, 11. Iron Fist (12) J.H. Arul 53 and 12. Pastiche (11) P. Surya 53.

**1. PROFOUND, 2. SIR JERSEY, 3. OCEAN DUNES**

**5 GATEWAY OF INDIA PLATE**, (1,600m), rated 30 to 50, 5-y-o & over, 3:30: 1. Casey (11) Akshay K 60, 2. Green Channel (6) J.H. Arul 60, 3. Silver Dew (8) A. Imran 59.5, 4. Wings Of Desire (5) Rayan 56, 5. Cavallini (2) Akshay K 55, 6. Miniver Rose (9) Jagadeesh 55, 7. Piper Regina (1) Akash Chavan 55, 8. Fair Warning (12) Antony 54, 9. Harmonia (11) J.H. Arul 53.5, 10. Ice Floe (3) Trevor 53.5, 11. Lycurgus (7) Vivek 53 and 12. Glenary (4) Arshad 50.5.

**1. CAVALLINI, 2. ICE FLOE, 3. NEUFC silences Blasters, enters semifinals**

**6 BYERLEY TURK TROPHY**, (1,200m), rated 30 to 50, 5-y-o & over, 4:30 p.m.: 1. Asgardia (1) Shreyas Singh 60, 2. Cherokee Moon (9) Gnaneswar 60, 3. Osiris (10) M. Naveen 60, 4. Kimera (7) J.H. Arul 59, 5. Venus Bay (6) Ankit Yadav 59, 6. Panama (8) Vinod Shinde 58.5, 7. Donna Bella (3) Srinath 58.5, 8. Benediction (4) Md. Aliyar 56.5, 9. Skyfire (2) P. Surya 56.5, 10. Birchwood (11) S. Mubarak 54.5, 11. Ultimate Speed (5) Jagadeesh 53 and 12. Baltimore (12) Akshay K 52.5.

**1. RADIANT TREASURE, 2. CELESTIAL HIGHWAY, 3. HAFNUPI**

**9 BULL TEMPLE PLATE (DIV. I)**, (1,200m), rated 15 to 35, 5:30: 1. Michigan Melody (4) Naveen K 60, 2. Flamingo Road (5) J.H. Arul 59.5, 3. Dark Vision (1) D. Patel 59, 4. Bloom Buddy (8) Anjar Alam 58.5, 5. Areca Angel (10) R. Ravi 57, 6. Country's Jewel (3) Gnaneswar 57, 7. Morganite (7) Ashhad Asbar 56, 8. Arathorn (9) Trevor 55, 9. Blazing Gold (11) Arvind K 55, 10. Encounter (12) Chandrashekhar 55, 11. Highland Rock (2) Vivek 55 and 12. Lucky Chance (6) Rayan 55.

**1. ARATHORN, 2. MORGANITE, 3. COUNTRY'S JEWEL**

**Day's best: BRUNHILD**

**Double: COPPER SUNRISE – ARATHORN**

**Jkt: 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9; Tr (i): 1, 2 & 3; (ii): 4, 5 & 6; (iii): 7, 8 & 9.**

## PM Modi inaugurates Khelo India Winter Games

PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated the second edition of the Khelo India Winter Games and said hosting such events will make J&K a sports hub.

"These games show J&K is excited for a new era of peace and prosperity. The government is working on a sporting ecosystem. Khelo India excellence centres are coming up in Jammu and Srinagar besides Khelo India centres in 20 districts," said Modi.

He said the second edition of the Winter Games at Gulmarg will prepare sportsmen for bigger international platforms like the Olympics.

"This event will make J&K a hub of sports activity," he said.

Modi said the players participating in the event epitomises the 'one India, one nation' spirit. "This year, participation has doubled from the States and Union Territories," he said.

He said the J&K sportsmen did well last time and those from across the country will watch them and learn from each other this time.



PM Modi.

An official told *The Hindu* that around 1200 athletes and guests from across the country will participate in multiple events, including snowshoe race, ice skating, ice hockey, skiing, Nordic ski, snowboarding, ski mountaineering, ice stock, etc.

Around 840 athletes will vie for honours in the competitions being held for the second time in a bid to promote sports activities and adventure tourism in the region.

"A special team of doctors and ambulances have been directed to be available round the clock. A special team of the State Disaster Response Fund shall remain deployed for relief and rescue operations," officials said.

## Vaishnavi in line for a double

SPORTS BUREAU  
INDORE

Second seed Vaishnavi Adkar put herself in line for a double, as she beat Navya Vadlamudi 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 in the girls semifinals of the ITF grade-5 tennis tournament at the Indore Tennis Club on Friday.

Vaishnavi, who won the doubles title with Gargi Pawar, will play Lakshmi Prabha in the final.

In the boys event, top seed Aman Dahiya cruised into the final and will play third seed Denim Yadav.

**The results:**

**Boys (semifinals):** Aman Dahiya bt Dhruv Hirpara 6-2, 6-1; Denim Yadav bt Sanjith Devineni (USA) 6-4, 6-4.

**Doubles (final):** Aayush Bhat & Heerak Vora bt Sanjith Devineni (USA) & Maanav Jain 6-3, 6-2.

**Girls (semifinals):** Lakshmi Prabha bt Saina Deshpande 7-5, 7-5; Vaishnavi Adkar bt Navya Vadlamudi 3-6, 6-4, 6-2.

**Doubles (final):** Vaishnavi Adkar & Gargi Pawar bt Reshma Maruri & Suhitha Maturi 7-6(3), 3-6, [10-3].

## Deepak in semifinals

## BOXING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Asian silver-winner Deepak Kumar (52kg) entered the semifinals to be assured of a medal and a clash with reigning Olympic and World champion Shakho-biddin Zoirov at the 72nd Strandja memorial boxing tournament in Sofia.

Deepak defeated Bulgaria's Darislav Vasilev 5-0 to make the last-four stage.

However, it was a largely disappointing day for Indians with former youth World champion Jyoti Guilia (51kg) and Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg) bowing out of women's competition.

With their loss, India's challenge in the women's draw has come to an end without an medal.

**The results: Men: 52kg:** Deepak Kumar bt Darislav Vasilev (Bul); +91kg: Gurgen Hovhannisyan (Arm) bt Manjeet Singh.

**Women: 51kg:** Lacramioara Perijoc (Rou) bt Jyoti Guilia; **75kg:** Naomi Graham (USA) bt Bhagyabati Kachari.

## NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

**Mohd. Azam scalps six**  
Medium-pacer Mohd. Azam picked up six wickets for 44 runs as Sehwag Academy beat Mishra Sports by five wickets in the Harcourt Butler under-15 tournament.

**The scores:** Mishra Sports 144 in 30.4 overs (Surjeet Kumar 34, Mohd. Azam 6/44, Anupam Kumar 3/27) lost to Sehwag Academy 216 in 26.1 overs (Sumit Kumar 40 n.o., Ram Kapoor