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## Prayer space to pay homage to farmers who have died in stir

Protesters rent floor of an arcade near main agitation site

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A temporary prayer space has come up inside an arcade near the main stage at the Singhu border to pay homage to the farmers who have died during the ongoing agitation.

Farmers from several States, including Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting against three controversial agriculture laws brought in by the Centre. The protesters, who have been camping at the borders of the national capital for nearly 50 days now, have also demanded a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price.

Among the several resources and reinforcements, including dedicated medical kiosks, hospital, langar, waterproof and insulated tents; a temporary prayer space also found space at the Singhu border on Wednesday.

**Temporary facility**  
Volunteers at the prayer hall, which is on the ground floor of an arcade along the highway, said the facility would be available for at least three days.

"The space has been set up exclusively for prayers meant for those who have



A farmer offering prayers at the facility on the Singhu border on Wednesday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

lost their lives during this movement. The Akhand Path [reading of the sacred religious text without any breaks] began on Wednesday and will go on till January 15," said a volunteer at the prayer meet.

The initiative was taken by group leader Singh Sahab Baba Kulwinder Singh and saw the plaza being taken on rent. "All the arrangements have been made by us. We

procured carpets and mattresses, and installed the stage inside the premises where the Akhand Path is taking place. Our sect leaders got together to ensure that this facility was made operational. We set this up as soon as we got the space. Now, this will go on for two more days after which we will vacate the space. However, we will not leave the protest site," he added.

The CBSE issued a notification saying that board ex-

## Schools to reopen for Class 10, 12 students from January 18

Physical attendance not compulsory; parents' consent necessary, says Sisodia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday said that the Delhi government has allowed the reopening of schools for students of Classes 10 and 12 from January 18 so that they may complete their required studies ahead of the CBSE Board examinations, the dates of which have already been announced.

The government said that physical attendance is not compulsory and students will attend schools only with the consent of parents and issued a standard operating procedure for all schools to follow.

"Keeping in view CBSE board exams, permission is being granted for schools to reopen for Classes 10 and 12 from January 18 for practicals, project work and counselling. Students will be called with parent's consent and will not be bound to come," Mr. Sisodia tweeted.

Schools have been closed since March 19 just ahead of the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The CBSE issued a notification saying that board ex-

### Back to school

#### HEALTH GUIDELINES

- No symptomatic child/employee to be allowed in school campus
- Mandatory thermal screening at school entry gate
- Compulsory hand sanitisation at entrance of schools, classrooms, labs and public utility, etc.

#### SCHOOL READINESS

Head of school to ensure thorough sanitisation of the premises and availability of key supplies such as thermal screeners, disinfectant, soap, mask, etc.

**Quarantine room:** Schools to ensure availability of



physical distancing at all times by ensuring that students maintain a distance of six feet and do not assemble or gather near entry/exit gates – even during breaks

**Campus guest policy:** Guest visits should be discouraged. During emergency, visit by parents with proper COVID Appropriate Behavior protocol may be permitted

**Community/common space policy:** Congregating in common areas of school campus must be prohibited

**Awareness drive:** Posters on preventive measures about COVID-19 to be displayed at prominent places

difficulties of students may be cleared by the teachers as it will impact positively on the mental well-being of students for the preparation of the examinations.

The CBSE has modified the design of question papers of Classes 10 and 12 by introducing the objective type questions, source-based questions, analytical and application-based questions from the session 2020-21. The students should be guided accordingly and given sufficient practice to answer all

these type of questions in the board examinations," the DoE said in its circular to the heads of schools.

It added that pre-board examinations may be conducted from March 20 to April 15 tentatively for Class 12 and between April 1 and April 15 for Class 10. "While the records of children coming to school be maintained, the same should not be used for attendance purpose as sending the child to school is completely optional for parents," the DoE said.

## Fake call centre busted, three arrested

Accused duped over 500 people in last one month: police

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

With the arrest of three persons, Delhi Police claimed to have busted a fake call centre operating in Rohini, said a senior officer on Wednesday.

The arrested persons were identified as Bhupesh Gupta, Prashant and Mohit Kumar. Ten mobile phones, a computer and other devic-

es were recovered from them. They have cheated more than 500 people in the last one month.

Following this, an FIR was registered at Budh Vihar police station

A senior police officer said that specific information was received regarding a fake call centre duping innocent people by offering costly mobile phones on discounted rates. "A raid was conducted and three men and six women were found

## Ban sex-selective surgeries on intersex infants and children'

They are done without fully informed approval, says plea

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR), in an order on Wednesday, recommended that the Delhi government should declare a ban on medically unnecessary, sex-selective surgeries on intersex infants and children except in the case of life-threatening situations.

The commission passed the order after deliberating on a plea that brought to its notice that there have been instances wherein intersex people are treated as disabled, and hence are approached through a medical lens, reducing them to an 'impairment' leading to medical interventions that can lead to long-term impairments and requiring lifetime medical care.

The plea added that most of the times these surgeries are conducted without prior, free and fully informed consent.

formed autonomous consent.

#### Only exception

The order read: "After careful deliberations, the commission is of the considered opinion that the Government of Delhi should declare a ban on medically unnecessary, sex-selective surgeries on intersex infants and children except in cases of life-threatening situations and gender-related medical interventions should be delayed until the patient can provide meaningful informed consent/assent to these interventions.

The commission said that it conducted an enquiry into a plea and requested submissions from the Delhi Medical Council, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of NCT of Delhi, Department of Social Welfare, Govt. of NCT of Delhi and organisations and experts in the domain.

Adviser to the commission, a human rights activist Anjali Gopalan, in her response said that such medical

interventions are violative of the fundamental right to bodily integrity and physical autonomy. She added that some intersex people can face significant health issues that require treatment, which may include hormone-based therapy or surgery while others do not require medical intervention.

The Delhi Medical Council in its response said that surgical interventions and gender-related medical interventions should be delayed until the patient can provide meaningful informed consent/assent to these interventions.

#### Madras HC order

The DCPCR also said it had taken due notice of the judgment of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court wherein the court directed the Government of Tamil Nadu to ban sex reassignment surgeries on intersex infants and children.

## Builder held for duping investors of ₹38 lakh

He promised plots on Ajmer-Jaipur Road

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old builder has been arrested from Jaipur for allegedly duping investors of ₹38 lakh on the pretext of giving them plots on Ajmer-Jaipur Road, the police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Anil Kumar Sharma, is the chief managing director of a construction firm he started in 2000. In order to raise more funds, he kept launching new projects and used the raised funds from one project to the other, the police said.

A probe was initiated against Mr. Sharma after the Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police received several complaints against the builder. The complainants alleged that they had purchased plots of lands from the accused situated at Asiana Enclave on NH-8, Ajmer-Jaipur Road

from 2012 to 2014. They alleged that they had paid the full amount but full date were yet to get the plot.

After preliminary enquiry, a case was registered against Mr. Sharma in 2018. During investigation, bank details were verified and relevant documents were scrutinised. Investigation from government land authorities revealed that no approval in the name of project "Ashiana Enclave" was given by them, said Joint Commissioner of Police (Economic Offences Wing) O.P. Mishra.

"The accused had been avoiding to join inquiry despite repeated notices. A team was constituted and he was arrested from Jaipur on Tuesday. He was produced before a Delhi court and has been taken into one-day police remand," he said.

## 2 juveniles apprehended for killing shopkeeper

Victim had harassed them earlier

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Two juveniles were apprehended for allegedly killing a 26-year-old shopkeeper to take revenge for harassing them in north-east Delhi's Jafraabad, the police said on Wednesday.

The deceased, Afzal, was shot dead by the two juveniles with the help of another juvenile on the night of January 9 in a Chauhan Bangar lane, they said.

"During probe, it was found that around six months ago, Afzal had a

scuffle with the two juveniles and both the families had amicably settled the matter at that time. Later, there had been incidents of heated arguments between Afzal and the two juveniles. The juveniles along with an accomplice planned to eliminate Afzal. As per their plan, they fired at Afzal near his shop," said DCP (North-East) Ved Prakash Surya.

They were apprehended at Jafraabad metro station. A countrymade pistol with two cartridges were recovered from them.

## 50-year-old man shot dead by bike-borne men

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

A 50-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by two unidentified bike-borne men in north-east Delhi's Jafraabad on Wednesday afternoon, the police said.

The deceased has been identified as Raees Ansari. He was the president of Resident Welfare Association (RWA) of the locality, they said.

According to a senior police officer, they received in-

formation about the incident around 1 p.m. on Wednesday. The deceased was sitting outside his house when two unidentified persons came there and struck a conversation with him, following which one of them shot Ansari in his head. Later, they fled the spot, the officer said.

The deceased was taken to a hospital, where he was declared brought dead. A murder case has been registered, the police said.

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HAPPY Pongal

I wish everyone a Happy and Joyful Pongal. May God Bless us with a Great Year.

-Arvind Kejriwal  
Chief Minister, Delhi

Dinesh Shabdarath/DI0097/2021

Department of Art Culture and Language, Government of NCT of Delhi

Dinesh Shabdarath/DI0097/2021

Timings  
DELHI

THURSDAY, JAN. 14
RISE 07:16 SET 17:46
RISE 08:15 SET 18:57
FRIDAY, JAN. 15
RISE 07:15 SET 17:47
RISE 09:01 SET 19:59
SATURDAY, JAN. 16
RISE 07:15 SET 17:48
RISE 09:40 SET 20:58

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	18	03
Safdarjung	18	03
Palam	15	05

**Delhi Palam Today**  
18°C Cold wave condition would prevail at some parts. Dense to very dense fog expected. Day would remain cool with few clouds.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
19°C Dense to very dense fog at some places with cold wave condition. A pleasant day with few clouds.

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**THE HINDU**  
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## IN BRIEF

## Several AAP leaders, members join BJP

AAP office-bearers and party members joined the BJP at its State HQ on Wednesday, the party said in a statement. "Ex-AAP civic body candidate Pawan Rai; Badarpur Vidhan Sabha vice-president and coordinator of the AAP Central Coordination Team Mamta Rexwal, Ward 95 president Manoj Sahu; polling station In-charge Ahmed Raja; Mandal president Anwar Khan; polling station In-charge Dev Narayan; executive member (Women's Wing) Poonam Yadav; executive member Wasim Khan joined," the BJP said.

# Vaccination sites cut from 89 to 75, jabs to be given just 4 days a week

'Steps taken following Centre's orders that indicate going slow on immunisation'

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Wednesday reduced the number of COVID-19 vaccination sites in the city from 89 to 75, as per Central government directions, an official said. The number of days immunisation will happen in a week at a vaccination site has also been reduced from six to four following the Centre's orders.

"On Wednesday, the Centre gave multiple directions which indicated to go a little slow on the vaccination drive," another official said.

The immunisation drive is set to begin from Saturday.

Meanwhile, 20,000 doses of Covaxin reached Delhi's central vaccine cold storage facility at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital



More doses of COVID-19 vaccine arrive in Delhi on Wednesday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

(RGSSH) on Wednesday afternoon, said hospital spokesman Chhavi Gupta.

On Tuesday, Delhi had received its first consignment of Covishield, 2.64 lakh doses, which were also stored at the RGSSH, as per the hospital.

On Wednesday evening, the doses were moved from

RGSSH to several district vaccine stores, multiple officials said. The Delhi government, however, did not officially comment on the move.

## Exception for Army

Exceptions will be given to healthcare workers of the armed forces and vaccine doses will be handed over to the armed forces without taking names of beneficiaries, according to a document seen by *The Hindu*.

A presentation made to the Delhi government by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Wednesday read: "The vaccines for the armed forces is to be handed over at the district level to their designated officer. No line listing of the beneficiaries may be asked and no registration on Co-WIN is required."

"Basically, from the district vaccine stores, the vaccine doses will be given to the armed forces for vaccinating their healthcare workers. The names will not be shared with the city government for security reasons. Only the total number of healthcare workers will be shared," a Delhi government official said.

"Only the number of healthcare worker vaccinated by the armed forces will be conveyed to the District Immunization Officer," the document read.

The document added that the Delhi government should give syringes along with the vaccines to the armed forces and support them for storage and any adverse event following immunisation.

## Minimum temperature settles at 3.2°C in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Dense fog brought visibility down to as low as 50 metres in some parts.

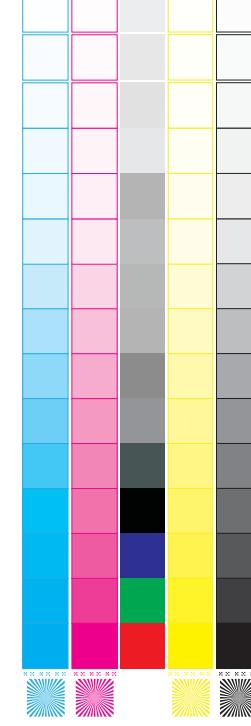
In the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to 4 degrees Celsius.

A severe cold wave is when the minimum is 2 degrees or less. Cold wave conditions are likely to prevail for the next two days.

The forecast for Thursday reads "partly cloudy sky with dense to very dense fog in the morning. Cold wave conditions in isolated pockets. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 19 and 3 degrees Celsius".

The sky was partially cloudy during the day.

Several parts of the city reported low visibility during the early hours.



## NDMC budget proposes + no new taxes in 2021-22

Focus is on public service delivery

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Smart roads, more dedicated toilets for third gender, public e-charging stations, drinking water fountains, a 50-bed hospital, bagless classrooms, and no imposing any new tax for the next financial year, are among the plans listed by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in its annual budget announced on Wednesday.

Civic body chairman Dharmendra presented a budget with a moderate surplus of ₹136.18 crore in the current financial year and ₹172.47 crore for financial year 2021-22 reflecting its

commitment to a well-governed and financially sustainable municipality.

**Internal governance'**

"NDMC has not proposed any new tax for the next financial year in spite of a number of reliefs granted this year... projects for the next financial year focus on uninterrupted power supply, other civic services and strengthening internal governance," he said in his budget speech.

"The New Delhi Municipal Council budget is focused on uninterrupted, smart, and caring public service delivery," he added.

## SC takes cognisance of contamination of rivers

'Quality of water affects public health'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday took *suo motu* cognisance of the contamination of rivers by sewage effluents through lapses committed by municipalities, saying "open surface water resources including rivers are the lifeline of human civilisation".

**'Right to life'**

"Deterioration of quality of fresh water has a direct correlation with the quality of public health... The right to clean environment, and further, pollution-free water, has been protected under the broad rubric of the right to life," a three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde said.

The Bench was hearing an urgent petition filed by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), represented by advocate Shadan Farasat, to "immediately stop" Haryana from discharging pollutants into

the Yamuna, which is causing an alarming increase in ammonia levels in the water. The Board said the increased ammonia levels have impaired its water treatment plants and a drinking water crisis looms large in Delhi.

"Ammonia and chlorine will cause cancer. We cannot release water to the citizens," senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, arguing counsel for the DJB, submitted.

The petition triggered the court to step in to protect rivers in similar peril as the Yamuna.

The court directed the registration of a PIL titled "Remediation of polluted rivers" and issued notice to the Centre, the Ministries of Environment and Housing and Urban Affairs and the Central Pollution Control Board.

It also sought response from Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

## Govt. launches fifth sero survey

It will be the largest such study conducted in the city so far

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has started a fifth serological survey to find the percentage of the population that has developed antibodies against COVID-19, an official source told *The Hindu*.

Blood samples of random people will be collected to check how many of them have developed antibodies against the virus.

"This is the largest such survey done by the government in terms of sample size and 28,000 samples will be collected.

The first such survey done in the city in June-July had shown that 23.4% people had developed antibodies. A survey in August showed 29.1% people had antibodies, 25.1% in September, and 25.5% in October.

The document added that the Delhi government should give syringes along with the vaccines to the armed forces and support them for storage and any adverse event following immunisation.



The aim of the fifth sero survey is to get an idea of the situation before people get the vaccine. ■ FILE: R.V. MOORTHY

has developed antibodies against the virus. This means that the person was infected at some point by the virus and now has developed immunity against it.

When a larger part of the population develops antibodies and becomes immune to the virus, the chain of transmission of the virus is broken and this reduces the spread of the disease and this is called herd immunity.

So, a higher value of sero prevalence is favourable.

As per experts, the result of the serological survey has to be about 50-60% to attain herd immunity.

## 357 new infections

Delhi on Wednesday reported 357 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total to 6,31,249. The death toll has risen to 10,718 with 11 more fatalities reported in a single day. There are now 2,991 active cases.

## Civic bodies ban sale, storage of poultry

Step taken after cases of bird flu were confirmed in Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The North, South and East Municipal Corporations of Delhi on Wednesday imposed a ban on sale, storage of poultry or processed chicken meat by shops and restaurants with immediate effect. The steps were taken after cases of bird flu were confirmed in the Capital.

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation ordered "complete prohibition of keeping live poultry birds, sale and purchase of poultry meat at shops and in restaurants and running processing and packaging units anywhere in the jurisdiction

of the civic body from immediate effect".

It added that in view of public health and safety, SDMC has asked people involved in poultry business to follow the prohibitory order properly. "If violated, action will be taken, and their Meat Trade License will also be cancelled. Owners of restaurants are being ordered not to serve food containing poultry meat and eggs. Otherwise penal action will be initiated against them as per the law," the order said.

Mayor of East Delhi Nirmlal Jain said that the EDMC has increased vigilance in area and that the civic body is conscious about the health of the citizens.

The North Delhi Municipal Corporation, in an order, said: "All meat and poultry shops and meat processing units in areas are prohibited to sell, store poultry or processed chicken meat with immediate effect, till further orders."

**Loss to businesses**  
The civic bodies' decision has left the owners of meat shops and restaurants in the national capital worried as they termed the order "needless" and said it would cause a huge loss to their businesses.

## Govt. issues health advisory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Health Department on Wednesday issued an advisory in view of bird flu cases in the city, asking people not to panic and follow a set of dos and don'ts, including not consuming half-cooked chicken, and half-boiled or half-fried eggs.

"Eat only completely cooked eggs and poultry products cooked at 70°C for 30 minutes," read the advisory, which also recommended cleaning any bowls used for feeding birds.

## SC takes cognisance of contamination of rivers

'Quality of water affects public health'

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday took *suo motu* cognisance of the contamination of rivers by sewage effluents through lapses committed by municipalities, saying "open surface water resources including rivers are the lifeline of human civilisation".

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the Yamuna, which is causing an alarming increase in ammonia levels in the water. The Board said the increased ammonia levels have impaired its water treatment plants and a drinking water crisis looms large in Delhi.

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# Farmers' protest puts JJP under strain

BJP's ruling alliance partner could face farmers' anguish and backlash, feels a section within the party

VIKAS VASUDEVA  
CHANDIGARH

Even as Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal and Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala have asserted that there was no threat to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Janayak Janta Party (JJP) coalition government, a section of JJP legislators continue to take their party to task by cautioning it on facing farmers' anguish and backlash in the backdrop of the JJP's support to Centre's farm laws.

Some political observers are of the view that while there's no imminent threat to the stability of the coalition government, if the farmers' agitation continues for long, it could result in cracks developing within the JJP. "If the ongoing agitation continues for a long period and the pressure on JJP MLAs from farmers mounts, then one or two MLAs could rebel," said Vijay Chauhan, Assistant Professor

and Head of the Department of Political Science, Maharana Pratap National College, Mullanagar.

In Haryana, the BJP and the JJP head a coalition government, with the BJP having 40 members and the JJP having 10 members in the 90-member State Assembly.

In Haryana, leaders of the BJP and the JJP have been facing protests by anguished farmers on the farm laws. On January 10, a group of people protesting the farm laws ransacked a venue at Kairala village in Karnal, where Mr. Lal was scheduled to address a farmers' gathering. Last month, a group of farmers dug up a makeshift helipad in Jind's Karsindhu village ahead of a scheduled visit by Mr. Chautala, and demanded his resignation.

Amid the ongoing protests Mr. Lal and Mr. Chautala on January 12 met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New



JJP chief Dushyant Chautala

Delhi. On Wednesday, Mr. Chautala even met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and deliberated on issues related to the farmers' protest.

#### Repeal the laws'

JJP MLA Ram Kumar Gautam, who has been vocal in his support of the farmers' cause on Wednesday told *The Hindu* that "if the three farm laws were not repealed then its consequences would not be good".

"When the farmer does not want these laws, then what's the necessity for

implementing them? The government should immediately repeal the laws and then engage farmers in talks. All those who are supporting the laws will suffer immense loss," said Mr. Gautam.

Mr. Gautam said the JJP is a one-man party and is being run by one family. "No one is realising that it would be difficult to cover up the loss arising due to farmers' anguish. The anti-defection law has made MLAs bonded labourers. We are handicapped. The way the Chief Minister's event was cancelled in Karnal - it's an eye-opener," he said.

Another JJP MLA, Jogi Ram Sihag, has also been vocal in his support to farmers and has been demanding repealing of the farm laws.

Professor Chauhan said, "In the last few days, several senior JJP leaders have spoken in favour of the farmers and indicated that the party may change its opinion. But

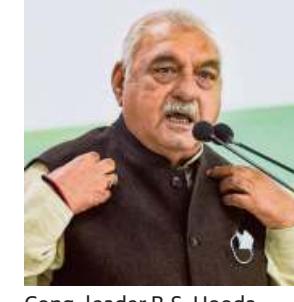
the number of these MLAs has been two or three. It is not easy for any JJP MLA to rebel from party as a two-third majority of MLAs is needed to save themselves from the anti-defection law. Moreover, there has been no strong statement from Dushyant Chautala that he wants to break the alliance with the BJP. Dushyant's stand on farmers' laws is like 'two steps forward and one step backward,' he said.

#### 'Chautala concerned'

JJP's Haryana State president Nishan Singh said that Mr. Chautala mainly deliberated on the farmers' protest, among other issues, in his meeting with the Union Minister. "Mr. Chautala expressed his concern over the issue of the farm laws and conveyed that the issue was serious and it should be addressed seriously," Mr. Singh told *The Hindu*.

# Haryana govt. has lost trust of people and MLAs, says Hooda

'Coalition regime will fall due to burden of its own failures'



Cong. leader B.S. Hooda

the coalition government on no-confidence motion instead of resigning. "If he resigns from the post of MLA, then it will benefit the government, because the Opposition will have one less vote," he said.

Reiterating his support to the farmers' agitation, Mr. Hooda said the farm laws harm not only the farmers but also every consumer and poor section of the society and this is why the movement has received support from all sections of the society. He said the government should accept the demands of the farmers and bring an end to the agitation.

The former Chief Minister said the laws would hurt the consumers and poor as there are fears that profiteers would indulge in black marketing.

## Panel to identify facilitators of 'illegal migrants'

Its constitution assumes significance with Assam polls just a few months away

RAHUL KARMAKAR  
GUWAHATI

The border wing of the Assam police has formed a five-member panel for taking "immediate and proactive steps to identify the intermediaries, facilitators, collaborators" of "illegal migrants from across the international border into Assam and initiate legal action to bring them to justice".

Comprising police officers, the committee is headed by Subhrayoti Borah, commandant of the 7th Assam Police Battalion based in

western Assam's Kokrajhar district.

Mukesh Agrawal, Special DGP (Border), confirmed the setting up of the panel after a meeting with Chief Secretary Jishnu Barua on January 11.

An order issued on the panel said the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Border), the SPs (Border), SP, Railway Police (Border) and other officials concerned would take legal action in their respective jurisdictions according to the recommendation of the five-member committee.

"They would also render necessary assistance to the committee in performing its task including utilisation of Border staff of the districts as and when required by the committee," the order said.

The DIG (Ranges) would supervise the progress of the work of the panel as would the Commissioner of Police for Guwahati and the IGP for the Bodoland Territorial Region.

"Identifying illegal migrants as well as people who help them enter India illegally has been part of our job. The only thing new is that a

panel has been formed for this," a Border police officer said.

#### Poll staple

But the constitution of the panel has assumed significance with the Assam Assembly elections barely four months away. The issue of illegal migrants, or "Bengal-deshis", has been a poll staple for most political parties.

The Assam Police Border Organisation was formed in 1962 under the Prevention of Infiltration of Pakistani scheme.

## ULFA(I) demands 'due share' from oil firm

It warns that abducted employee from Bihar will be harmed if anything goes wrong

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GUWAHATI

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) ULFA (I) has said a man from Bihar, one of the two employees of a private oil firm its cadres had abducted from an oil drilling site in Arunachal Pradesh almost a month ago, "will be a victim" if "anything goes wrong".

It said the other employee, an Assamese, would not be harmed.

On Tuesday evening, ULFA (I) chief Pares Baruah warned the New Delhi-based

Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Limited that Ram Kumar, one of its two abducted employees, could be harmed if the firm did not pay the outfit its "due share" as the price for exploiting the natural resources of Assam and elsewhere in the Northeast.

#### Duo abducted

On December 21, 2020, radio operator Ram Kumar, 35, and drilling superintendent Pranab Kumar Gogoi, 51, were abducted from the Kumchaikha hydrocarbon drilling site

in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The district borders Myanmar.

#### '₹20 cr. for release'

The outfit reportedly demanded ₹20 crore from the oil firm, a subsidiary of SREI Infrastructure Finance Ltd, for releasing the duo.

"This is not ransom. The conflict with all the MNCs [multinational companies] is because they are continuously exploiting our natural resources and have siphoned off billions of dollars over decades from our land, which we cannot accept. These MNCs have understanding with all political parties. They have to come to an understanding with us. All we want is our due share," Baruah told local TV channels.

He warned that Ram Kumar would be a victim if Indian security forces made any rescue attempts and the oil firm would be responsible for it. "Gogoi is an Assamese and he is with us unfortunately because of the situation and not by any plan. No harm will come to him and his family can rest assured," he said.

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CSC/Complaint-17302020

MEMO OF PARTIES

Shri Parveen Khera

S/o Late Shri Surendra Khera

Sole Proprietor

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

Address: 9212380290

3. Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

Manager

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

WhatsApp No.: 9212380290

Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

Manager

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

Address: 9212380290

Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

Manager

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

Address: 9212380290

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Defendant

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Given under my hand as the date this

06/01/2021

District Judge, Commercial Court-Central, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-110054

VERSUS

1. M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

through its Proprietor

Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

2. Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

Manager

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

Address: 9212380290

Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

Manager

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

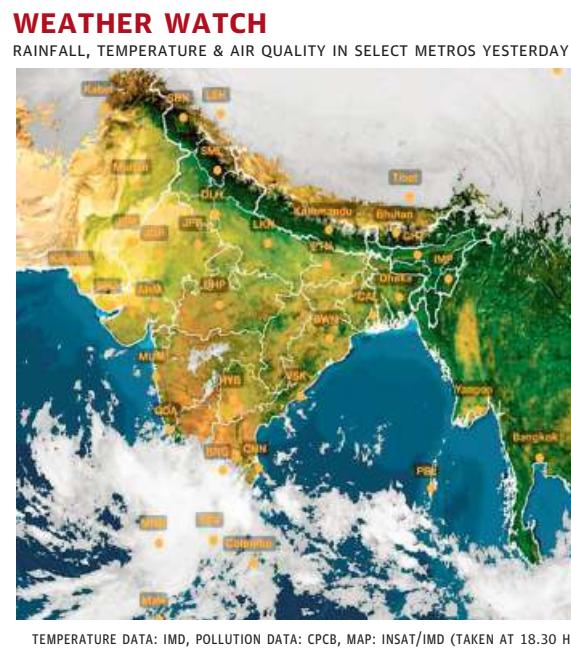
Address: 9212380290

Shri Rishi Kumar Agarwal

Manager

M/s Shree Radhey Trading Company

Address: 9212380



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.30 HRS)

**Forecast for Thursday:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over Lakshadweep. Cold wave/severe cold wave/damaging winds likely in some/isolated pockets over Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Dense fog likely at isolated places over Assam, Sikkim, Manipur and Mizoram

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	23.2	14.2	8.8	Kozhikode	...-30.4...	24.8	19.1
Ahmedabad	27.0	12.0	10.0	Kurnool	...-30.4...	19.1	11.5
Aizawl	23.0	11.5	10.0	Lucknow	...-17.4...	5.0	5.0
Allahabad	20.8	6.2	4.0	Madurai	10.2	28.0	22.6
Bengaluru	27.7	16.8	13.0	Mangaluru	...-31.5...	21.6	16.8
Bhopal	22.9	7.0	5.0	Mumbai	...-34.6...	22.0	22.0
Bhubaneswar	31.8	22.6	18.0	Mysuru	...-30.2...	20.8	20.8
Chandigarh	13.7	6.5	4.0	New Delhi	...-18.5...	3.2	3.2
Chennai	29.7	24.0	18.0	Patna	...-19.9...	7.6	7.6
Coimbatore	0.1	26.5	21.6	Port Blair	...-29.9...	25.5	25.5
Dehradoon	18.4	8.7	6.0	Puducherry	4.4	29.2	22.0
Gangtok	0.2	10.8	8.2	Pune	...-32.2...	17.0	17.0
Goa	35.1	22.2	18.0	Raipur	...-29.0...	14.8	14.8
Guwahati	23.2	15.2	10.0	Ranchi	...-25.1...	9.2	9.2
Hubballi	29.0	19.0	14.0	Shillong	...-16.5...	4.8	4.8
Hyderabad	30.9	17.6	12.0	Shimla	...-17.8...	5.9	5.9
Imphal	20.3	3.7	1.0	Srinagar	...-3.2...	7.8	7.8
Jaipur	25.2	6.6	4.0	Thiruvananthapuram	12.6	27.2	23.3
Kochi	30.6	25.0	18.0	Tiruchi	28.7	27.0	22.2
Kohima	15.4	3.0	1.0	Vijayawada	...-30.1...	21.2	21.2
Kolkata	22.8	15.4	10.0	Visakhapatnam	...-30.0...	21.6	21.6

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	18	143	30	95	...-30.4...	42
Bengaluru	15	.92	29	90	...-30.4...	42
Chennai	10	16	35	154	...-30.4...	42
Delhi	24	58	89	410	335	42
Hyderabad	12	80	23	218	...-30.4...	42
Kolkata	26	24	46	314	187	42
Lucknow	12	73	68	360	266	42
Mumbai	.8	92	12	238	249	42
Pune	...-60	-	.276	201	220	42
Visakhapatnam	21	88	49	228	220	42

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

**SO<sub>2</sub>:** Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

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

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

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

**Yesterday**

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air-quality index (AQI) score of 398 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Mairah, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 42

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has allowed State, national and international educational boards to hold exams physically in Mumbai by following COVID-19 guidelines.

Last month, citing fear of a second wave, the BMC deferred the reopening of schools and colleges till January 15. However, it has now

Jail superintendent should ensure that they do not contain objectionable material

**SONAM SAIGAL**  
MUMBAI

The special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court has allowed Sudha Bharadwaj, accused in the Bhima-Koregaon violence case, access to five books a month from outside the Byculla district prison.

Special judge D.E. Kothalkar directed the Superintendent of the prison to grant the access to Ms. Bharadwaj, trade unionist and human rights lawyer.

The court said, "The Superintendent shall carefully examine the books and if they contain objectionable material, which preaches violence, vulgar, obscene, pornographic or the material propagating the banned organisation namely Revolutionary Democratic Front or CPI (Maoist), in that case he shall not allow the applicant [Ms. Bharadwaj] to accept such books."

On November 11, a clerk from the office of Ms. Bharadwaj's lawyer had gone to the prison to deliver a parcel



**Tight security:** A policewoman escorts lawyer-activist Sudha Bharadwaj to the Pune district and sessions court. ■ FILE PHOTO

consisting of two kurta and one book. The jail authorities, however, accepted the parcel but removed the book – *The Empire of Cotton* by Sten Backert.

On December 30 last year, lawyers representing Ms. Bharadwaj, along with co-accused in the case Hany Babu and Gautam Navlakha, lodged at the Taloja Central Jail moved the special NIA court seeking access to

books and newspapers in prison. Mr. Navlakha sought two books – *The World Of Jeeves and Wooster* by P.G. Wodehouse and *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* by James C. Scott. Meanwhile, Mr. Babu wanted to read three books namely *A Man Called Ove* by Fredrick Backman, *Sea of Poppies* by Amitava Ghosh and *Last Train to Istanbul* by Ayse Kulin.

**Consider Rao's age, health: HC to NIA**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said the National Investigation Agency and the State government should consider the age and health condition of poet-activist Varavara Rao, arrested in the Elgar Parishad, while making submissions on his bail plea.

A Division Bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Manish Pitale posted Mr. Rao's plea on medical grounds for hearing on Thursday.

Mr. Rao was last month admitted to Nanavati Hospital following the court's intervention while hearing a petition filed by his wife, raising concerns over his health. Since then, the hospital has been submitting periodical reports on his health condition to the HC.

**Rajasthan gets its first vaccine consignment**

First batch comprises 20,000 doses

**MOHAMMED IQBAL**  
JAIPUR

The first consignment of COVID-19 vaccines for Rajasthan arrived here on Wednesday, three days ahead of the nationwide vaccination drive on January 16. The first batch, comprising 20,000 doses manufactured by Bharat Biotech, landed in a flight from Hyderabad at Sanganaer airport here.

**4.50 lakh to be covered**  
Principal Secretary (Medical & Health) Siddharth Mahajan visited the model vaccination centre at Sawai Man Singh Government Hospital here and saw the arrangements. About 4.50 lakh healthcare and frontline workers across the State will be administered the vaccine in the first phase of the drive.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said after the arrival of vaccines, the State government would ensure a smooth process of vaccination and show a "model like the COVID-19 management". "We have reasons to be optimistic in Rajasthan with low infection and lowest mortality rates," Mr. Gehlot tweeted, while asking people to keep following the health protocols and taking precautions.

Another consignment of 4.43 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine, manufactured by

## Education boards get BMC nod to hold exams

Civic body allows schools to conduct tests in Mumbai from January 18

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has allowed State, national and international educational boards to hold exams physically in Mumbai by following COVID-19 guidelines.

Last month, citing fear of a second wave, the BMC deferred the reopening of schools and colleges till January 15. However, it has now

**Bhandara fire: victims' kin to get ₹2 lakh each**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NAGPUR

Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Wednesday announced an aid of ₹2 lakh each to the families of 10 infants who died in a fire at Bhandara district general hospital on January 9.

Mr. Koshyari said the fire incident was hurtful during a visit to the hospital.

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pre-planned examinations of Classes IX to XII. Other boards like SSC, HSC (Maharashtra board), CBSE, IB, CISCE and IGCSE can conduct exams of Classes X and XII as per their planned time table, the BMC said.

"They should follow all the precautionary, health, cleanliness and security guidelines for the COVID-19 pandemic," the order said.

According to the BMC, in

the Mumbai municipal limits, some subjects of the Cambridge board schools for Classes IX to XII are of February-March session and their examinations are starting on January 23.

The BMC last month allowed city-based schools of the U.S. and other countries to reopen from January 18, but has not specified when exactly the other educational institutions can reopen.

Name mentioned in tweets on State Cabinet decisions

**STAFF REPORTER**  
MUMBAI

The official Twitter handle of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) again stirred controversy on Wednesday by referring to Osmanabad as Dharashiv while posting about the decisions taken at a State Cabinet meeting.

The CMO tweeted a photo with the caption: "Dha-



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Accused in drug case gets bail

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
MUMBAI

A court here on Wednesday granted bail to Ramkumar Tiwari, one of the owners of Muchhad Paanwala shop, who was arrested in connection with a drug case. Mr. Tiwari was granted bail by the court of a metropolitan magistrate on a cash bond of ₹15,000.

Mr. Tiwari was questioned for several hours by the Narcotics Control Bureau on January 11 after his name cropped up during the investigation into a drugs case in which three people, including a British national, were arrested with drugs from Khar and Bandra on January 9.



## Terror trail

Pakistan's action against terrorists is welcome, but nowhere near enough

In his speech to the UN Security Council (UNSC) marking 20 years since the resolutions that announced a global commitment to the war against terror after the U.S. 9/11 attacks, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made a pitch for greater coordination between counter terrorism agencies worldwide. He highlighted the necessity to streamline the process of the UN's top body in designating terrorists while strengthening coordination in the agencies that check their financial resources. First, the world must acknowledge that terrorist organisations use not only extortion and money laundering, drugs and wildlife trafficking to raise funds, but, in the present and future, will use loopholes in digital security and the "anonymity" provided by block chain technology to access finances. Second, in a clear reference to Pakistan, he spoke of the need to link actions between the UN and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and for countries that "willfully provide financial assistance and safe havens" as well as "5 star" treatment to criminals and terrorists, to be held to account by them. His words are significant given that a FATF committee, the Asia Pacific Joint Group (APJG), is meeting this week to finalise recommendations for the FATF on whether to continue Pakistan's 'greylisting status', downgrade it to a blacklist, or let it off, decisions that India is watching closely. Finally, he pointed to countries that allow their "political and religious" affinities to decide on issues of designation of terrorists, blocking and unblocking requests at the UNSC for such reasons rather than technically evaluate the evidence against these individuals. While the broad message here was for China, which has often blocked India's efforts to designate individuals at the UNSC, this also includes Turkey and Malaysia which have helped Pakistan avoid stringent measures at the FATF thus far.

While Mr. Jaishankar's words were meant for the global struggle with terrorism since 2001, their import is for India's particular problems with Pakistan and cross-border terrorism in the present for the impending decision at the FATF plenary next month. Pakistan's recent actions, including the sudden arrests and quick convictions of most wanted figures Zaki Ur Rehman Lakhvi and Hafiz Saeed, and the warrant for JeM chief Masood Azhar, all in cases of terror financing, indicate that Islamabad is aware of the importance of these decisions for its economic future; for the moment, the government is appearing to fall in line with the FATF's 27-point action plan. By drawing the connection between the actions of the UNSC and the FATF together, Mr. Jaishankar is indicating that India is not only watching what Pakistan does but also how the international community "walks the talk" on "zero tolerance to terrorism".

## Final blow

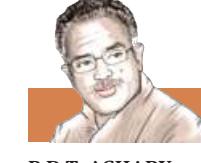
Biden shouldn't be deterred by the policy reversal on Cuba by the Trump administration

The Trump administration's decision to redesignate Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism, taken in its last days, appears to be a blatantly politicised move, bereft of any strategic or moral reasoning. In the announcement, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cited Cuba's hosting of 10 Colombian rebels, a few American fugitives and its backing for Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro as evidence for its "support for acts of international terrorism". The designation now puts the Caribbean country with Iran, North Korea and Syria, and would trigger fresh sanctions, making it more difficult for Cuba to do business. Havana has stated that returning the Colombian rebels would complicate the peace process in which it is a mediator. With regard to Venezuela, Cuba is following a foreign policy which it thinks serves its best interests, dealing with the country's government, irrespective of Washington's opinion. Not even the harshest critics of the single-party communist government in Havana, which faced domestic protests recently for freedom of expression, would allege its involvement in terrorist activities. As the Trump administration prepares to hand over power to a new President, it is taking a host of consequential foreign policy decisions that would make it difficult for Joe Biden to move quickly on his foreign policy agenda.

America's acrimony towards Cuba has its roots in the Cold War period. As U.S. President Barack Obama noted when he opened up towards Cuba, their adverse relations were a relic of the past. He had taken a more realistic approach towards the Cubans than his predecessors. The U.S. has punished Cuba for decades with harsh sanctions, hoping that the Castro regime would eventually collapse. But the Cuban communists survived even the fall of the Soviet Union. With the Cold War memories fading and a new generation of Americans demanding a reset in foreign policy, Mr. Obama re-established ties, opened the American embassy and travelled to Havana, marking a new beginning. The logical approach of his successor should have been taking more confidence-building measures between the two countries and working towards a gradual normalisation of ties. But Donald Trump did just the opposite. It is strange that the U.S., the world's largest military power that had cooperated with communist China since the early 1970s, still treats this tiny communist country that lies off the Florida coast as an enemy. Mr. Biden, during his campaign, had criticised the Trump administration's Cuba policy and promised a more open approach. He could reverse the terror listing, but it would take time as the decision should follow a review process. Perhaps that is what Mr. Trump, who resisted the November election result till the Congressional certification of Mr. Biden's victory, wants. Mr. Biden should not be deterred by these last-minute policy sabotages.

# Farm laws, their constitutional validity, and hope

In the event of further judicial intervention, there are grounds and an opportunity for the government to revisit the laws



P.D.T. ACHARY

**W**ith the Supreme Court of India staying the operation of the farm laws and setting up a committee of experts to negotiate with the government and the farmers, the agitation being carried on by the farmers is entering a new phase. The farmers' unions have not reacted favourably to the formation of the experts' committee. As it happens, the committee does not comprise entirely impartial experts. Most of them are well known and strong defenders of the farm laws, and are critical of the agitation.

### The situation now

For conducting negotiations with both the government and the farmers, the members of the committee ought to and should be known to have an open mind on the core issues, which alone will create a necessary confidence in the parties concerned. The farmers have, however, made it clear that they will not agree to anything less than the repeal of these laws. This would mean that the present agitation is likely to continue indefinitely. It is not yet clear what impact the report of this committee will have on the final decision of the Supreme Court on the question of the constitutional validity of the farm laws. That is the real issue before the Supreme Court. So whatever the experts' committee recommends, the question of the constitutional validity of the farm

laws can be decided only after a proper hearing of the matter before the Court. The most curious thing about a decision on this issue by the Supreme Court is that if the Court upholds the validity of the laws, the agitation will not stop because the farmers' demand is for the repeal of the laws.

But the government of India seems to have taken a maximalist approach, particularly on the question of a repeal of the farm laws. While the repeal of a law is a simple legislative act, having to repeal a law in which the government has invested a lot of its prestige is not so easy especially for a government which is extremely proud of its numerical majority in the Lok Sabha, which has generated a great deal of hubris. On the other hand, the farmers are unwilling on the demand for a repeal.

### Not in accordance with rules

The constitutional validity of the farm laws has been challenged in the Supreme Court mainly on the ground that Parliament has no legislative competence to enact these laws, the subject matter of which is essentially in the State list. But there is a more fundamental reason to challenge these enactments which will be examined now.

It is a universally acknowledged fact that the voting on the Farm Bills in the Rajya Sabha was not done in accordance with the rules of the House. These rules require the Chair to order the recording of votes (division) by members even when one member demands it. The Deputy Chairman of the House, who was conducting the proceedings at that time, did not order division although a few



members openly and loudly demanded it. It is true that there was disorder in the House but it could have been controlled and a proper voting could have been conducted. Disorder was not taking place for the first time in the House. Thus, there was a violation of the rules of the House in passing the Bills by voice vote when there was a demand for division.

### Voice vote is unrecognised

But the matter goes beyond the violation of the House rules. It involves the violation of the Constitution itself. Article 100 says that all questions at any sitting of either House shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and voting. Majority can be determined only in terms of number, and therefore what this Article requires is that all questions in the House should be determined by recording the votes of the members present and voting. Majority cannot be determined through voice vote. In fact the Constitution does not recognise voice vote to determine majority in a legislature. However, deciding a question by voice vote is a practice prevailing in all legislatures. This was devised for the sake of convenience and there is always an assumption that since the government of the day has a majority, any proposal before the House

has the support of the majority. But that assumption goes when a member demands voting in the House and the Chair has, then, no option but to order the actual voting. Since this was not done and the Bills were all passed by voice vote, there is a violation of the rules as well as the Constitution.

### Options before the judiciary

It is true that Article 122 of the Constitution protects the proceedings of the House from judicial review. But this protection is available only when the proceedings are challenged on irregularity of procedure. Violation of the Constitution is not a mere irregularity of procedure. The Supreme Court in Raja Ram Pal's case had clarified that the proceedings can be challenged on substantive grounds like violation of the Constitutional provisions. Therefore, the Farm Bills were passed in the Rajya Sabha in violation of Article 100 of the Constitution and can be challenged in the Supreme Court on that ground.

Now what are the options before the Supreme Court if and when such a challenge is made? The Court can strike down the whole laws as the requirement of Article 107 has not been fulfilled. This Article says that a Bill shall not be deemed to have been passed unless it has been agreed to by both Houses. As has been explained above, the Bills have not in fact been passed by the Rajya Sabha because the majority had not been determined in accordance with Article 100. It would mean that the three Bills did not become laws.

The Court may also invalidate the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha and send the three 'Acts' back

to that House for further proceedings in accordance with the constitutional provisions. If this happens, it may provide a good opportunity to the government to revisit these laws. These can then be referred to a Select Committee of the Rajya Sabha which can invite the farmers and all other stakeholders and finally produce better Bills. Such an opportunity is invaluable in the present circumstances when the government is facing virtually a no-win situation. If, on the other hand, the government decides to withdraw the Bills after these are sent back to the Rajya Sabha on the ground that it wants to bring fresh Bills with altered proposals, it will have that option too under the rules of the House. The possibility of these options can be creatively considered for finding a solution to this problem.

### Centrality of Parliament

We may not forget that the issue that needs to be settled by the top court is only the constitutional validity of the laws. In resolving a problem like the agitation by farmers against the laws, the centrality of Parliament in the legislative process in all its dimensions should not be lost sight of. Once the Court decides the legality or constitutionality of a law, the political and legislative aspects of the issue will have to be dealt with only by Parliament. Parliament and its systems alone can produce a satisfactory solution. The only condition is that the government which is accountable to Parliament should genuinely demonstrate its faith in those systems.

P.D.T. Achary is a former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha

## Mediating the farmers' protests is difficult terrain

If the top court does find itself mandated by a higher public duty to intervene, then it must observe some essentials



SRIRAM PANNU

**F**or nearly half a hundred days, the farmers of North India protesting against the recent farm laws have been at the capital's outskirts, braving the bitter cold, and growing in numbers. They have mostly kept the peace and their dignity, and their communities seem ready to support them for as long as need be. If the authorities had any hopes of the protest petering out by dissonant voices claiming to represent farmers, or labelling them as anti-national and fuelled by pro-Khalistan elements, these do not look like carrying much weight. New Delhi's mandarins have a first class headache, brought on principally by the way in which they hustled through legislation which affects the lifeline of India's agrarian sector.

### Central issue is about trust

One thing stands out clearly, and that is the lack of trust the farmers have developed about the designs of the government; the laws, they say, will leave them at the mercy of corporates. Given the imputed closeness of the ruling elite with corporate houses which have ascended to commanding heights of the economy in multiple key sec-

tors, this is not a charge easily to discount. The farmers' focus is on retention of the MSP, the minimum support price mainly for wheat and rice, and the need to provide a statutory backing for this, in the absence of which a corporate with ready cash will tap into farms in need. And the necessity of continuing with the *mandi* system which provides the wherewithal for open trade. On its part, the government offers assurances but these fall short of binding legal mandates, in other words asking the farmer to accept on trust that all will be well – and that brings us back to the central problem of lack of trust in the central government.

Another thing that stands out clearly is the fact that the Prime Minister and the top leadership have been absent from dialogues with the farmers' representatives, these being helmed by junior Ministers out of the decision-making range. The earnestness of the government in finding a fair solution would have been well demonstrated if its heads lent a willing ear to those who toil on the ground to keep us well fed. For the essence of a hearing is that it may well open out your mind and give you a better perspective. And it brings comfort and confidence to those who are agitating to have their concerns redressed.

### Committee and its mandate

In the encrusted stalemate now comes pitchforked the appointment of a committee by the Supreme Court, before which were



petitions calling for removal of protesters and challenging the farm laws, accompanied by a stay of implementation of the laws with observations to the effect that the protesters need not continue on site. This is problematic for several reasons. Staying a law on legal grounds of *prima facie* force in the constitutional challenge is one thing, holding it in abeyance to facilitate the committee's work and dispersal of protesters is another. Another is the mandate itself – the committee is supposedly made up of experts to give its recommendations to the Court on the laws; where exactly does a court come into the picture in what seems to be a legislative and executive exercise? It is another matter for a court to undertake legal examination and on finding provisions to be *ultra vires*, strike them down or declare the entire law void.

The body has not been termed a mediation committee nor formally tasked with conducting a mediation, but the Court does mention a role in assisting the negotiations between the farmers and the government, and in public discourse this is being talked about. A struc-

tured mediation would be approached differently. First, and this is of the essence, all necessary parties must consent to it; mediation's strength lies in its voluntary aspect. Here, prominent farmer unions held back, perhaps because they perceive that growing public support dictates the choice of the political battleground rather than the mediation table; if so, the Court should be circumspect before entering the arena. The other reason for rejection has to do with the second basic requirement for mediation, that the mediators must be fair and neutral, and seen and perceived by all parties to be such. Appointing persons who have publicly taken strong stands on the merits of the matter is asking for a non-starter.

### The pathway to take

It is a tricky situation and caution would forbear a Court from wading into a political minefield. However, it has repeatedly been said by the Chief Justice of India that the negotiations seem to be going nowhere, and something urgent needs to be done. In times gone by, the Court has utilised its reservoir of public trust to mandate and structure a mediation in public disputes. This is being occasioned because increasingly, current day politicians seem to have lost the willingness and capacity to reach out and build bridges and find solutions. But if the Court does find itself mandated by a higher public duty to intervene, then it must observe some essentials. The first is

to offer a committee of such composition that its neutrality, calibre and *gravitas* command respect and persuade doubters to give the process a try. There are some, but not many, former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of India who will qualify to serve. The second is to obtain from the government the assurance that its highest level will meet the committee and participate in the proceedings. With this on offer, the consent of all parties may be secured.

Once discussions start and are properly guided, solutions are possible. It may well be that once the important elements get focused upon and the key concerns expressed, approaches will open up which will secure legitimate interests to the maximum extent possible. Right now, parties are log jammed on the demand for immediate repeal, and the counter of focusing on amendments. The Supreme Court order may relegate this obstacle to the background. With all aspects on the table, it may be possible to get agreement and then put forward a law for repeal and reenactment, a known legislative device. All this is however possible if it is mediation on accepted principles and lines, which is not the case now. The Court needs to be careful about further continuance; its reservoir of public trust should not further be diminished.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Rebooting SAARC

When the very same SAARC leaders, who had

keeping away from the South Asian alliance that was formed with an intention to promote amity and mutually beneficial and comprehensive cooperation.

Breathing life into the almost moribund organisation will eventually promote the welfare of the people of South Asia, accelerate economic growth and increase collaboration in economic, social, cultural, technological and also scientific fields.

NALINI VIJAYARAGHAVAN,  
Thiruvananthapuram

for other subregional multilateral mechanisms will have adverse consequences on the long-term stability of the region. For India, the reality of China using the Belt and Road Initiative as a platform to mobilise almost all South Asian countries, except perhaps Bhutan and the Maldives, can be dealt with by initiating a fresh diplomatic dialogue with Pakistan with the aim of reviving SAARC's stalled meetings. Just as it is effectively using vaccine diplomacy now, New Delhi can mobilise trade and investment to revive SAARC. Bilateral tensions between any two members should not be allowed to jeopardise the bloc's normal functioning.

BEJOY SEBASTIAN,  
Kochi

■ South Asia cannot afford to miss full-fledged regional integration, both economically and politically, and for that, both India and Pakistan need to cooperate. Compromising the importance of a pan-regional organisation such as SAARC

Initiative and forging strong economic links with most of the countries in the region is turning out to be a big challenge that India needs to tackle dexterously. Reviving and reinvigorating ties with the neighbourhood countries should not be a difficult task, given the excellent relations India had earlier with all of them. Moving towards an idea of a cohesive economic grouping is the key.

KOSARAJU CHANDRAMOULI,  
Hyderabad

■ China's strategic move of making inroads into South Asia using the Belt and Road

has come forward to awaken both the parties on the imperative need to sort out the grave national issue at the earliest and avoid further bruises. How can one cast aspersions on this good intention? The very fact that the Court has been severe in its criticism of the government speaks of its *bona fide* intent. As the constitutional court of the country as well as an advisory court, the top court has acted well within its domain.

RAM MOHANAS K.,  
Malappuram, Kerala

■ There appears to be a glimmer of hope in the top court's intervention, although there is room for doubt about the intentions behind the stay and the committee being set up. The panel might only budge a little; besides this, some of its members have already

expressed their choice in favour of the farm laws which does not instill confidence in us. One hopes that there is transparency and that the intent is not merely to ensure a trouble-free Republic Day.

S. SUHIRTHI MAHARANI,  
Karan, Tamil Nadu

**Vaccines on the way**  
The reports and images of the vaccine rollout bring relief that there is finally a solution to the novel coronavirus pandemic, that has only spelt misery. The efforts of our public health specialists are a source of confidence. Going forward, our (political) leaders must now ensure maximum vaccination publicity and see to it that all Indians are properly vaccinated.

A.J. RANGARAJAN,  
Chennai

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# Karnataka's giant leaps backward

It has squandered its precious political and administrative heritage



JANAKI NAIR

My local bank has a framed picture of M. Visvesvaraya on its wall, a curious throwback to an era of optimistic belief that over time, Mysore, and later the enlarged State of Karnataka, would take its place among the most modernised and industrialised regions of India. Certainly, Visvesvaraya, as Chief Engineer and then Dewan and even in unofficial capacities, hoped that the State would enter into and reorganise nearly all aspects of economic, social and cultural life to make Mysore modern – in the absence of a social class before independence that could lead that transformation.

But his portrait in the bank is marked by *vibhuti* and vermillion markings, a sign of what Indians prefer to do even the most ardent representatives of tradition: worship them, rather than walk their path. 'Industrialise or perish!' was among his most well-known injunctions, but he left no stone unturned in proposing a developmental regime for everything, from the establishment of Sahitya Parishats and club cultures to social audits of government work – the State in effect compensating for an absent civil society. And he considered 'tradition' (naively but unwaveringly) as an ideological drag on the State's development – almost unbelievable in these times.

**Policies of inclusion**  
Karnataka was once known for its pioneering policies of inclusion – the Miller Committee Report of 1919 which proposed reservations for Backward Classes (though note, not those then referred to as 'Panchamas' and reservations were finally accepted only in May 1921), family planning and rights of women to property in 1934. It was heralded for the bold and creative post-independence measures of Chief Ministers like Devaraj Urs (1972-80), who has been justly acclaimed as among the most important non-communist Chief Ministers, fiercely committed to deepening democracy and social equali-



"In rushing through an anti-cow slaughter ordinance without a debate, the Karnataka government undoes more than a century of nuanced debate on the matter." Karnataka Rural Development Minister K.S. Eshwarappa does a cow puja in front of Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ty. The State has had upper caste Chief Ministers who balanced the two dominant castes as well as non-dominant caste Chief Ministers. All of them added to the State's commitment to democracy and development in different ways. Whatever their quirks and failures, none of them made an agenda of peddling hate. The State's splendid economic achievements evolved in ways that are too obvious to bear repetition.

**Debates on anti-cow slaughter**  
Today we are in precipitous decline, thanks to the current leadership, which insists on taking its cues from the Indo-Gangetic regions of India, instead of looking to more recent peninsular achievements in managing natural disasters, pandemics, or in encouraging educational reform. In rushing through an anti-cow slaughter ordinance without a debate, the present government undoes more than a century of nuanced debate and policy on the matter.

For example, Mysore's Dewan Seshadri Iyer refused those members of the Mysore Legislative Assembly demanding prohibition of cow slaughter not once but four times (in 1884, 1885, 1889, 1890), saying that

the custom had been in existence for so long that it was impossible to ban it without the consent of all classes of people.

Decades later, M.K. Gandhi took the same stand when the Mysore Cow Protection Committee, an all-Hindu body constituted by the Maharaja to explore the prospect of a legislative ban, asked for his opinion in 1927. He too said that legislative bans were meaningless: Mysore had already led the way in creating a more positive programme. "It has," he said, "from all accounts received by me, a popular prince, an enlightened public opinion, no Hindu-Mussalman question, and a sympathetic Dewan. Mysore has also the Imperial Institute of Dairying and Animal Husbandry... The state has, therefore, all the materials necessary for evolving a constructive policy" (emphasis mine). No wonder, as Dewan Mirza Ismail later recounted, "the committee expressed itself unanimously against any restriction in the matter of cow slaughter" unlike other States. "Their opinion," he said, "was based mainly on economic grounds." How remarkable that men separated by time and space – Seshadri Iyer, M.K. Gandhi, Mirza Ismail,

the word 'development' sends shudders through the spines singled out for such effort, and equally those left out of it. Agrarian communities feared the arrival of 'development' in the form of the amendments to the Land Reforms Act of 2020 that permitted non-agriculturalists to buy land. In keeping with the penchant of the national government for 'bigger and better' even in the time of financial distress, the Chief Minister has announced a ₹500 crore 'renovation' of the Anubhava Mantapa at Basava Kalyan (formerly Hyderabad Karnataka), among the least developed regions of the State.

The work of Visvesvaraya and a legion of progressive administrators now stands tarnished.

Janaki Nair taught history at the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi

and Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV shared a different idea of India, which was economically independent and culturally inclusive.

## Following the U.P. model

The current Karnataka government now flatters Uttar Pradesh's 'administrative genius' by imitation, and proposes to protect 'its' women by passing a 'love jihad' law. It is as if Karnataka is mesmerised by U.P., which has seen child deaths in hospital, deadly crumbling infrastructure and steadily increasing violence against women. All this is compounded by the illegalities of the State, and its commitment to endangering its minority population.

Karnataka's own men in saffron, the mathadhipatis, who number in the thousands, had for long kept a respectable distance from the hurly burly of representative politics (or had at least refrained from public pronouncements). They have now shown no hesitation in appearing in public to voice their demands, particularly on the heated debate on 'reservations within reservations' and on whether their sub-caste deserves more ministerships and administrative headships. Not a day passes without one or another Swamiji threatening padayatras, rallies or other protests on the question of how much more their micro-group deserves. Karnataka thus moves closer to 'proportional representation', far from the democratic impulse of the Communal Government Order.

The word 'development' sends shudders through the spines singled out for such effort, and equally those left out of it. Agrarian communities feared the arrival of 'development' in the form of the amendments to the Land Reforms Act of 2020 that permitted non-agriculturalists to buy land. In keeping with the penchant of the national government for 'bigger and better' even in the time of financial distress, the Chief Minister has announced a ₹500 crore 'renovation' of the Anubhava Mantapa at Basava Kalyan (formerly Hyderabad Karnataka), among the least developed regions of the State.

# Building trust in vaccines

By being accountable and transparent and countering misinformation, the government can improve vaccine intake



CHAPAL MEHRA

Over the last year, as the novel coronavirus has plagued humanity killing thousands, the role of science and particularly vaccines has become critical. To millions, vaccines represent the possibility of a swift end to an uncontrollable pandemic. It is not surprising then that recent news of promising vaccines has been greeted with hope and faith.

In India, however, lack of transparency and public information as well as the government's seeming high-handedness have started creating a distrustful narrative around the two vaccine candidates. The accelerated approval of Covaxin without Phase III trials data puts forth several critical questions. Why are approvals shrouded in mystery? Has the scientific process and validation been followed rigorously before approval? Most importantly, why has there been no open discussion and comprehensive public education about the vaccines?

## Fear and scepticism

The role of the vaccine in putting an end to this pandemic is critical. Yet public trust in such vaccines is indispensable. In short, a vaccine-led control effort will only be as effective as the public confidence and support it garners. However, as experts and politicians engage in public sparring, the general public's fear and scepticism around these vaccines is only growing. This underscores the urgent need and critical importance of transparency as also public education and participation in this process.

For the public, there exist multiple concerns around any large-scale vaccination programme. A vast majority of these concerns are fuelled by a lack of trust in approval processes, insufficient information combined with limited health literacy and a poor understanding of the protection vaccines provide. These concerns are exacerbated when you couple them with the fact that trust in public institutions has been quite low, especially in the wake of the lockdowns and economic desperation. So, the expectation that populations will accept a vaccine blindly and flock to government programmes to take it is misguided.

How do we remedy this? The government and public institutions need to start by building open, participative frameworks for building trust, and engaging all sta-

keholders, especially experts and communities, on these vaccines. This should have started months ago but even now it is not late.

For building trust, a national forum needs to be created. It should include representatives from all stakeholders, where both the scientific basis for approval and the roll-out strategy need to be discussed. Until this is done, public confidence will remain low.

Simultaneously, there needs to be public education and information through large-scale State- and local-level networks where people are informed, sensitised and their feedback taken. These efforts need to be guided by scientific experts, communication and community specialists and leaders. This is important because misinformation about the vaccines is rife. This is potentially damaging for any mass vaccination programme.

## Participatory decision-making

The people who need to take this vaccine need to understand the programme, be assured of the vaccine's efficacy but also be involved in decision-making. Local leaders from public figures to religious leaders need to be made Ambassadors in this process. Local networks from self-help to faith groups, the media and even educational institutions need to participate to help citizens understand its importance and build trust. It is important that the process is not just directive but participative with people being able to ask questions and offer suggestions.

It is instructive to note that this will be the largest immunisation exercise to be rolled out globally. Yet, in India we still have no idea what the roll-out and access strategy is. This is why an accountable, open, ground-up participative model needs to be implemented. This conversation should be led by experts, local and community leaders, not political leaders. In fact, using vaccines for political gains and image building, though not unexpected, will not only be unethical but counterproductive.

Governments everywhere need to understand that a simple, democratic, yet effective way of improving uptake while reducing costs is by creating participatory frameworks of engaging experts and communities and building effective and reliable public information, and transparency.

Science has done its job. Now it is time for the government's to do what is expected in a democracy - be accountable, build trust and counter misinformation with openness and communication and not obfuscation.

Chapal Mehra is Public Health Specialist and Director, Pi Consulting

## Two protests and false parallels

While democracy was under siege in the U.S. last week, autocracy was under siege in Hong Kong in 2019

RYAN HO KILPATRICK

As a pro-Trump mob swarmed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, the comparisons drawn to the storming of Hong Kong's Legislative Council (LegCo) complex on July 1, 2019 were immediate. The two historic moments marked days when protest movements breached the hearts of their respective governments. But that is where the similarities ended. Beyond this superficial level, the differences between the two were numerous.

### Stark differences

While those besieging the Capitol sought to overturn the results of an election to cement their strongman leader's rule, those in Hong Kong sought to secure their right to elect their leader and govern themselves, as promised in their own constitutional document. While hordes supporting U.S. President Donald Trump stormed the Capitol as Congress was in session, intending to hold their elected representatives hostage, LegCo was occupied late at night when it was empty. The target of the Hong Kong protesters was not any individual but a symbol: a building that, far from a centuries-old temple of democracy, was a barely eight-year-old steel-and-glass dolmen for a government they had never voted for, and which continued to ignore them even when two million Hong Kongers marched peacefully through the streets to demand the withdrawal of a bill allowing criminal suspects to be sent to Communist Party-controlled courts in mainland China.

But not all comparisons between Washington and Hong Kong are unwarranted. Days after the LegCo siege, another watershed event took place that bears far more of a resemblance to the events on Capitol Hill: the infamous attack at Yuen Long station, launched by pro-government thugs viciously and indiscriminately targeting returning protesters, journalists and everyday commuters. The venue – a metro station far from the city centre in the northwest New Territories – was different, but the motivations and actions of the Yuen Long mob share far more in common with the one on Capitol Hill: manipulated by establishment figures to ex-

act revenge against those desperately seeking to make their voices heard, and the "fake news" media deemed complicit in helping to project these voices. Like the pro-Trump mob – and unlike the LegCo protesters – they were largely unmasked, confident in their impunity as defenders of the existing order.

When they struck, the police patrolling the station at the time walked away. Citizens ran to the nearest police station to report what was happening only to find its doors shuttered. When a sizeable number of anti-riot officers finally arrived 40 minutes later, they were filmed gently escorting the armed men away from their bloodied victims – a far cry from the tear gas and rubber bullets fired at pro-democracy protesters earlier in the day. No arrests were made on the scene, and it later emerged that police had received warnings about the impending attack and had observed the throng of men wielding wooden sticks, poles, rattan canes, steel rods, and even knives as they amassed outside the station.

Not unlike Missouri Senator Josh Hawley, Hong Kong pro-Beijing lawmaker Junius Ho turned up to show his support for the armed mob, hailing them as "heroes."

**Misrepresentative equivalence**  
It can be tempting to draw parallels between two events that present similar images: the surging crowd, the makeshift battering rams, the shattered glass, and a legislative chamber briefly occupied by an uninformed crowd. But before making those comparisons one ought to consider what motivated that crowd, what led the protesters there, and what that legislative body and its composition tell us about its significance and the political climate surrounding it. One should also ask whether it is responsible to make an equivalence between an incident in which democracy was under siege and one in which autocracy was under siege. By all means, draw parallels between the events in Washington and those in Hong Kong in 2019, but be sure that you are making the right one.

Ryan Ho Kilpatrick is a journalist from Hong Kong

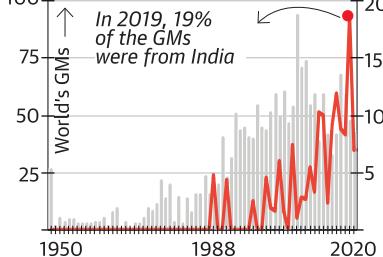


## DATA POINT

### Young knights, on the move

While 51-year-old Viswanathan Anand continues to be the highest-ranked Indian Chess player for decades now, a group of teenagers has burst onto the scene in the past three years. R. Praggnanandhaa became India's youngest and the world's second youngest Grandmaster\* (GM) in 2018 when he was 12 years and 10 months old. The next year, D. Gukesh rewrote the record books by attaining the status when he was 12 years and 7 months old. When 14-year-old Leon Mendonca became India's 67th GM in December 2020, he was the youngest among those who won the title last year. In the last three years, India has produced seven GMs aged 15 or less, a feat unmatched by any other country. By Suman Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

**INDIA'S SHARE |** The chart shows the number of new GMs in the world (■) and the % from India (■■■) in each year



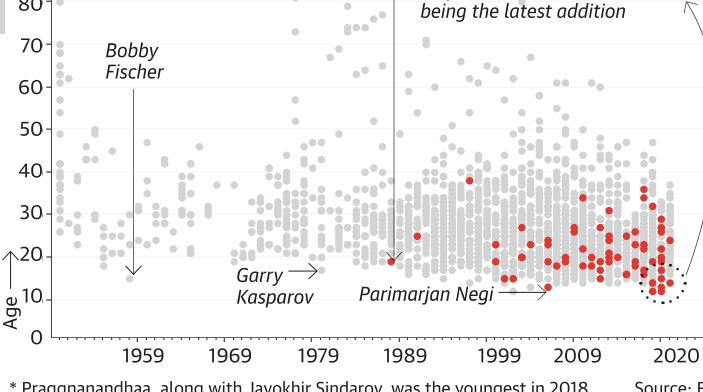
### YOUNG BLOOD

The table shows the % of players who became GMs at a relatively younger age from 1950 to 2020. For instance, 16.4% of all GMs from India were younger than 16 years when they received the title – the highest share among the top 10 nations. More than half of India's GMs (58%) attained the status before turning 22. With 38% of such GMs, the U.S. was a distant second. Only the 10 countries with the most GMs at present are listed

**EVERY GM SINCE 1950 |** The chart shows every Indian GM (●) and from the rest of the world (○) and their age when they became GM. The share of younger GMs has increased in the recent years.

**At 19, Viswanathan Anand, India's first GM, was the youngest among those who became GM in 1988**

**In 2018\*, 2019 and 2020, the youngest GMs were from India. And in these years India produced seven GMs aged 15 or less, with 14-year-old Leon Mendonca being the latest addition**



\* Praggnanandhaa, along with Javokhir Sindarov, was the youngest in 2018

Source: FIDE

## The Hindu

### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 14, 1971

### Literacy for Progress

The national workshop on functional literacy inaugurated recently in New Delhi by Dr. V.K.R. V. Rao, Union Education Minister, marks the commencement of the mass literacy programme intended to make 100 million adult illiterates literate by the end of 1980.

Since the Fourth Plan coverage is expected to benefit only 10 millions of them the target for the decade requires that the annual coverage in the six years after 1974 is higher than what is to be achieved on the aggregate over the current quinquennium. This is not going to be easy.

The country's experience in adult education is such as to make it clear that there is, on the one side, the reluctance of adults to enlist themselves for this purpose and, on the other, shortages of teachers as well as of financial and other resources. The reluctance of the adult is due to his preference for rest as against mental activity of any kind, because he has toiled all day for a mere pittance with his stomach half-empty.

This situation represents both the challenge and the need for social education in the country. Since the need is ingrained in the fact that there can be no progress social or economic, without work, the challenge has to be taken and the people put through a scheme of functional literacy which will infuse in them a better sense of values and social exertion.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 14, 1921

## FROM PAGE ONE

## No clarity on tomorrow's talks with farmers

One of the committee members, Pramod Kumar Joshi, said he would be able to set aside his personal views while serving on the panel. "You have to be very unbiased, keep your own views in the locker and remain open-minded. There is nothing wrong in [the fact that all members of the panel are in favour of reforms]. Judges have their own views, and they are still able to give unbiased judgments," he said.

At its internal meeting, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha warned its union leaders to tone down their rhetoric regarding plans for January 26. Republic Day protests are expected to take place across the country, including in Mumbai, where plans were finalised for a three-day sit-in by 50,000 farmers starting on January 23 followed by a march to the Raj Bhavan on January 26.

"We will definitely hold a parade in Delhi on Republic Day, but there is no question of any disruption of the official parade. We have strictly said there will not be any violence," said Krantikriti Kisan Union president Darshan Pal.

"We will carry the national flag and the union flags. All other details will be decided after the meeting on Januray 15."

He was speaking after participating in the Lohri celebrations. As farmers lit bonfires to burn the three laws as a sign of their rejection, they also sang songs of the mythical folk hero Dulla Bhatti, seen as a Punjabi Robin Hood, who championed peasant farmers against exploitative zamindars.

There was also a commemoration of the 120 people who have died for various reasons during the protests so far.

## Afghanistan raises 'delay' in India's acceptance of envoy

When contacted, MEA officials aware of the protocol concerns pointed to a number of reasons, beginning with the initial delay by the Ashraf Ghani government in naming a replacement for Mr. Abdali, and subsequently its preoccupation with elections, the coronavirus pandemic and the Doha peace process.

However, they confirmed that since 2019, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had sent at least three names, beginning with senior government official Waheed Tamim in July 2019, and subsequently floated the name of Kawoos Kakar, a former adviser to President Ghani. Mr. Tamim was appointed a Deputy Minister in the Finance Ministry pending his credentials from New Delhi, the government had announced, but when New Delhi did not respond to either name, the MFA proposed Mr. Mamundzai.

On September 3 last, Mr. Mamundzai even tweeted that he was "honoured & humbled to have been designated as the new Afghan ambassador to India", calling

India a "generous neighbour" and a "strategic partner with strong historical, political & cultural links" to Afghanistan. However, *The Hindu* confirmed that New Delhi's letter of agreement has not so far been conveyed to the Afghan side, leading to the queries put to Mr. Doval and Mr. Jaishankar.

**'Senior' envoys sent**  
Sources who didn't wish to be identified said India had always sent "senior" envoys to Afghanistan and, therefore, expected that Kabul would reciprocate. New Delhi had also requested that the Ambassador-designate have ties with all political parties in Afghanistan and took into account India's security sensitivities in the region, the sources added.

While delays in providing agreement letters are not uncommon, it is extremely rare for a host country to reject the names of one, let alone more suggested names of incoming diplomats, especially when they are from a country with friendly ties, as Afghanistan and India share.

## Publication of notice of marriage not mandatory'

However, her father was not permitting her to live with her husband even though the couple desired to live together. The woman and her father appeared in court in person where she expressed her desire to live with her husband and the father too "fairly accepted" her decision since she was an adult, had married of her own volition and wanted to live with her husband.

At this juncture, the court took note of the personal experience narrated by the couple who expressed that they could have solemnised their marriage under the Act but said it required a 30 days' notice to be published and objections to be invited from the public at large. They said that any such notice would have been an invasion of their privacy and would have

caused unnecessary social pressure and interference in their free choice with regard to their marriage.

The personal laws did not impose any such condition of publication of notice, inviting and deciding objections before solemnising marriage, the couple submitted.

The counsel for the petitioners also stated that the situation may become more critical with the notification of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, as it says conversion of religion for marriage is unlawful.

The counsel further submitted that interfaith couples were not in a position to raise these issues before solemnising their marriages as litigation further attracted unnecessary attention and put social pressure on them.

## Anganwadis to reopen by Jan. 31: Supreme Court

The court directed the States and UTs that a decision to not open anganwadi centres located outside containment zones should be taken only on the direction of the State Disaster Management Authority concerned. It, however, said centres situated in containment zones would remain shut during the prescribed period of isolation.

The court directed States/

Union Territories to ensure nutritional standards in these centres as provided under the National Food Security Act, 2013. "All the States/UTs shall issue orders regarding monitoring and supervision of anganwadi centres to ensure that the benefit reaches the beneficiaries and a complaint redressal mechanism be put in place in each district," the judgment directed.

## 7 new faces inducted into Karnataka Cabinet

Those unhappy are expected to meet Amit Shah during his visit on Jan. 16

STAFF REPORTER  
BENGALURU

After months of speculation and postponement, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa inducted seven new faces into the Karnataka Cabinet on Wednesday, amid discontent by a section of party legislators.

Seven legislators – three MLAs N. Nagaraju (MTB) and R. Shankar, both defectors, and C.P. Yogeshwar, who played a key role in toppling the coalition government, and four senior MLAs, Umesh Katti, Arvind Limbavalli, S. Angara, and Murugesu Nirani, were sworn in as Ministers at the Raj Bhavan.

One Minister, H. Nagesh, Independent MLA, was

dropped to keep one slot vacant, for political exigencies. An upset Mr. Nagesh, who resigned from the Cabinet, was pacified and appointed as chairperson of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Development Corporation, as per his request, with a Cabinet Minister rank, later in the day.

Notable exclusion from those inducted into the Cabinet is Munirathna, a defector who recently won the bypoll. Mr. Yediyurappa had announced during the bypoll campaign that Mr. Munirathna would be made a Minister. A case against him alleging voter fraud and over-representation of Bengaluru in the Cabinet forced his exclusion, sources said.



Taking charge: Karnataka Governor Vajubhai Vala and Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa, with the new Cabinet Ministers at the Raj Bhavan in Bengaluru on Wednesday. ■ MURALI KUMAR K.

The Cabinet expansion has led to discontent among a long list of ministerial aspirants.

A group of those unhappy with the outcome are expected to meet and air their grievances with Union Home Mi-

nister Amit Shah, when he visits the State on January 16.

In terms of caste equation, of those inducted on Wednesday, two each are from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, Kuruba, and Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Caste

communities and one is from Vokkaliga community. With these inductions, the Cabinet now has 11 Lingayats, seven Vokkaligas, four Kurumbas, three from Scheduled Castes, and two from Scheduled Tribes, a composition

that has drawn flak over domination of Lingayats and Vokkaligas.

Though the induction of Mr. Yogeshwar, who got defeated in the 2018 polls and was later made an MLC, has turned controversial, he is seen as a key leader to counter KPCC president D.K. Shivarum and JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy in Ramnagarangam district.

Mr. Nirani was reportedly inducted to co-opt the growing assertion of Panchamasali Lingayat sect, sources said. Mr. Angara, a six-time MLA, being made a Minister was a long-pending demand from the party old-timers.

Mr. Katti and Mr. Limbavalli were all set to be made Ministers in February 2020 and dropped in the last minute, providing them with a strong case.

## IN BRIEF



Padayatra will be on, says Panchamasali seer

HUBBALLI  
Amid confusing reports about the proposed padayatra from Kudalasangama to Bengaluru seeking 2A reservation for Lingayat Panchamasali community being called off, seer of Lingayat Panchamasali Peetha at Kudalasangama Basava Jaya Murtyunjaya Swami on Wednesday clarified that the protest march would be held as scheduled.

## A.P. to develop start-up area near Krishnapatnam

VIJAYAWADA  
As part of its efforts to develop the Krishnapatnam node in the Chennai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor (CBIC), the Andhra Pradesh government has identified a start-up area of nearly 2,140 acres meant to serve as a catalyst for investments.

The project is being developed in partnership with the National Industrial Corridor Development & Implementation Trust.

## Pandemic has left a dent on Kerala's finances: Isaac

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM  
COVID-19 and the consequent lockdown and other restrictions have left a huge dent on Kerala's finances, Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac has said. Citing provisional figures released by the Accountant General, Dr. Isaac informed the Assembly on Wednesday that the State's own revenue dipped by 23.04%, non-tax revenue by 65.55% and Central tax share by 38.49%.

## Probe into sexual abuse of minor: Kerala Minister

KANNUR  
Kerala Minister for Women and Child Development K.K. Shylaja has directed the Director, Department of Women and Child Development, to investigate and submit report in a case in which a 60-year-old man sexually abused his foster child in Kannur. The Director will also inquire whether the former Child Welfare Committee, which released the child, was at fault.

## Kerala files appeal in SC in LIFE Mission project case

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Kerala government on Wednesday appealed to the Supreme Court against the State High Court's rejection of its plea to quash the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation into the irregularities in the implementation of the LIFE Mission housing project at Wa-

dakancherry in Thrissur.

The special leave petition was filed late Wednesday. The High Court, in its order, had observed that the facts reveal "a high-profile intellectual fraud played" to avoid audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and get kickbacks and gratification. In its petition, the State, through the LIFE Mission, said the project was

exempted under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

G. Prakash, counsel for Kerala, said the State government had not received any funds directly from abroad. Mr. Prakash said the State had contended that the charges in the FIR were "wholly malicious, baseless" and fuelled by "ulterior political motives."

## Festive cheer



Musical welcome: A Gangireddu community member, accompanied by his festooned bull, playing music as part of the Sankranti festivities in Khammam on Wednesday. ■ G.N. RAO

## Loan apps: Chinese among 2 arrested

They operated over 30 such apps

STAFF REPORTER  
HYDERABAD

Continuing their probe into the alleged financial irregularities by instant loan app companies, the Rachakonda police on Wednesday announced the arrest of one more Chinese national and his Indian associate.

The accused, HE. Jian, 26, alias Mark from Jiangxi in China, along with his Indian associates, operated over 30 instant loan mobile apps, through which money was disbursed.

They further tied up with Jia Liang Infotech Private Limited, Pune, for recovery of the loan amounts. With this, the number of Chinese nationals arrested by the Telangana police has increased to four.

On December 27, the police arrested Liang Tian Tian, a Chinese national, her husband Parshuram Lahu Takwe and Aquib Shaik. Based on their confession, the police arrested HE. Jian and Vivek Kumar, 26, accountant with Ajaya Solutions Private Limited, the firm which was represented by the former.

Commissioner of Police

Mahesh M. Bhagwat said

HE. Jian came to India in July 2019 on a business visa and joined as a representative of Chinese nationals Xu Nan, Xu Xinchang and Zhao Qiao, who are the directors of four microfinance loan app companies.

They also appointed Ankur Singh as one of the directors.

"In the initial stage they ran call centres at Thane to recover the loan amounts from the borrowers and after that they tied up with Jia Liang," he said.

If any borrower does not respond or repay the amount, the firms instructs Jia Liang to start abusing the borrowers and threaten them to repay the due amounts.

As per their instructions, the call centre staff were making calls to the borrowers and their relatives, friends and insisting that they repay the loan amounts with abnormal interest added by the companies," the officer said.

So far the police have frozen ₹30 crore in various bank accounts of the companies in question and more accounts are being verified.

## Sabarimala all set for Makaravilakku festival

Only 5,000 devotees, against the annual average of 3 lakh, will be allowed to attend it this time

STAFF REPORTER  
PATHANAMTHITTA

With only hours left for the Makaravilakku festival to begin at Sabarimala, all arrangements have been completed for its smooth conduct amid COVID-19 restrictions.

Purification rituals, including the Bimbasudhi, were performed at the temple under the leadership of Tantri Kandararu Rajeevaru. Thiruvabharanam, sacred ornaments of the presiding deity, will be brought to the

temple in a procession by Thursday evening, and this

will be followed by Deepadarhana, sighting of the Makarajyothi, and the Makaramskramana Puja.

As against the annual average of three lakh devotees, only 5,000 devotees will be permitted to the temple for the festival this time, said N. Vasu, Travancore Devaswom Board president.

A strict ban has been imposed on the stay of pilgrims and open cooking of food

across the region.

The temple and its premises have been brought under a thick blanket of security.

Devaswom Minister Kadakkampilly Surendran will be present at the Sanmadham during the day.

According to Mr. Vasu, the Board has ensured adequate stock of temple offerings, including Appam and Aravana, for the devotees.

The facility for offering Neyyabhishekam will close on January 18.



Patient wait: Devotees standing in a queue to have darshan at the Sabarimala temple on Wednesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Cinemas reopen to good crowds in Kerala

Vijay's *Master* draws hundreds of film buffs back to the theatres in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

About 90% of the cinemas in Kerala reopened on Wednesday as Tamil superstar Vijay's *Master* brought hundreds of moviegoers back to the theatres that had remained shut for nearly nine months owing to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Diehard fans of the actor whistled and cheered as the opening credits of the much-awaited film started rolling. Long queues of masked film buffs were seen outside cinemas, even though the government had permitted only 50% occupancy for a show.

Diehard fans of the actor whistled and cheered as the opening credits of the much-awaited film started rolling. Long queues of masked film buffs were seen outside cinemas, even though the government had permitted only 50% occupancy for a show.

M.C. Bobby, general secretary, Film Exhibitors' United Organisation of Kerala, said *Master* was screened in the majority of the 670 screens across the State. "About 10% of the theatres could not reopen as the owners required

more time to complete the maintenance and preparatory works. Some are facing a financial crisis and their theatres will reopen after a few days," he said.

## Malayalam releases

Jayasoorya's *Vellam*, directed by Prajesh Sen, will be the first Malayalam movie to reach theatres after the reopening. It is being released on January 22.

Exhibitors are hopeful that there will be a steady release of films in the coming weeks. Big budget movies are expected to be released by the end of March. Mohanlal's *Marakkaran: Arabikadinte Simham* is set for release on March 26.

Diehard fans of the actor whistled and cheered as the opening credits of the much-awaited film started rolling. Long queues of masked film buffs were seen outside cinemas, even though the government had permitted only 50% occupancy for a show.

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## 'No conspiracy in desecration of idols'

A.P. DGP says investigation is on

STAFF REPORTER  
VIJAYAWADA

## CBFC chief for regulating OTT platforms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

OTT (Over-The-Top) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and others need to be regulated, Chairman of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Prasoon Joshi, said at a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology.

The committee, headed by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, met on Wednesday for holding a review of the functioning of the CBFC.

Mr. Joshi gave a presentation on the recent reforms made by the CBFC, including cutting down the average time it takes in the certification process.

He also said while films which were made available for public viewing in cinema halls were regulated, similar checks and balances were missing for OTT platforms. The same content in cinema hall had to go through the CBFC, while it did not need any clearance if it was aired on the OTT platforms, he said.

# 'Focus is on providing vaccination free of cost to all'

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister spoke on how bolstering health infrastructure helped in dealing with the pandemic effectively

S. VIJAY KUMAR  
CHENNAI

rated on how bolstering health infrastructure helped in dealing with the pandemic effectively.

Besides establishing 11 new medical colleges and upgrading over 2,400 primary health centres, 6.17 lakh "fever camps" had been held across the State, where 3.26 crore people were examined.

RT-PCR tests were conducted on 1.35 crore people and the testing process was on, with an average of 70,000 samples each day. He said 15,000 health workers had been appointed exclusively to provide treatment to COVID-19 cases, and 2,000 mini-clinics with a doctor and two paramedical staff were also coming up.

### Aggressive testing

"Though the number of new cases and deaths have come down drastically, the aggressive testing process is continuing in all districts. The strategy to establish facilities like adequate beds, ICU facilities equipped with sufficient number of ventilators, oxygen cylinders, antiviral drugs, etc., and Covid care



Dr. Malini Parthasarathy, Chairperson of The Hindu Group of Publications, calling on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami in Chennai on Wednesday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

centres yielded the desired results," the Chief Minister said.

With over 7.93 lakh people recovering from the infection and the death rate at 1.48%, the State's performance received words of appreciation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had urged other States to emulate Tamil Nadu's model of

pandemic management, Mr. Palaniswami said.

Mr. Palaniswami said that his government was keen on preserving the legacy of the former Chief Minister the late Jayalalithaa in respect of the outreach to women, focusing on their security and empowerment.

He said Chennai and Coimbatore were assessed to

be the safest cities for women. The Chennai City Police had installed about 3 lakh CCTV cameras, the highest in the country, which were serving as a deterrence to criminals, and also aiding in early detection of cases. People were being encouraged to install CCTV cameras on their premises as a safety measure, he added. The 'Ka-

valan' app was another SOS mechanism for people in distress to seek police assistance. Explaining his plan to open the State economy and inspire confidence that the health security of the State was in order, he said he was making efforts in this regard.

On the industrial front, a single-window system had simplified the process of sanctioning approvals for business proposals.

### Absolute transparency

"I am convening a meeting every month to dispose of applications that are pending for various approvals. Absolute transparency has been brought about in the system to boost industrial activity ... any industrialist can seek an appointment and walk in to meet me for grievance redressal," he said.

Asked if it was possible to allow private investments in the power sector, the Chief Minister ruled out the possibility of privatising the power sector saying that "it would lead to a lot of issues". He said the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) government

would go by the views of the people, who wanted the power sector to be owned and operated by the State.

Despite the COVID-19 lockdown, the State machinery had ensured implementation of public welfare schemes uninterruptedly, the CM said. Agricultural activity was not affected during the pandemic and paddy cultivation in the Cauvery delta region had recorded an all-time-high yield. The lockdown and prohibitory orders that followed had no impact on the prices of essential commodities, he added.

Asked if he was confident that he could carry forward the legacy of the charismatic former leader Jayalalithaa and deliver decisive mandate for the AIADMK, Mr. Palaniswami said he was touring the State in the run-up to the Assembly election and was clear that "Makkal thaan Amma vin varisu" (the people are Jayalalithaa's heirs). He expressed certainty that the administrative work done by his government in the last four years would stand it in good stead.

## CCS approves 83 Tejas fighters for Air Force

₹47,000-crore deal a 'game-changer', says Rajnath Singh

DINAKAR PERI  
NEW DELHI

In the biggest indigenous defence deal, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Wednesday approved the manufacture of 83 Tejas light combat aircraft (LCA) by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) at a cost of around ₹47,000 crore.

"The Cabinet met under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister in New Delhi on January 13 and has approved procurement of 73 LCA Tejas Mk-1A fighter aircraft and 10 LCA Tejas Mk-1 trainer aircraft at the cost of ₹45,696 crore along with design and development of infrastructure sanctions worth ₹1,202 crore," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Twitter, "This deal would be a game changer for self-reliance in the Indian defence manufacturing." The indigenous content of the LCA-Tejas was 50% in the MK-1A variant and it would be enhanced to 60% by the end of the programme, he said.

### 40 modifications

The MK-1A would have over 40 modifications over the MK-1 variant, including some major ones like an electronic warfare system, advanced electronically scanned array



New heights: The MK-1A aircraft will have several modifications over the MK-1 variant. ■ SE PHOTO

(AESAs) radar, beyond visual range (BVR) missiles and a network warfare system comprising software defined radio (SDR), a defence official said. The modifications would be incorporated on the LCA concurrently along with the production once the deal is signed.

The Cabinet also approved infrastructure development by the IAF under the project to enable them to handle repairs or servicing at their base depot so that the turnaround time is reduced for mission critical systems, which would lead to increased availability of aircraft for operational exploitation, the statement said. "This would enable the IAF to sustain the fleet more efficiently and effectively due to availability of repair

## Many Kerala farmers to join Delhi agitation

They are led by the CPI(M)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A delegation of 1,000-odd Kerala farmers aligned with the All India Kisan Sabha's (AIKS) State unit will be joining the agitation at Delhi border on Thursday. This is the first delegation from Kerala to participate in the sit-in.

The delegation is led by

## SC allows time to Jamiat to make changes in plea

sons in the final list. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde listed the case again next week. The Bench had questioned why the organisation, represented by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, wanted contempt action against Mr. Sarma.

infrastructure at respective bases," it added.

The first LCA MK-1A is expected to roll out 2023-24 onwards, after which HAL plans to ramp up the production rate to 16 aircraft a year. While a second line had been set up, production on both lines has been kept at eight aircraft a year to keep the assembly running due to limited orders.

"A third assembly line will also be ready by 2023-24 to further ramp up production," the official said.

For the MK-1A, HAL is outsourcing significant work share to the private industry while it will act as a 'system of systems integrator'. HAL has over 550 vendors for the LCA, which includes five companies manufacturing the structures.

## Centre's affidavit an attempt to mislead SC, nation: Congress

'Not even perfunctory consultations were made'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi government's affidavit filed in the Supreme Court on Monday claiming that due consultations were made before bringing in the three farm laws is an attempt to "prevaricate, distort, misrepresent and mislead", the Congress said on Wednesday.

At an online press conference, party spokesperson and senior Supreme Court lawyer Abhishek Singhvi said the government's affidavit is at variance with an RTI reply given by them. In reply to two RTI applications filed by activist Anjali Bhardwaj, who sought details of pre-legislative consultations, the information officer had said "this CPIO does not hold any record in this matter".

The government in its affidavit said it is being filed "for the purpose of dispelling the erroneous notion that the protesters have peddled that the Central government and Parliament never had any consultative process or examination of issues by any Committee before passing of the laws in question". And as examples of pre-legislative

consultations, the government quotes circulating Draft Model Acts in 2003 and 2017 to the States, among other things. The government said the "legislations are not hurriedly made but are result of two decades of deliberations".

"Can you call this elaborate consultative process? For a law that you bring in 2020, you circulate Model Act in 2017," Mr. Singhvi said. He said not even perfunctory consultations were done. "It is clear that there are serious attempts at prevarication, distortion, misrepresentation and misleading of the nation, the hon'ble apex court and all relevant stakeholders, apart from indulging in blatantly contumacious conduct."

TAMIL NADU HOUSING BOARD OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PROJECT CIRCLE, CHENNAI-35. RE-SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE NO:SE/PC/16/2020-21 DATED:13.01.2021			
Sl. No.	Description of work	Approximate Value (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD Amount Rs
1.	Area Development scheme for 197 Plots (40 - HIG, 79 - MIG and 78- EWS) in S.No.428/1,3A, 440/1, 2,431/1&2, 442/5, 6 of Ponner village & Taluk, Tiruvannamalai District.	348.00	Rs.1,84,000/-

Last Date for receipt of tender 03.02.2021 upto 11.00 am., Date of Opening of tender 03.02.2021 at 11.15 am.

Period for sale up to 02.02.2021 upto 1.00 pm., Cost of tender document Rs.15,750/- including GST. The tender schedule can also be downloaded from the website [www.tenders.tn.gov.in](http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in) at free of cost. The tender documents can be had from the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Project Circle, TNHB, No.485, Anna Salai, Nandanam, Chennai - 600 035.

Superintending Engineer, Project Circle

DIPR/290/TENDER/2021

Abhishek Singhvi

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prevarication, distortion, misrepresentation and misleading of the nation,

the hon'ble apex court and all relevant

stakeholders, apart from indulging in blatantly contumacious

conduct."

## Ministry denies RTI query on farm law consultations

It says the matter is sub judice in SC and HCs

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

The Agriculture Ministry has denied a Right to Information (RTI) request for details on pre-legislative consultations on the farm reform laws, saying the matter is sub judice.

In its response, the Ministry cited the clause from the RTI Act that exempts information that has been forbidden to be published by a court of law or whose disclosure would amount to contempt of court. This comes after an earlier reply claiming that the Ministry did not have any record of such consultations.

RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj had filed her request on December 11, asking for details regarding the stakeholder consultations held before the Centre promulgated the three ordinances in June. Within the 30-day pe-

riod given to respond, two Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs) in the Ministry disposed of her request, saying that they did not have any record of such consultations. The Hindu reported this on January 12, a day after the Ministry told the Supreme Court that farm unions were "peddling an erroneous notion" that no consultations were held.

On January 13, Ms. Bhardwaj received a fresh response: "It is informed that the information being sought for has been challenged in various Hon'ble High Courts as well as Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. As such being a sub judice matter it may not be feasible at this moment to provide information under Section 8(i) (b) of RTI Act, 2005." The CPIO said the delay in providing a reply was due to the COVID-19 situation.

COOPERATIVE DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU	
N.V. Natarajan Maligai, 170, Periyar EVR High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010.	
R.C. No. 60000 / 2020 / TFM/C2	TENDER NOTICE Date, 13.01.2021
1 Tender Inviting Authority, Designation and Address	Additional Registrar (Finance and Banking), O/o. Registrar of Cooperative Societies, N.V. Natarajan Maligai, 170, Periyar EVR High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010.
2 Name of the work and place of Execution	Selection of System Integrator for Migration and Integration of the existing Common Application Software into a centralized system along with development and maintenance of the Centralized Monitoring Information System for Primary Agricultural Cooperative Credit Societies in Tamil Nadu.
3 Tender Document	Tender document can be downloaded from the URL <a href="https://tntenders.gov.in">https://tntenders.gov.in</a> at FREE OF COST.
4 Earnest Money Deposit	Rs. 3,00,000/- (Rupees Three Lakhs Only) Should be paid by way of Demand Draft.
5 Due Date, Time and Place for Bid Submission	On 01.02.2021@ 12.00 Noon hrs. O/o. Registrar of Cooperative Societies, 170, N.V. Natarajan Maligai, Periyar EVR High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010.
6 Date, Time and Place of Opening of Technical Bids	On 02.02.2021@ 11.00 AM hrs. O/o. Registrar of Cooperative Societies, 170, N.V. Natarajan Maligai, Periyar EVR High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010.
7 Date, Time and Place of Opening of Price Bids	On 03.02.2021@ 11.00 AM hrs. O/o. Registrar of Cooperative Societies, 170, N.V. Natarajan Maligai, Periyar EVR High Road, Kilpauk, Chennai – 600 010.
Note: Neither the Cooperative Development nor their representatives are obligated to inform any bidders who have not qualified in any of the stages of bid process management.	
DIPR/267/Tender/2021	
Registrar of Cooperative Societies	

STATE INDUSTRIES PROMOTION CORPORATION OF TAMILNADU LIMITED 19-A, RUKMANI LAKSHMI PATHY ROAD, EGMORE, CHENNAI - 600 008. CIN U74999TN1971SGC005967

Tender Notice NIT.No.124/CW/1/No.128/2020-21 Dt:12.01.2021

For and on behalf of State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, sealed tenders are invited under "Two Cover System" for the following work from Class –I State level Civil / Electrical Contractors registered in PWD/Highways/Any Department of Government of Tamilnadu, Central Government Department, Central / State Government undertaking having experience in similar nature of works. Tenders will be

## IN BRIEF

**Dhananjay Munde denies accusation of rape**

MUMBAI Maharashtra's Social Justice Minister Dhananjay Munde, who was on Tuesday accused of rape by a singer, denied the charge but admitted that he had an extra-marital affair with the complainant's sister. He said that the sisters, along with their brother, were now blackmailing him. Mr. Munde said that he has two children from the affair and that he has been taking care of them.

**U.K. court denies Mallya permission to appeal**

LONDON Liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya was denied permission on Wednesday to appeal against a U.K. High Court order refusing to dismiss bankruptcy proceedings brought by a consortium of Indian banks in pursuit of debts related to the defunct Kingfisher Airlines. His counsel argued that the bankruptcy petition should be dismissed, as the debt in question was being disputed in Indian courts.

**HC reserves order on Sonu Sood's plea**

MUMBAI The Bombay High Court on Wednesday reserved its order in a plea filed by actor Sonu Sood seeking protection from action by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation against the alleged illegal construction at his residence. A single Bench of Justice Prithviraj Chavan was hearing a plea filed by the actor seeking extension of the stay granted by the City Civil Court and Sessions Court.

**Former Rajya Sabha MP arrested in Ponzi case**

NEW DELHI The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested former Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member and industrialist K.D. Singh in connection with a Ponzi scam case allegedly involving Alchemist Infra Reality Ltd. The company was accused of collecting over ₹1,900 crore from investors through unauthorised means.

**SC notice to Meghalaya on journalist's plea**

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Meghalaya government on an appeal by senior journalist and Padma Shri awardee Patricia Mukhim to quash hate crime proceedings against her for a Facebook post.

# 11 cities get Covaxin shipments

Bharat Biotech despatches first batch of the vaccine by air from Hyderabad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

Vaccine maker Bharat Biotech has started supplies of Covaxin, the indigenous COVID-19 vaccine candidate developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology (ICMR-NIV).

The first batch of vaccines was despatched by air from Hyderabad to 11 cities across the country in the early hours of Wednesday. This follows receipt of the government purchase order for 55 lakh doses, the company said.

Without sharing details of how many doses were part of the batch that was shipped, a company spokesperson said the entire purchase order would be executed within a few days. The government has placed the order at ₹295 a dose.

**Donations too**

The company would be donating 16.5 lakh doses to the government over and above the 55 lakh ordered, the spokesperson said.

Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Lucknow, Pune, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Ganavaram, Guwahati, Patna and Kurukshestra are the cities to which the first batch of vaccines (each vial containing 20 doses) were shipped. The company, in a media release, expressed deepest gratitude

**First doses:** Covaxin airlifted from Hyderabad on Wednesday. ■ BHARAT BIOTECH/TWITTER

## Countdown begins for vaccination drive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The scheduled vaccination drive from January 16, a massive country-wide exercise, will use the principles of people's participation (Jan Bhagidari) and utilise the experience of election (booth strategy) and the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP), the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

"There will be no compromise on the existing

healthcare services, especially national programmes and primary health care, and no compromise on scientific and regulatory norms," it said.

The Ministry tweeted that the initial procurement of 1.65 crore doses had been allocated to the States and Union Territories in proportion to the healthcare worker database.

The supply would be continuously replenished, it added.

## Polio immunisation drive postponed

Health Ministry sends note to States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has postponed the polio immunisation drive scheduled from January 17 till further notice, citing unforeseen activities.

While the COVID-19 vaccination starts on January 16, the National Immunisation Day (NID), commonly known as Pulse Polio Immunisation programme, was scheduled for January 17 across India.

The January 9 notice issued by the immunisation division says: "This is to inform that due to unforeseen activities, it is decided to postpone the scheduled Pulse NID (National Immunisa-



The pulse polio drive was scheduled for January 17.

tion Day) round from January 17, 2021 till further notice."

The letter has been issued to the Principal Secretary in the Health department of all States among other top officials.

## BSF uncovers tunnel in Jammu

The 150-metre-long tunnel's direction is towards the International Border

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
JAMMU

The Border Security Force on Wednesday unearthed a 30-foot-deep and 150-metre-long cross-border tunnel in Samba district in Jammu, the third such tunnel since last November.

"On a specific intelligence input, the BSF troops detected a tunnel in the Bobiya area in Samba sector. The tunnel has an opening of about 2-3 feet and is about 20 to 30 feet deep. The direction of the tunnel is towards the International Border, which is about 150 metres long from the point of incident," a BSF spokesman said in a statement.

The origin of the tunnel is towards Pakistan territory, the BSF said.

**Key find:** Security officers near an opening of a 150 metre tunnel below the International Border in J&K. ■ PTI

"Sandbags recovered had Karachi-made markings. The tunnel seems to be a bit old. This finding was the direct result of BSF's anti-tun-

nel drive. Whether this tunnel was used by militants to infiltrate into this side is subject to investigation," Inspector General of BSF, Jam-



Workers at the construction site of the new Parliament.

## New Parliament work may start today

Panel approved proposal on Monday

OMAR RASHID  
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party (SP) has fielded two veteran leaders as its candidates for the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council election, turning it into a hot contest for the 12th seat.

Twelve seats need to be filled in the Council, but the SP on its own strength – it has 48 MLAs, including Shivpal Yadav, the estranged uncle of party chief Akhilesh Yadav – can secure only one.

By nominating a second candidate, it has made it an open game and would need the support of MLAs from other smaller parties and even its rival BSP.

SP nominated candidates Ahmad Hasan and Rajendra Chaudhary were ministers when Mr. Yadav was the Chief Minister from 2012-2017.

Mr. Hasan is an outgoing MLC. Mr. Chaudhary, a Jat with a socialist background, is a party spokesperson. Both are often seen shadowing Mr. Yadav and have been close to him as well as his father Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The BJP has 309 MLAs, and combined with the figure of its ally, the Apna Dal (Sonelal), it tally goes up to 319. It can secure 10 out of the 12 MLC positions, while the SP is set to win one.

## SP fields two candidates in U.P. MLC polls

DAMINI NATH  
NEW DELHI

Construction work on the new Parliament building is likely to begin on Thursday, after the Supreme Court gave the go-ahead on January 5 and the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) approved the proposal on Monday. Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry officials said on Wednesday.

A top official said the work would start on Thursday, which happens to be the auspicious day of Makar Sakranti.

The project was scheduled to start in December, but construction and demolition at the site was put on hold while legal challenges to the project were pending in the court. On December 7, the court allowed the ground-breaking ceremony to take place after the government submitted an affidavit that it would not start construction, demolition and tree transplantation until the court gave its judgment.

With the court clearing the project on January 5, the Central Public Works Department moved the HCC for approval, which was granted on Monday, according to HUA Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation

## Sarada house damaged in Kolkata fire

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

A major fire broke out in Kolkata Baghbazar slum on Wednesday evening which gutted several shanties.

More than 20 fire tenders were rushed to the congested area in north Kolkata to bring the fire under control.

The fire also destroyed parts of the residence of Ma Sarada, consort of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The monks of the Ramakrishna Mission also took part in putting out the fire.

The fire destroyed a part of the slum but no deaths were reported. The enraged residents of the slum vandalised public property, including police vehicles. A few residents and firefighters suffered injuries.

## Adani Group to invest in port terminal: Gotabaya

He addresses worker unions

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

In his government's first admission yet of Indian involvement in developing a container terminal at the strategically coveted Colombo Port, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday said 49% of the investment will come from the "Adani Group and other stakeholders".

President Rajapaksa was addressing representatives of the Port's worker unions, amid their persisting resistance to any foreign involvement in the proposed project to develop the East Container Terminal (ECT). "The ECT will not be sold or leased," he assured them, adding that the foreign investments would cause no harm to Sri Lanka's sovereignty or independence, according to a statement issued by the President's office.

The development comes a week after External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Colombo, during which he reportedly urged the Sri Lankan side to expedite finalising the deal. While 66% of the transhipment business at the terminal is linked to India, New Delhi's strategic interest in having a presence at the Port, located along one of the world's shipping lanes, is no secret.



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

In May 2019, the predecessor government – led by Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe – signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with India and Japan for the project.

Asked how the new deal would be different from the 2019 MoC – which envisaged neither sale nor a leasing arrangement – SLPA chairman (retired) General M. Daya Ratnayake told *The Hindu*: "We will not be resorting to any loans. It will all be investment."

However, Opposition legislator Vijitha Herath of the leftist-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) – which held a rally on Tuesday protesting Indian involvement in the ECT – said he was not convinced. "Investment is just a way of covering up the Indian company's actual role and control here. It does not rule out sale or a lease in future," he told *The Hindu*.

## Mughal history whitewashed in texts, say two educationists

J.S. Rajput and Shankar Sharan speak to House panel

SOBHA NAIR  
PRISCILLA JEVARAJ  
NEW DELHI

At its meeting on textbook reforms on Wednesday, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education heard presentations from right-wing organisations and educationists, one of whom was at the centre of a debate on the "saffronisation" of textbooks under the Vajpayee government. They argued that Mughal history is being whitewashed in Indian textbooks, and crowding out space for history from the Vedic era.

The panel's agenda for the meeting was to remove "references to un-historical facts and distortions about our national heroes", to ensure "equal or proportionate references to all periods of Indian history" and to highlight the role of great women in Indian history.

**New syllabus**

"It has been over two decades since textbook reforms have been discussed at the platform of a parliamentary committee. We thought it fit to apply our mind considering the new National Education Policy is in place and new syllabus is being written," committee chairman and senior BIP

leader Vinay Sahasrabuddhe told *The Hindu*.

On Wednesday, the panel heard depositions from educationists J.S. Rajput and Shankar Sharan, as well as two right-wing leaning organisations, the Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal and the Shiksha Sanskriti Nyas.

From 1999 to 2004, Dr. Rajput was director of the body responsible for drafting school textbooks and setting the national curricular framework, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

During his tenure, he spearheaded a process of controversial textbook revision, which critics have slammed as a communalisation of Indian history.

According to sources, both Mr. Rajput and Mr. Sharan argued that the amount of space given to the Mughal era versus the reign of Hindu kings needed to be balanced. They argued that Indian history was falsely written as though foreign rule existed only for 200 years of the British Raj, without taking into account the 1,000 years before that. The Mughal era had been whitewashed, and their role as invaders had been muted, they claimed.

Sources said that it was decided that they would depose at a later date.

The two right-leaning organisations also spoke on similar lines, asserting that there was a need for children to be taught "Indian culture" from the Vedic era onwards. The influence of Marxist historians on the Indian textbooks needed to be corrected, the witnesses told the committee.

"In today's meeting, no member raised any objection, because these were merely depositions and there is no need for us to rectify their positions," one of the members said.

**NCERT revision**

The NCERT is currently in the process of revising textbooks, and is likely to complete the process by 2024. Some members of the committee suggested that it be speeded up to 2022 instead.

One member recommended that the Education Ministry consider how to change higher education syllabi as well, to ensure that it aligns with the changes in school textbooks.

The Director of NCERT, the CBSE Chairman and the Secretary of School Education were present at the meeting.

Sources said that it was decided that they would depose at a later date.

## NSA Doval holds talks in Afghanistan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval held talks on Wednesday with the Afghan leadership in Kabul on the security scenario in Afghanistan, ahead of the arrival of the Biden-Harris administration in Washington DC.

The Office of the National Security Council of Afghanistan said in a public announcement that the two sides held "extensive conversations on issues of strategic mutual interest, including on synchronising efforts to combat terrorism and build peace".

Mr. Doval is heading a high-level delegation.

He also met with President Ashraf Ghani and Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah. "We exchanged views on the Peace Process, the beginning of 2nd round of [Intra-Afghan] talks, and the role of India in establishing peace in Afghanistan," Dr. Abdullah Abdullah said on social media. Following Mr. Doval's meeting with President Ghani, Afghan envoy Tahir Qadri said the two sides "discussed cooperation in countering terrorism and strengthening a regional consensus on the Afghan peace process".

The government said in the petition that personnel of the Army, Navy and the Air Force were a "distinct class". They were governed

## Adultery law must stay for military: govt.

SC Bench refers the petition to CJI

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday admitted a petition filed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) seeking to exempt armed forces personnel from the ambit of a Constitution Bench judgment of 2018 that decriminalised adultery.

One of the chief reasons given by the government for seeking exemption is, incidentally, that "there will always be a concern in the minds of the Army personnel who are operating far away from their families under challenging conditions about the family indulging in untoward activity".

A three-judge Bench led by Justice Rohinton Fali Naqvi said the plea had to be considered by a Constitution Bench because the original verdict, striking down Section 497 (adultery) of the IPC, was pronounced by a five-judge Bench in September 2018. The court referred the case to the Chief Justice to pass appropriate orders to form a five-judge Bench to clarify the impact of the 2018 judgment on the armed forces.

"In cases of adultery, even if there is a charge against the accused, an argument can be raised that we are circumventing the law and what could not be done directly through these Acts," the Ministry said.</

PRYADARSHINI PAITANDY

The eight cows at The Banyan Tree Farm Stay (Pollachi, Tamil Nadu) are celebrities, and they know it. Every Pongal people come from all over the world to fuss over them as they get bathed and decked up for Mattu Pongal. This year, the bovine divas will miss their international fans but are more than happy to pose for domestic followers.

M Prabhu, the ninth generation owner of the 160-year-old farm says, he has hosted guests from 30 countries. This year, because of the pandemic, however, most of his guests are from in and around Tamil Nadu.

**Taking a step back**  
With concerns over boarding flights and trains due to the pandemic, people are driving to nearby destinations this year.

The short Pongal break is a great time for road trips. At The Banyan farm stay, celebrations include a traditional festive menu featuring dishes made with farm fresh yam, *mochai* (beans), red and white pumpkin.

"We also show the attendees how to make pongal. They are mostly fascinated with the cows and how we feed them. Before that, till about 15 years back, it used to be our elephants," says Prabhu, adding that the elephants also helped with farm work, but they no longer have them as maintenance became a challenge.

Given its lush surroundings, the farmstay offers activities such as butterfly watching, birding, herpetology, Nature classes, cooking lessons and games like hop scotch, sack race, lemon and spoon race.

"All activities that don't involve computers," says Prabhu. "This is a place where guests come to detox from the city. They are interested in different facets of a farm: how it runs, learning to make products out of coconut etc," he adds.

The 210-acres boast a large variety of trees including jamun,

# Pongal by the bonfire

Switch off your computer and join the exodus. This year, farmstays offering treks, homegrown meals and friendly cows are a popular antidote to lockdown blues



kokum, butterfruit and litchi, red and green custard apple, breadfruit and eggfruit. The team organises a treasure hunt so participants can learn names of trees as they play the game.

#### Reconnecting with tradition

Classic games like sack races, lemon and spoon races, as well as tree climbing, slow cycling and swimming are an annual fixture

**Over the last few years, there has been a growing interest in agritourism among holidaymakers**

from the farm and cook a meal.

"We have been celebrating Pongal here for the last 10 years and get guests from India and the world over. This year the visitors are primarily from Chennai, Tiruchi, Madurai, Coimbatore and Thanjavur," says Naveen Krishnan, who started the farm in 2005.

He believes that farmstays in



particular are popular around this time. "We make pongal in a mud pot. Then, our farm animals like donkeys, camels, cows, bulls are decorated for the occasion," he adds.

Last year the farm welcomed upwards of 90 guests for the festivities. While many stay the night at the venue, a lot of them come on a day-trip to participate. "This year, so far, we have 70 guests coming," adds Naveen. Besides the planned activities, people enjoy walking around their miyawaki forest, and acquaint themselves with the 116 varieties of trees grown here.

Over the last few years, there has been a growing interest in agritourism among holidaymakers. Mohanavelu Ramasamy, manager – strategy at Destiny FarmStay in Udhagamandalam, another popular weekend getaway that starts getting booked

**The pot runneth over** Relax amidst Nature and participate in fun activities that help you understand Pongal better

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

for Pongal by mid-December, says, "There has been a shift in interest and our guests are keen to learn about agricultural processes and dairy farming."

That explains why, along with horse riding and trekking, the tour of their 30-acre patch growing herbs and vegetables is such a hit. "Sometimes, our guests come on short trips but go back armed with a whole lot of new knowledge, a few have even started their own agricultural ventures," he says. And after a day at the farms, there is always a bonfire to light up the cold night as people settle down with a bowl of pongal and watch the embers reach the sky.

# The fields are grateful

In the five years that this writer spent transitioning from corporate life to agricultural life, few challenges compare to the ones thrown up by 2020. And yet, on Pongal, she looks back in satisfaction



**In it together** The women of the plantation team

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

AISHWARYA UPADHYE AND MEGHNA MAJUMDAR

Two matriarchs look back at the Sankranti village festivities of their childhood



in the evening. There is no whitewashing the house or decorating the livestock anymore," she says.

For 84-year-old Savitri Jain in Nagpur, the flood of memories begins at sunrise. Savitri grew up in a village in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district, with rituals distinctly different from that in Nagpur, Maharashtra, where she now lives.

One thing, however, is common in the festivities of both states.

"*Zyadatar, yeh aurato ka tyohar hai.* [It is primarily a festival for women]," she states matter-of-factly over the phone from Nagpur. Which is why the Sankranti of her girlhood would begin even before the sun rose for the women of her village. "It was customary for the women to walk together to the river nearby. We would bathe there, and use that water to give offerings to the sun god," she recalls.

*Daan* or donation, or offering food to the less fortunate was also an important ritual.

A large part of Savitri's memories have to do with the foods she doesn't get to taste any more. "These days, people don't think beyond *til gur* (sesame and jaggery). But back in the day, we used to make so many kinds of *laddus* together: with rice flour, wheat flour, *lai* (puffed rice), and even *rajma* and *dalwa* (green gram). The main dish was always *khichdi*," she states. "There are a lot of reasons behind this festival, but I think the main one for us, was finding an excuse to bring the whole family together."

"Sankranti is now just a day-long festival when we feast on food prepared from store-bought ingredients and visit our relatives

ABARNA MUTHIAH

Growing up, Pongal to me meant holidays, movie releases, playtime with cousins and, of course puja as well as making and eating lots of Pongal. However, since becoming a planter (farmer of cash crops), this festival has taken on a significantly different meaning.

As the daughter of the family, it was never on the cards that I would be a planter despite my father and grandfather being one. I did just as was expected of me. I became a chartered accountant, got married, sported a corporate career and lived the racy city life in many parts of the world.

And then it all changed. I was in the midst of a divorce, treatment for a terminally ill father and relocating back to my small hometown in India all at once. In these dire circumstances the most joyous thing happened. I became a cardamom planter in Kerala. I got myself a wide-brimmed hat, rain boots, hiking gear and UV-protective hoodies, and marched right into this otherwise male-dominated world.

Looking back, the initial set of challenges I faced now seem a cakewalk. It involved establishing myself as a wo-

man leader to the plantation folk, unions and local political parties. It further involved evincing genuine respect for my opinions, rather than reluctantly obeying merely because I was *ayya's* (the boss') city-bred daughter. It included not batting an eyelid when I was given a tour of the locations where huge resident cobras like to sunbathe.

I learnt to overcome each of these challenges...and as I learnt, the plantation folk learnt too. They revelled in the new collaborative management style I followed, as compared to the more instructive style my very experienced father had. They took pride and honour in the larger responsibilities I placed on them simply because they are more experienced than I am. They began to respect my use of the Internet, access to research firms and consultants to find solutions to problems rather than rely on just in-house experience. They learnt to value the excel spreadsheets and reports I forced them to maintain, as access to data became remarkably simple.

Gradually, over time, they allowed themselves to be challenged, and eventually guided by me.

This journey has taken five years and the plantation folks and I now make a strong team. Yet with every passing year, just when we believe we have seen it all, we face new situations that sometimes challenge our very existence.

As the Kerala floods of 2018 ravaged our fields and broke our labour quarters and catchment, we worked non-stop over the next 18 months to salvage our plantation.

So imagine our bewilderment, come 2020. COVID-19-related lockdown restrictions, extreme dearth of labour due to shut State borders and ab-

sent migrant workers, delayed monsoons followed by torrentially excessive rains...the list of challenges seemed endless.

Yet while the world stopped, agriculture didn't. We ploughed on.

As members of my team and I fell sick with COVID-19, requiring extensive quarantine planning on the plantation during peak cardamom picking season, I remember lying on the hospital bed breathless and weak, staring at the ceiling, feeling completely overwhelmed.

Yet, as January is born and Pongal is here, even the most dire challenges dissipate in memory, leaving us purely grateful for all the things that went right during the year.

That every tree that fell did not take one of us along with it. That every gliding snake went by without confrontation. That we were able to address crop rotting caused by the torrential rains in time. That Komalam and Shanthi, the oldest of our workers affected by Covid-19, recovered completely and we were able to arrest the spread.

That the rogue tuskers who visited us the past year did not cause havoc. That Gnanaraja, who ran into a tiger, which had lost its way right by the bungalow, was unharmed. That our long-time worker Girija was able to smile and wave at all of us before the cancer that consumed her body took her. That Murali who walked into a truant leopard by the forest boundary did not lose his wits and backed out safely.

And most importantly, that even in the darkest hours of 2020, we were able to safeguard our people and produce against the numerous variables that are not in our control, and that it fed all of us on the plantation and kept our families safe and comfortable.

Pongal has become a day to truly celebrate that we have made it through the year together successfully. In doing so, we renew our energy and faith to meet the challenges of the year that is to come.

With the pristine weather that January offers, festively garlanded gods of our fields, crisp *settu mundus*, bright smiles, and caramelised *sakkara Pongal* that we make together, this festival to me is like no other. It gives me intense gratification to have successfully seen our little plantation through one of the most challenging years in recent history. *Pongalo Pongal!*



M ND-NDE

# Bulls, muscle, and a pandemic

This year's jallikattu promises to be different not just because of COVID-19 protocol... it also features more first-time bull owners who took to the sport during lockdown

AKILA KANNADASAN

Babloo the bull, is ready to charge out of the *vaadivasal* (entry way) for the first time at the Alanganallur jallikattu on January 16.

At two years, with just four teeth, Babloo is technically only a calf. He has been pampered for the past six months – "like a baby", as K Vignesh, who along with his grandfather and mother is responsible for Babloo's care, puts it. The 24-year-old is among several young men in and around Alanganallur, the epicentre of the world-famous bull-taming event in Madurai district, who have turned bull-owners this year owing to the pandemic.

"I saved up around ₹25,000 from my work with a contractor involved in stone-laying," says Vignesh, adding, "I didn't have

work during lockdown and decided to invest in a bull."

He bought Babloo from Usilampatti six months ago. His employer, G Selva, also from Alanganallur, too, has bought two bulls.

Vignesh admits he is jittery about the big day. "Jallikattu is not new to me. I have been participating from my teens, but this is Babloo's first time," he says, adding, "We have no idea about his temperament. Will he sprint out fearlessly or hesitate at the sight of the crowd? I cannot tell you how anxious I am."

**New entrants**  
There are three big jallikattu tournaments held during Pongal in



The game is on  
(Clockwise from above)  
At Alanganallur jallikattu 2020; owners tend to their bulls like their children ■ G MOORTHY; S JAMES

The most notable change brought about by the pandemic and lockdown is the increase in the number of first-time bull owners. Several men, like Vignesh, have put together their earnings to buy bulls.

"Nine of my friends bought bulls during lockdown," says M Sakthivel, a jallikattu champion from Alanganallur. "This time, 162 bulls from across 19 villages around Alanganallur have registered for the tournament. Last year, we had only 120," the 25-year-old points out.

T Godwin, a physical education teacher from Alanganallur, puts this trend down to the urge to "do something" to combat



lockdown-induced boredom. "The mood in the village is vibrant now. Everywhere I see, there are young men walking their bulls. I saw similar scenes in Madurai town as well. Some 15 boys were cheerfully walking four

muscular bulls," he remarks. Alanganallur's sprightly jallikattu champions did struggle through lockdown though; not all bulls were as lucky as Babloo. A good diet for the animals usually includes cotton seeds, sesame seeds and groundnut oil cakes, *toor dal* dust and wheat dust

What is the best alternative to raw rice for *sakkai pongal*? *Thinai*? Black rice? Perhaps *thooyamalli*?

AKILA KANNADASAN

The cooker with black rice and dal whistles, puffing steam along with a drizzle of purple-coloured water onto my kitchen walls.

I wince at the thought of cleaning up: black rice, evidently, is not easy to handle. But once I open the cooker – after five whistles and 10-minutes of simmering on low flame – the glistening deep-purple rice makes me forget all else.

*Kavuni arisi* or black rice pongal is the third variety I am experimenting with. In an attempt to make *sakkai* pongal with heritage rice varieties this year, I narrow down to three: *thooyamalli*, *kavuni arisi*, and *thinai arisi*. The best pongal wins, which I will cook on the big day.

*Sakkai* pongal is a silky concoction of rice, *moong dal*, jaggery and ghee. Although raw rice is widely used, several heritage rice varieties make for a great pongal. These include *iluppai poo samba*, *mappilai samba*, *neelam*, Salem



And the winner is Kavuni arisi  
*sakkai* pongal ■ GETTY IMAGES/  
ISTOCK AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

belt, the stronghold of Tamil culture."

Cooking time and the amount of water required, varies for each; Praveen suggests soaking the hard varieties such as *mappilai samba* for half an hour before cooking.

**Round 1**  
*Thooyamalli* is from his list and the rice, slightly longer, but as thin as *jeeraga samba*, does a great job of becoming one with the jaggery and dal. The taste is similar to the typical raw rice pongal; the rice, a shade darker than ivory, bears a mild fragrance.

**Round 2**  
*Thinai* or foxtail millet is technically not a rice variety. But I decide to cook it thanks to a conversation Coimbatore-based A Shrikumar, (who works for an NGO) had with an elderly man from a tribal village in

the Sathyamangalam forest.

"I learnt that people of the Urali tribe make pongal with millets, *thinai*, *ragi*, *cholam*, *varagu* or *samai*," says Shrikumar. This is because they chiefly grow millets in the hills. And years ago, when jaggery was difficult to source, tribal people used honey to sweeten their pongal. "They also made a curry with the vegetables they grew, to be had with pongal," he points out. "They

**Round 3**  
*Thooyamalli*, that is longer than *jeeraga samba*, does a great job of becoming one with the jaggery and dal



used wild tubers, broad beans...whatever they cultivated."

I cook *thinai* pongal in a steel wok since millets do not require pressure-cooking. The tiny round morsels yield well – in no time, they take in the jaggery syrup I spoon in. *Thinai* has a nice earthy fragrance that is subdued in the end result: what makes this pongal stand apart is the pleasingly grainy texture.

**Round 3**  
*Kavuni* or black rice is the best-looking of them all. Apart from the health benefits the rice boasts, I pick it to attempt cooking a hard rice variety. Which means it requires soaking the night before to make the rice pliable. I pressure-cook it: it is easier that way. But before that, I spread the soaked rice on a piece of cloth to dry and dry roast it before cooking.

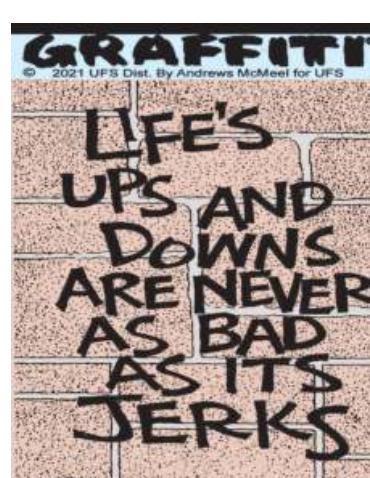
I add jaggery syrup and simmer the deep-purple mix of rice and *dal*, but the colour remains the same. Once done, I top it with plenty of ghee-roasted cashews. The taste is unique: the rice's nutty flavour fits jaggery's sweetness to the T. And the pongal is chewy, with a depth of flavour.

The winner is undoubtedly black rice. It is slightly more elaborate to cook, but the end result is worth it.

## My experiments with RICE

*sanna*, *jeeraga samba*, hand-pound raw rice, *thooyamalli*, *kuruvai*, and *thinai arisi*, according to Praveen Anand, executive chef, South Indian Cuisine, ITC Hotels.

"Pongal is a festival in which farmers offer to Nature whatever they grew on their land," explains Praveen, adding, "The above varieties are grown in the Madurai



### THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13395

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

taste (7)

7 Catch sight of (4)

8 Building where objects of interest are displayed (6)

13 Methodist (8)

15 Blame (7)

16 Material used for violin strings, for example (6)

18 Only US president to have resigned from office (5)

20 Wan (5)

21 Between the sheets (4)

The solution will appear on January 21, 2020

Solution No. 13394

S	C	R	A	M	B	L	E	S	T	M
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### POOCH CAFE



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



### CALVIN AND HOBBES



**HEALTH CAPSULES**  
WHAT IS ROOIBOS TEA?  
*ROOIBOS ASPALATIUS LINEARIS*  
ALSO KNOWN AS "RED BUSH" TEA, ASCORBATE- AND PHENOL-RICH ROOIBOS TEA COMES FROM SOUTH AFRICA'S WEST CAPE FENDERBERG MOUNTAIN AREA. THE NEEDLE-LIKE LEAVES THAT GROW ON A ROOIBOS LIKE BUSH ARE HARVESTED IN THE SUMMER MONTHS WHEN THE LEAVES ARE STILL GREEN. ROOIBOS TEA IS NATURALLY FREE OF CAFFEINE.

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### Across

- 1 Cummerbund (4)
- 19 Fish using a dragnet (5)
- 22 New York borough (5)
- 23 Badly behaved (7)
- 24 Back (8)
- 25 Soon (4)
- Down
- 1 Strong drink like gin (8)
- 2 Grenadine, for example (5)
- 4 Superiority in numbers (13)
- 5 With alcohol added (5)
- 6 What gives tonic water its

batsman in a side (6)

19 Fish using a dragnet (5)

22 New York borough (5)

23 Badly behaved (7)

24 Back (8)

25 Soon (4)

■ Down

1 Strong drink like gin (8)

2 Grenadine, for example (5)

4 Superiority in numbers (13)

5 With alcohol added (5)

6 What gives tonic water its

# Trump is a clear and present danger: Pelosi

Several Republicans are breaking with the party to join House Democrats in voting for the impeachment

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump is on the verge of being impeached for a second time in a fast-moving House vote, just a week after he encouraged loyalists to "fight like hell" against election results and then a mob of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

During debate on Wednesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi asked Republicans and Democrats to "search their souls" ahead of the historic afternoon vote. Mr. Trump would be the first American president to be impeached twice.

"Trump must go," Ms. Pelosi said. "He is a clear and present danger to the nation we all love."

#### Senate trial delayed

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the Republican



**Standing guard:** Members of the National Guard outside the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday. • AFP

leader would not agree to bring the chamber back immediately, ensuring a Senate trial could not begin at least until January 19, a day before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden.

While Mr. Trump's first impeachment in 2019 brought no Republican votes in the House, several GOP

leaders and other lawmakers are breaking with the party to join Democrats this time, saying Mr. Trump violated his oath to protect and defend U.S. democracy.

However, most Republicans planned to vote "no," and Representative Tom McClintock of California said during debate that impeach-

ing Mr. Trump a week before he leaves office is a "petty, vindictive and gratuitous act."

House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy said Mr. Trump "bears responsibility" for attack on Capitol, but says he opposes fast impeachment.

U.S. Representative Dan Newhouse, a Republican, on Wednesday said he would vote to impeach Mr. Trump, becoming the sixth Republican to join the effort.

As for threats of more trouble from intruders, security was exceptionally tightened at the Capitol with National Guard troops and secure perimeters around the complex.

#### An opportunity

"We are debating this historic measure at a crime scene," said Representative Jim McGovern, D-Mass.

Though Mr. McConnell is declining to hasten an im-

peachment trial, a Republi- can strategist said the GOP leader believes Mr. Trump committed impeachable offenses and considers the Democrats' impeachment drive an opportunity to reduce the divisive, chaotic president's hold on the GOP.

Mr. McConnell called major Republican donors last weekend to gauge their thinking about Mr. Trump and was told that Mr. Trump had clearly crossed a line. Mr. McConnell told them he was through with Mr. Trump, said the strategist.

Mr. Trump faces a single charge of "incitement of insurrection."

The four-page impeachment resolution relies on Mr. Trump's own incendiary rhetoric and the falsehoods he spread about Mr. Biden's election victory in making its case for "high crimes and misdemeanors" as demand ed in the Constitution.

With regard to India, one of the "desired end states" of the U.S.'s strategy is for the U.S. to be India's preferred partner on security issues and for the two countries to "cooperate to preserve maritime security and counter Chinese influence" in South Asia, Southeast Asia and other regions of "mutual concern". Several sentences in the document – including in sections on India – have been redacted.

# A strong India would act as 'counterbalance' to China: U.S.

Declassified document outlines objectives on China

SIRIRAM LAKSHMAN  
WASHINGTON

India in the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus.

Consequently, the U.S.'s to-do list has on it offers of support to India via military, diplomatic and intelligence channels "to help address continental challenges such as the border dispute with China and access to water, including the Brahmaputra and other rivers facing diversion by China."

On Russia, it says the country will "remain a marginal player" in the region relative to the U.S., China and India.

On North Korea, a stated U.S. objective is to, "Convince the Kim regime that the only path to its survival is to relinquish its nuclear weapons."

The official reason for the early declassification of the document, 20 years ahead of time, was "to communicate to the American people and to our allies and partners, the enduring commitment of the U.S. to keeping the Indo-Pacific region free and open long into the future," said national Security Advisor Robert C O'Brien in a covering note.

#### Act-East policy

The U.S. also seeks to bolster common principles, including the peaceful resolution of disputes and the transparent infrastructure-debt practices (a reference to alternatives to financing by China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has led to untenable debt positions in borrowing countries), as per the strategy. The U.S. aims to support India's "Act East" policy and "its aspiration to be a leading global power, highlighting its compatibility with the U.S., Japanese and Australian vision" of the Indo-Pacific.

"Frankly, the early declassification doesn't tie the Biden administration's hands," Ankur Panda, a senior fellow in the Nuclear Policy Program of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told *The Hindu*.

"I suspect it's an attempt by some in the outgoing administration to make their mark on policy clear and public, but it's not a document that speaks to tremendous strategic foresight," he said.

"There's a considerable bit of dissonance across this document, however, in its professed goal of spreading American and liberal values and the complete lack of any language on human rights. That again isn't particularly surprising given how the administration has gone about things," Mr. Panda wrote in a post analysing the document.

# Kremlin critic Navalny to fly to Russia on Sunday despite risks

He shrugs off risks of being jailed on reaching the country

REUTERS  
MOSCOW

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said on Wednesday he would fly back to Russia on January 17 from Germany, where he has been recovering after being poisoned, shrugging off potential legal risks that could see him jailed.

Mr. Navalny, one of President Vladimir Putin's leading critics, was airlifted to Germany for treatment in August after collapsing on a plane in what Germany and other Western nations say was an attempt to murder him with a nerve agent.



Alexei Navalny  
Russian authorities deny any involvement in the incident. "It was never a question of whether to return or not. Simply because I never left. I ended up in Germany after arriving in an intensive

care box for one reason: they tried to kill me," Mr. Navalny wrote on Instagram.

"(President Vladimir Putin's) servants are acting as usual by fabricating new criminal cases against me. But I'm not interested in what they're going to do to me. Russia is my country, Moscow is my city and I miss it," he wrote.

His announcement came a day after court documents showed Russian authorities had asked a court to jail him for allegedly breaking the terms of a suspended sentence, which he calls a politically-motivated conviction.

The court in the eastern town of Batticaloa released Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, who won a seat while in detention in last August's parliamentary election, representing a party that backs President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The Attorney General's Department told the court earlier this week that it does not intend

# Sri Lankan court acquits rebel-turned lawmaker

Chandrakanthan aided in LTTE defeat

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
COLOMBO

A Sri Lankan court on Wednesday acquitted a rebel-turned-lawmaker of charges that he was involved in the killing of an ethnic Tamil legislator at the height of the island's long civil war. Four others were also released.

The court in the eastern town of Batticaloa released Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, who won a seat while in detention in last August's parliamentary election, representing a party that backs President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. The Attorney General's Department told the court earlier this week that it does not intend

to continue the case against Chandrakanthan.

Chandrakanthan was a former child soldier in the Tamil Tiger rebel group that fought a quarter-century civil war. He later joined a renegade faction that emerged from the biggest split in the rebel group in 2004 and functioned as a paramilitary group supporting government forces.

His faction played a key role in the defeat of the Tamil Tigers in the eastern province, a precursor to their total rout in 2009.

He then entered politics and became the government-backed Chief Minister of Eastern Province.

+

# 57 killed in deadliest Israeli strikes on Syria in years

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIRUT

Israeli air strikes on east Syria killed 57 regime forces and allied Iran-backed fighters, in the deadliest such strikes since the start of the conflict, a war monitoring group said on Wednesday.

The overnight raids against arms depots and military positions killed at least 14 Syrian re-

gime forces, 16 Iraqi militia fighters and 11 Afghan members of the pro-Iran Fatimid Brigade, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The nationality of the remaining 16 who lost their lives in the 18 strikes was not immediately clear.

"This is the largest death toll from Israeli raids in Syria," Observatory head Rami Abdul

Rahman said.

The official Syrian news agency SANA said "the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial assault on the town of Deir Ezzor and the Albu Kamal region", only adding that "the results of the aggression are currently being verified".

An Israeli Army spokesperson declined to comment.

Days before the strikes, the

Fatimid Brigade transported a consignment of Iranian-manufactured weapons to eastern Syria from neighbouring Iraq, said the Observatory, which is based in the United Kingdom.

They were stored in the region targeted overnight, it added.

In June 2018, strikes on the same region killed at least 55 pro-government fighters, in-

cluding Iraqis as well as Syrians, according to the monitoring group, which relies on a network of sources on the ground.

The latest raids came hours after separate strikes near the Iraqi border killed at least 12 Iran-backed militia fighters on Tuesday.

The Observatory said it could not identify the warplanes responsible for the earlier strikes.

# U.S. makes negative COVID-19 test mandatory for all arrivals

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

The U.S. on Tuesday announced all air travellers entering the country will need a negative COVID-19 test before departure, as concerns grow over more contagious coronavirus variants. The policy takes effect on January 26 and expands an existing measure targeting Britain, where the strain known as B117 has been

tied to a drastic spike in cases.

Ireland, which now has the world's highest infection rate, also announced on Tuesday it was extending to all arrivals testing measures that previously applied only to travellers from the U.K. and South Africa.

The U.S. remains the worst-affected country, with around 3,80,000 dead.

# Sri Lanka reports 'new virus variant' from U.K.

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities on Wednesday said a visiting British national tested positive for the new strain of COVID-19 reported recently in the United Kingdom.

An individual who arrived from the U.K. was found carrying the new COVID-19 variant that is rapidly spreading in the U.K., Chief Epidemiologist Dr. Sudath Samarawera told local media. Health authorities suspect that the infected person arrived in Sri Lanka within the last two weeks.

A team of scientists at the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura confirmed detection of the new variant of the novel Coronavirus.

University of Hyderabad Gachibowli, Hyderabad - 46 (TS)  
UH/CPU/Housekeeping/2021/426  
Tenders are invited for providing Multi-Tasking Workers for Housekeeping and Sanitation works at UoH. For details visit [www.uohyd.ac.in/tenders](http://www.uohyd.ac.in/tenders). Last date for receipt of bids 8-2-2021.

# RAIL WHEEL FACTORY

Yelahanka, Bengaluru - 560 064.  
Website: [www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in)

TENDER NOTICE NO. RWFS/P1/01/2020-21 dt 13.01.2021

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from Interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal - [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). The Tender documents and the Corrigenda to the Tenders, if any, will be available on the Portal only.

Sl.	Tender No.	Due date	Short Description	Qty
1	P1211008	09-02-2021	Steel Blooms 300 mm square R16 as per RWF specification	33690 MT
			Steel Blooms 287 mm square as per RWF specification	5010 MT
			Steel Blooms 340 mm square R43 as per RWF specification	1920 MT

Principal Chief Materials Manager

# PALKHIVALA FOUNDATION

Cordially Invites you for the

## 39<sup>th</sup> Palkhivala Memorial Lecture

by

Mr. Shaktikanta Das

Governor, Reserve Bank of India

on

### "Towards a Stable Financial System"

Saturday, January 16, 2021

at 11.00 a.m.

Meeting Link :

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_LakgNZ-DQDC43UTQkIHWMw](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LakgNZ-DQDC43UTQkIHWMw)

All are welcome

CM YK

# GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT TRICHY (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No.35/2020-21/HDD/Dated:11.01.2021

For and on behalf of Governor of Tamil Nadu, Percentage tender through online only will be received up to 16.02.2021, 15.00 hours by the Superintendent Engineer (H) & C&M Trichy Circle, TVS Tollgate, Pudukkottai Road, Trichy-20 for the work of Dismantling the existing old steel girder bridge across Kollidam river at Km.312/2-313/0 of Chennai - Trichy - Dindigul road pertaining Trichy (H) C&M Division.

Details of works, approximate value of works, DEM, availability of tender documents and all other details are available from 14.01.2021 onwards in the Government website <https://tntenders.gov.in>. If any Changes / Corrections in the tender, it will be published in the above Government website only.

DIPR/232/TENDER/2021

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER (H)  
C&M CIRCLE, TRICHY-20

+

idco  
Your power to grow  
ISO 9001 & 14001 Corporation

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C), IDCO,  
IDCO TOWERS, BHUBANESWAR - 751022

Tender Call Notice No. H.O./P.C/EST-E-1654/04/2020-21 669 Dt :- 12.01.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER  
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement

SI. No. Name of Work Value

## MARKET WATCH

	13-01-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	49,492	-0.05
US Dollar	73.15	0.13
Gold	48,877	-0.14
Brent oil	56.23	0

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	536.65	+25.40
Asian Paints	2703.70	-16.85
Axis Bank	687.80	-12.10
Bajaj Auto	3600.90	-23.35
Bajaj Finserv	8793.65	-165.35
Bajaj Finance	4902.90	-139.30
Bharti Airtel	578.25	+12.50
BPCL	411.90	+9.35
Britannia Ind	3621.15	-10.50
Cipla	841.70	-1.45
Coal India	145.80	-0.85
Divis Lab	3719.40	-48.10
Dr Reddys Lab	5290.00	-63.85
Eicher Motors	2868.65	-13.00
GAIL (India)	141.25	-0.15
Grasim Ind	1033.35	+23.05
HCL Tech	1055.95	-6.15
HDFC	2670.90	-76.65
HDFC Bank	1470.65	-10.35
HDFC Life	713.25	-5.15
Hero MotoCorp	3256.80	+8.55
Hindalco	262.65	-1.70
Hind Unilever	2372.35	-3.55
ICICI Bank	556.50	+8.50
IndusInd Bank	942.75	+15.10
Infosys	1387.15	+15.40
Indian Oil Corp	100.95	+3.00
ITC	211.25	+4.80
JSW Steel	402.95	+3.40
Kotak Bank	1882.10	-21.35
L&T	1352.50	+2.70
M&M	828.35	+48.50
Maruti Suzuki	8139.85	-48.20
Nestle India Ltd.	18019.30	+20.20
NTPC	102.55	+2.40
ONGC	105.25	+1.80
PowerGrid Corp	205.00	+1.30
Reliance Ind	1938.80	-18.25
SBI Life	926.55	+1.55
State Bank	306.80	+14.30
Shree Cement	24726.40	-642.70
Sun Pharma	602.30	-7.35
Tata Motors	242.60	+4.80
Tata Steel	709.15	+14.25
TCS	3158.95	-15.90
Tech Mahindra	1069.65	+5.45
Titan	1505.80	+21.30
UltraTech Cement	5650.75	+11.75
UPL	491.70	-9.80
Wipro	459.00	+1.30

## EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on January 13		
CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.95	73.27
Euro	88.82	89.24
British Pound	99.71	100.18
Japanese Yen (100)	70.18	70.49
Chinese Yuan	11.27	11.33
Swiss Franc	82.09	82.50
Singapore Dollar	55.02	55.27
Canadian Dollar	57.28	57.53
Malaysian Ringgit	18.03	18.13

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Tata Motors unveils new Altroz hatchback

MUMBAI  
Tata Motors Wednesday unveiled the new Altroz iTurbo on the first anniversary of the premium hatchback. The new Altroz iTurbo will be powered by a new 1.2L Petrol iTurbo engine. Tata Motors has opened bookings for the car and said the price would be announced on January 22.

## Centre to offload up to 10% stake in SAIL

NEW DELHI  
The Centre on Wednesday said it proposes to offload up to 10% in public sector steel firm SAIL. "Offer for Sale (OFS) in SAIL opens on Thursday (14.1.2021) for non-retail investors. 15th January (Friday) is for retail investors. Govt would divest 5% equity with a 5% greenshoe option," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted. PTI

## SPORT

## Mathews in squad for England Tests

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GALLE

Former Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews has recovered from injury and was named on Wednesday in a 22-player squad to face England in two Tests here from Thursday.

Mathews, 33, did not make the South Africa trip due to a hamstring injury. Both games will be played behind closed doors.

The squad: Dimuth Karunaratne (capt.), Kusal Perera, Dinesh Chandimal, Kusal Mendis, Angelo Mathews, Oshada Fernando, Niroshan Dickwella, Minod Bhanuka, Lahiru Thirimanne, Lasith Embuldeniya, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dilruwan Perera, Suranga Lakmal, Lahiru Kumara, Vishwa Fernando, Dushmantha Chameera, Dasun Shanaka, Asitha Fernando, Roshen Silva, Lakshan Sandakan, Nuwan Pradeep and Ramesh Mendis.

CMK

## Infosys profit climbs 16.6%, Wipro's jumps 20.8%

IT majors upbeat on demand outlook with former lifting full-year revenue forecast, latter saying 'bullish' on growth

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Infosys Ltd. on Wednesday reported third-quarter net profit climbed 16.6% to ₹5,197 crore buoyed by large deal wins and gathering demand for enabling digital transformation. The upbeat outlook also spurred the country's second-largest information technology services provider to raise its revenue guidance for the year ending in March for the second straight quarter.

And smaller rival Wipro Ltd. reported third-quarter profit jumped 20.8% to ₹2,968 crore, boosted by the strongest sequential IT services revenue growth in 36 quarters – of 3.9%. Chief Executive Officer Thierry Delaporte said the company was 'bullish' on revenue growth adding, "the demand envi-



Space saving: COO Pravin Rao says the company will have to wait and watch on real estate rationalisation. ■ REUTERS

ronment is steadily improving, especially for digital transformation, digital operations, and cloud services".

Infosys said it expects revenue to grow by 4.5-5% in the financial year ending March 2021, faster than the

2-3% pace it had projected earlier. It also raised its operating margin guidance to 24-24.5%, from 23-24%.

"Execution of client relevant strategy focused on digital transformation continues to drive superior

growth, well ahead of the industry," said CEO and MD Salil Parekh. "The scale of new client partnerships with leading global companies such as Vanguard, Daimler and Rolls-Royce demonstrate the depth of digital and cloud capabilities of Infosys," he added.

India's IT firms have benefited from a global trend to add digital offerings and leverage cloud capabilities as the pandemic has made businesses realise the strategic need to bolster remote services both for internal work and for customers.

## Large deal wins

Infosys reported total contract value for large deals in the quarter touched an all-time high of \$7.13 billion, with 73% being net new business. Among the several

deals it bagged were a cloud partnership with German automaker Daimler AG and a strategic partnership with Rolls-Royce.

Revenue grew 12.3% to ₹25,927 crore. Operating margin at 25.4%, surged 350 basis points from the year-earlier quarter. The firm said it would hire 24,000 more staff from campuses, adding that voluntary attrition rate at its IT services business slid to 10%, from 15.8% a year earlier. The cash flow during the quarter grew 19.4% to ₹5,683 crore.

Infosys COO Pravin Rao said the company would adopt a hybrid model of work from home and office going forward. "We have to wait and watch on real estate rationalisation. We are not renewing many offices on rent. We have slowed down

on infrastructure expansion," he added.

"Infosys reported another solid quarter beating the revenue and margin performance, along with record-high deal wins," said Sanjeev Hota, head of research at Sharekhan. "Strong revenue growth was driven by market share gains and ramp-up in deals," he added.

## Broad-based growth

Wipro said growth had been broad-based, across sectors and markets. Revenue from operations grew 1.3% to ₹15,670 crore, while IT services revenue grew 3.9% from the preceding quarter to ₹2,071 million.

"We expanded our operating margins... by about 240 bps to 21.7%," Mr. Delaporte said, adding it was the highest in the last 22 quarters.

Kerala allowed to borrow ₹2,261 cr. more

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has enhanced Kerala's borrowing limit by ₹2,261 crore, after the State joined seven others in completing reforms to improve the ease of doing business as stipulated by the Centre.

States have so far been granted an additional borrowing limit of about ₹23,100 crore linked to this aspect of the conditional reform-linked borrowings permitted this year.

The reforms for meeting the additional borrowing grant include the completion of first assessment of 'District Level Business Reform Action Plan', elimination of the requirements of renewal of registration certificates and licences obtained by businesses under various laws, and implementation of a computerised central random inspection system for allocation of inspectors.

In May, the Centre had allowed States to avail of enhanced borrowing limits of 2% of their Gross State Domestic Product, citing the COVID-19 pandemic. Half of this special dispensation was linked to the States undertaking citizen-centric reforms.

The four areas identified were implementation of 'One Nation One Ration Card' system, ease of doing business, urban local body and utilities' reforms and power sector reforms.

"So far, 10 States have implemented the One Nation One Ration Card system, 8 States have done ease of doing business reforms, and 4 have done local body reforms," the ministry said in a statement on Wednesday, adding States could overall borrow ₹5,526 crore additionally.

## Delhi HC asks Future to respond to Amazon plea

U.S. firm challenges bench's observation

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked Future Retail Limited (FRL) to respond to Amazon's plea challenging certain observations made by a single judge bench against the U.S.-based e-commerce major.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh also issued notice to Future Coupons Pvt. Ltd. (FCPL), seeking a stand on Amazon's plea against the observations made by the single judge bench in its December 21, 2020 order.

Amazon, in its appeal before the division bench, said certain observations were made by the single judge

bench "on the merits of the case in the arbitration proceedings, which were inconsistent with the findings contained in the emergency award (EA) order by the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)".

It contended that the observations "effectively resulted in allowing FRL to collaterally bypass the EA order".

## Paytm Money to offer futures and options trading

Eyes daily turnover of ₹1.5 lakh cr., 1 mn trades in 18-24 months

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Online investment platform Paytm Money on Wednesday unveiled futures and options (F&O) trading on its platform with an aim to reach a daily turnover of ₹1.5 lakh crore and one million trades in the next 18-24 months.

The offer comprises 178.2 crore shares of face value of ₹10 each and includes fresh issue of up to 118.8 crore shares and an offer-for-sale of up to 59.4 crore equity shares by the President of India, acting through the Ministry of Railways.

"Our pricing of ₹10 flat per order without any con-

tract/commitments/conditions brings the overall cost of trading significantly lower and makes it super transparent," Varun Sridhar, CEO, Paytm Money said.

"With this, Paytm Money is taking one step further to

become India's most comprehensive and number 1 digital wealth management platform," Mr. Sridhar added.

Paytm Money currently has more than seven million users, he said, adding that almost 50% of mutual funds and stocks investors on the platform were new to the market and more than 60% were from tier II, tier III cities.

Initially, the company will give early access to a select user base on Android and Web to receive their feedback and roll out commercially to all traders and iOS users over the next few weeks.

## IRDAI forms advisory panel on health cover

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Insurance regulator IRDAI has constituted a health insurance advisory committee to examine the availability of products, suggest approach on the coverage of specific diseases, and develop a strategy on treatment protocol.

The 10-member committee has been also tasked with examining the extant health insurance product structure in terms of policy conditions to protect the interest of the policyholders. The committee will have the IRDAI chairman and member (non-life) as its chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively.

## Hyundai Motor exports cars to Nepal via rail

Move to cut logistics cost, travel time

# Injury-ridden India out to breach Australia's Gabba fortress

With Jadeja ruled out and Bumrah set to miss Test, Kuldeep and either Shardul or Natarajan are likely to make the playing XI; the home team too has fitness issues

## INDIA IN AUS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BRISBANE

India, plagued by injuries, headed to Australia's Gabba fortress for Friday's final Test with high hopes of retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after securing an epic draw in Sydney to leave the series locked at 1-1.

But Australia will be optimistic of snatching a series win at the Gabba, where it is unbeaten in more than three decades, especially as India has been hit by a series of injuries.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja was ruled out on Wednesday after dislocating his left thumb in Sydney, while fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is set to miss the final Test with an abdominal strain.

**Inexperienced attack**  
If Bumrah cannot play, the already inexperienced attack will be led by Mohammed Siraj, who has only played two Tests, alongside Navdeep Saini who made his debut at Sydney plus one of the uncapped T. Natarajan or Shar-

dul Thakur. There are also doubts over the fitness of No. 6 batsman Hanuma Vihari, who tore his hamstring during his 161-ball vigil for 23 runs that helped earn the unlikely draw on Monday.

Fellow Sydney hero R. Ashwin, who spent more than three hours at the crease with Vihari in an unbroken sixth-wicket stand to save the game, has a back issue.

Despite the horror injury-run, Sunil Gavaskar believes India can win in Brisbane.

"I know that the Gabba in Brisbane is Australia's fortress but India has the ability to take on the Australians," he told the Indian media this week. "They (Australia) have not lost there since 1988 but there is always a first time. If Ajinkya Rahane and company do it, I won't be surprised at all."

Australia has its own injury worries with young opener Will Pucovski facing an anxious wait after suffering a partial dislocation of his right shoulder while fielding in Sydney.

Meanwhile, the Indian team underwent its first

training session at the Gabba here on Wednesday, hoping to field 11 fit players.

Chinaman bowler Kuldeep Yadav was seen bowling at the nets and there is a chance that he could be picked for the match with all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja ruled out due to a fractured thumb.

### The teams (from):

**India:** Ajinkya Rahane (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Mayank Agarwal, Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R. Ashwin, Navdeep Saini, Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, T. Natarajan, Kuldeep Yadav and Prithvi Shaw.

**Australia:** Tim Paine (Capt.), David Warner, Marcus Harris, Will Pucovski, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Cameron Green, Mathew Wade, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Michael Neser and Mitchell Swepson.

**Umpires:** Bruce Oxenford and Paul Reiffel; **Third umpire:** Rod Tucker; **Match referee:** David Boon.

*Match starts at 5 a.m. IST on Friday (January 15).*

*Live on Sony Ten 1, 3 and Six (SD & HD).*

## Everything to play for

As Rahane and Paine's troops prepare for the final battle at the Gabba from Friday, a look at what history tells us

### Outcome of final contests with four-match series level 1-1

#### INDIA

**1975-76**

lost to West Indies, away

**2002**

drew with England, away

**2003-04**

drew with Australia, away

**2016-17**

beat Australia, home

#### AUSTRALIA

**1994-95**

beat West Indies, away

**2003-04**

beat India, home

**2016-17**

lost to India, away

## AUSTRALIA IN TESTS AT THE GABBA

Played 62 Won 40 Lost 8 Tied 1 Drawn 13

■ The Aussies are on a 31-match unbeaten run (24 wins, seven draws) at the Gabba, their last reverse coming against the West Indies in 1988

■ On a seven-match winning streak since 2013

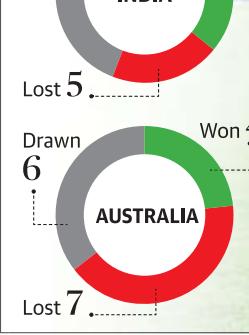
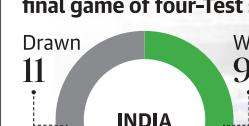
## IND. VS. AUS. IN TESTS AT THE GABBA

Played 6 India 0 Australia 5 Drawn 1

■ The Indians, under Sourav Ganguly, shared the honours in the opening Test of the 2003-04 series

COMPILED BY R. NARAYANAN AND G. PRASAD SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO

### India, Australia overall record in final game of four-Test series



## A significant milestone in Lyon's journey from groundsman to Test great

The off-spinner will play his 100th game at Gabba, needs just four wickets to reach 400

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

The aerial distance between Adelaide and Brisbane is 995 miles.

Beginning his cricketing career as a groundsman in Adelaide and then, remarkably, journeying to his 100th Test in Brisbane, Nathan Lyon has gobbled up countless miles and crossed numerous milestones.

Indeed, the fourth Test of this gripping series, at the 'Gabba', will see Lyon completing a century of Tests.

### In classical mould

The magnificent bowler, cast in the classical mould, has deceived and consumed batsmen around the world.

Lyon, pivoting and releasing

I'm pretty excited about...just the thought of playing 100 Test matches for Australia is very humbling

ing the ball from a high-arm action, imparts overspin that causes the sphere to dip on the right-hander and then turn and bounce into the batsman from outside the off-stump.

To the southpaws, the off-spinner is always a handful taking the ball away from them, the spin laced with bounce; he dismissed the formidable Kumar Sangakkara with his first delivery in Test cricket, in Galle, 2011.

Now, he is just four shy of 400 Test scalps, his 396 Test

wickets coming at 31.98. His returns are rather evenly distributed, with 197 wickets coming in 51 Tests at home at just over 32, and his 184 wickets in 44 Tests away from home arriving at 29.42. In four Tests in neutral venues, Lyon has 15 wickets.

His below par performance in India was one blemish in his record with M.S. Dhoni wading into him with mighty slog-sweeps in the Chennai Test of 2013.

When Lyon returned to India in 2016-17, he was a different bowler, quicker through the air, and getting his deliveries to fizz off the pitch.

He finished with 19 wickets in four Tests.

In the Ashes he has always

I look at the other 12 guys who have played more than 100 Test matches of cricket for Australia and they're pure legends. I'm going to pinch myself each and every day to see my name up against those fellows

been a major factor, complementing the pacemen, maintaining the pressure, and making inroads when the pitch deteriorates. He is a game-changer.

The manner Lyon ran through the Indian line-up, using footmarks, in the Adelaide Test's (2014) final session when India – needing 159 with eight wickets in

hand at tea – was well poised for victory, is high up in the list. He scalped seven, Australia won.

In this series, Lyon and his great Indian counterpart R. Ashwin, have followed contrasting methods. Lyon has bowled in the traditional off-spinner's arc, getting the ball to turn in and bounce from outside the off-stump. He has, however, been let down by poor catching.

Ashwin has bowled the middle and leg line – he does slip in the odd under-cutter – extracting bounce and having a leg-side trap in play.

Irrespective of what the 100th Test holds for Lyon, the fierce competitor will enjoy the occasion.



**Fierce competitor:** Nathan Lyon will look to make the landmark Test a memorable one. ■ AFP

## Saina and Srikanth progress; Kashyap, Prannoy and Sameer bow out



**Dictating terms:** Srikanth brooked no resistance from Sourabh Verma in the opening round. ■ AFP

Satwiksairaj-Chirag duo rallies past Korean combo; Sikki-Sumeeth pair loses

### THAILAND OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BANGKOK

Saina Nehwal and former World No. 1 K. Srikanth entered the second round, but P. Kashyap made an early exit from the Thailand Open Super 1000 tournament here on Wednesday.

Saina got the better of Selvaduray Kisona of Malaysia 21-15, 21-15 in the opening round to set up a clash with Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan.

Saina, who was first forced to withdraw from the event for positive COVID-19 results on Tuesday but later returned a negative test, thanked the Badminton World Federation officials and doctors for allowing her to participate.

Earlier in the day, Srikanth took just 31 minutes to prevail over compatriot Sourabh Verma 21-12, 21-11 in men's singles, but Kashyap was forced to retire midway through his opening-round match against Jason Antho-

ny Ho-Shue of Canada. Kashyap was training 8-14 in the third game when he chose to retire after pulling his calf muscle. He had lost the first game 9-21 before making a comeback to take the second 21-13.

Srikanth will next play eighth seed Zii Jia Lee of Malaysia, who defeated another Indian H.S. Prannoy 13-21, 21-14, 21-8.

Sameer Verma, too, made a first round exit. He lost 15-21, 17-21 to Shesha Hiren Rhustavito of Indonesia.

In men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty came from behind to defeat the South Korean pair of Kim Gi Jung and Lee Dae 19-21, 21-16, 21-14.

### Other results (first round):

**Men's doubles:** Ong Yew Sin & Teo Ee Yi (Mas) bt Arjun Ramachandran & Dhruv Kapila 21-13, 8-21, 22-24; Weeraphat Phakrung & Wongathorn Thongkham (Tha) bt Manu Attri and B. Sumeeth Reddy 21-19, 21-14.

**Mixed doubles:** Chung Man Tang & Yong Suet Tse (Tpe) bt Sikki Reddy & Sumeeth Reddy 22-20, 21-17.

## Ankita loses in final round

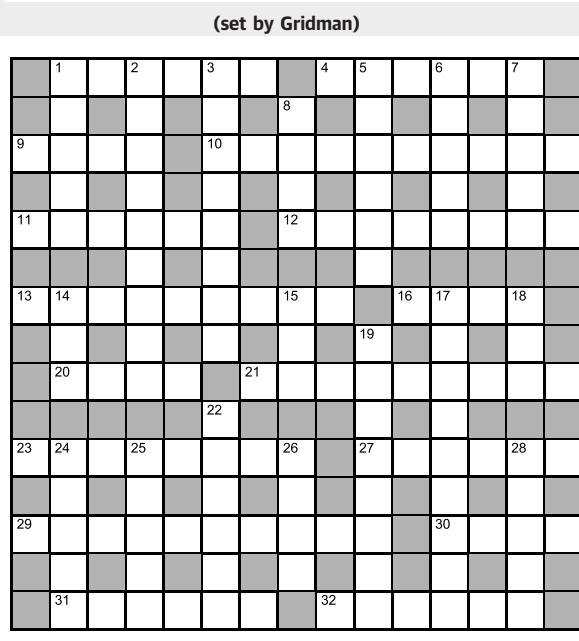
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
DUBAI

Ankita Raina's bid to qualify for a Grand Slam singles main draw failed yet again when she lost in the final round of the Australian Open qualifying event to Serbian Olga Danilovic 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 on Wednesday. It was her sixth attempt to qualify for a Slam.

Ankita's defeat meant that Sumit Nagal, who was awarded a wild card, will be the only Indian in the singles event for the first Slam of the season.

## TH CROSSWORD + 13145

(set by Gridman)



### ACROSS

- 1 Party leader takes along different characters for Tamil festival (6)
- 4 Endlessly bound with short headman! Here are super sizes! (6)
- 9 Plate for 1ac maybe (4)
- 10 Honest, it is not within reach of the directors (5,5)
- 11 Document stripped afterwards? Feel embarrassed (6)
- 12 Fine. Is French competitor run out? Let's have celebration! (8)
- 13 Notice! He has, and I have some small gums (9)

This pongal, may your cup run over with crosswords and sudokus!

@ <https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn>



## SUDOKU

4	7	1	5					
	3	9	6					
5	6	3	2					
6	8							
5	7							
				2	4			
				7	6			
2	3	9	5					
	4	7	6					

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### Solution to puzzle 13144</h

## TV PICKS

**THURSDAY (JAN. 14)**  
**Thailand Open badminton:** Star Sports 2 (HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 a.m.

**Sri Lanka v England:** First Test, Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10 a.m.

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), Noon & 7 p.m.

**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.

**Premier League:** SS Select 1 (SD & HD), 1.30 a.m. (Friday)

**FRIDAY (JAN. 15)**

**Australia v India:** Fourth Test, first day, Sony Ten 1, 3 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 5.30 a.m.

**Thailand Open badminton:** Star Sports 2 (HD) & Star Sports 3, 9.30 a.m.

**Sri Lanka v England:** 1st Test, Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10 a.m.

**Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy:** Star Sports 1 (SD & HD), Noon & 7 p.m.

**ISL:** Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Star Sports 3, 7.30 p.m.

## IN BRIEF



**Sabalenka wins third straight title**

ABU DHABI Aryna Sabalenka captured a third consecutive title by outclassing Veronika Kudermetova 6-2, 6-2 in the Abu Dhabi final on Wednesday to extend her winning streak to 15 straight matches. The 22-year-old from Belarus added a ninth singles trophy to her collection. AFP



**NEUFC sacks Gerard Nus; Jamil put in charge**

PANAJI NorthEast United FC on Wednesday confirmed that it has decided to part ways with head coach Gerard Nus saying the decision has been taken taking into consideration a contrast in the team's current tactics and the club's philosophy and vision. Khalid Jamil has been appointed interim head coach for the remainder of the season. ANI

## NBA fines Morris and Cousins for altercation

LOS ANGELES Los Angeles Lakers forward Markieff Morris and Houston Rockets center DeMarcus Cousins were fined \$35,000 and \$10,000 respectively by the NBA on Tuesday following an on-court fracas between the pair on Sunday. AFP



**Waqr back with family after seven months**

ISLAMABAD After going seven months without seeing his family while living in a bio-secure bubble and travelling the world as Pakistan's bowling coach, Waqr Younis is finally getting to spend some time at home. "I didn't see my family for the last seven months and got permission from the cricket board to spend time with my family," Waqr said. AP

## Sarthak Gandhi and Riya Kaushik triumph

CHANDIGARH Sarthak Gandhi and Riya Kaushik won the under-18 boys and girls titles in the AITA championship series junior tennis tournament here on Wednesday.

**The results (finals): Boys:** Sarthak Gandhi bt Navya Verma 6-3, 6-1; **Girls:** Riya Kaushik bt Harleen Kaur Dhanda 6-2, 6-7(2), 6-2.

## Ridhima, Amandeep share lead

BENGALURU Ridhima Dilawari and Amandeep Drall shot one-under 71 opening rounds to share the lead in the Hero Women's Pro golf tour - Leg 1, at Prestige Golfshire here on Wednesday.

**The scores (top-four):** 71: Ridhima Dilawari, Amandeep Drall; 72: Vani Kapoor; 73: Pranavi Urs, Anyana Datar.

CM YK

# Delhi pacers call the shots against Andhra

Dhawan's boys coast to a comprehensive victory with three overs to spare

## MUSHTAQ ALI

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI

Delhi ran through the opposition batting line-up without any fuss to set up its second convincing win in as many outings in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Wednesday.

Thanks to its pacers sharing seven wickets between them, Delhi outclassed Andhra by six wickets with three overs to spare at the Wankhede Stadium to top the Group E standings with a healthy net run rate.

**Faith justified**  
If Monday saw Delhi strangle Mumbai's top-order while defending a gargantuan total, on Wednesday, the pacers justified captain Dhawan's faith in them after chose to field first.

Veteran Ishant Sharma (two for 17), promising talent Simarjeet Singh (two for 21) and seasoned Deepak Sangwan (three for 33) wreaked havoc in the Andhra top-order.

The Delhi pacers account-



**Leader of the pack:** Ishant Sharma's incisive bowling unsettled Andhra's top order. ■ TWITTER/BCCI

ed for three batsmen on whom Andhra's batting relies on, leaving it reeling at 15 for three.

While Simarjeet induced an edge off K.S. Bharat in the second over, Ishant cleaned up Ricky Bhui for a blob in

the next over. Simarjeet then had the prize scalp of captain Ambati Rayudu an over later over.

## Too big a damage

The damage was too much to handle as Andhra crawled to

35 for three at the half-way stage.

Thanks to a late charge by K.V. Sasikanth and Shoib Mohammed Khan, Andhra managed to finish at 124 for nine.

A target of 125 was never

going to be challenging for Delhi. Despite Harishankar Reddy dismissing openers Shikhar Dhawan and Hiten Dalal in the second over, Nit-

## Rahi tops 25m sports pistol

## SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

Asian Games gold medallist Rahi Sarnobat asserted her class yet again as she overtook fellow Olympic quota winners Chinki Yadav and Manu Bhaker to the top spot in the women's 25m sports pistol event of the National shooting selection trials at the Dr. Karni Singh Range on Wednesday.

Rahi had qualified in the fourth place with 578, but called the shots in the final, twice with perfect rounds, as she pipped the young Chinki by two points with a total of 36. Manu who had

topped qualification with 582 placed third, marginally ahead of Neha.

Olympian Annu Raj Singh, Neeraj Kaur, Anisa Sayeed and Niveditha Nair were the others to make the final.

In trap, Asian Games silver medallist Lakshay Sheoran was in top form as he beat Adhiraj Singh Rathore 42 (117); 3. Zoravar Singh Sandhu 33 (116).

**Women:** 1. Rajeshwari Kumari 43 (110); 2. Shreyasi Singh 36 (108); 3. Kirti Gupta 29 (105).

**Junior men:** 1. Shapath Bharadwaj 41 (111); 2. Shardul Vihan 40 (112); 3. Aditya Bharadwaj 29 (109).

**Junior women:** 1. Kirti Gupta 43 (105); 2. Sabeera Haris 42 (100); 3. Neeru 28 (101).

## The results:

**Women's 25m sports pistol:** 1. Rahi Sarnobat 36 (578); 2. Chinki Yadav 34 (581); 3. Manu Bhaker 27 (582).

**Trap: Men:** 1. Lakshay Sheoran 46 (120); 2. Adhiraj Singh Rathore 42 (117); 3. Zoravar Singh Sandhu 33 (116).

**Women:** 1. Rajeshwari Kumari 43 (110); 2. Shreyasi Singh 36 (108); 3. Kirti Gupta 29 (105).

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**Junior women:** 1. Kirti Gupta 43 (105); 2. Sabeera Haris 42 (100); 3. Neeru 28 (101).

## Ghufran claims men's title

Shainy stays strong to get the better of Rashmi

## CARROM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Mohd. Ghufran was consistently brilliant to beat the World online carrom champion K. Srinivas in the men's final of the Indian online carrom challenge on Tuesday.

Ghufran had two black slams as he wound up the eight boards with 19 points. On the other hand, K. Srinivas had one black slam to show for in a below-par finish with 28 points.

In the women's final, 17-year-old Shainy Sebastian came up with a strong per-

formance, collecting 33 points. In contrast, two-time World champion Rashmi Ku-

mari struggled her way to 51, after conceding 28 points in the first three boards.

■ Mohd. Ghufran.



Shainy Sebastian.

## ISL—Esmael helps CFC climb to fifth

## SPORTS BUREAU

TWO costly errors by Gaurav Bora within the first 20 minutes helped Esmael Goncalves find the target twice as Chennaiyin FC defeated Odisha FC 2-1 and registered its third win in the Indian Super League at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim on Wednesday.

The victory helped Chennaiyin climb to the fifth spot with 14 points from 11 games while Odisha remained rooted to the bottom with six from 11.

**The result:** Odisha FC 1 (Diego Mauricio 63) lost to Chennaiyin FC 2 (Esmael Goncalves 15, 21-pen).

**Thursday's match:** FC Goa vs Jhansi FC.

**Friday:** SC East Bengal vs Kerala Blasters.

## Zeel Desai in second round

## SPORTS BUREAU

MONASTIR (TUNISIA) Zeel Desai beat USA's Gabriella Price 6-4, 6-4 in the first round of the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis tournament here on Wednesday.

## Other results:

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir, Tunisia: **Singles (first round):** Vaidehi Chaudhari bt Oceane Babel (Fra) 3-6, 6-1.

**Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Laetitia Pulchartova (Cze) & Zeel Desai bt Lois Boisson (Fra) & Renee Van Bommel (Ned) 6-1, 6-3.

\$15,000 ITF women, Cairo: **Doubles (pre-quarterfinals):** Elina Avanesyan (Rus) & Lexie Stevens (Ned) bt Eline Audebert (Bel) & Saumya Vig 6-1, 6-0; Fanny Ostlund (Swe) & Riya Bhattacharya (Ind) 6-2, 6-3; Vanda Lukacs (Hun) & Alessandra Simone (Ita) 6-2, 6-3; Chantal Skamlova (Svk) bt Yasmin Ezzat (Egy) & Smriti Bhasin 6-1, 7-5.

## DELHI CRICKET ROUND-UP

## Ankit Mishra and Aarush Malhotra saw Bal Bhawan Academy beat Ravindra Academy by 73 runs in the 5th Shanti Devi memorial tournament.

**The scores:** TNM Academy 155 in 37.4 overs (Naitik Yadav 54, Vishwas Bajpai 7/34) bt West Delhi Academy 105 in 29.3 overs (Mohammad Aman 4/20, Adhikansh Bharadwaj 2/9).

## Suyash scalps six as Youth Club posts win

Suyash Kumar had a six-for as Youth Club beat Bearcats by three wickets in the Rikhi Ram memorial tournament.

**The scores:** Var Sports 143 in 25.3 overs (Gaurav Kumar 36, Manavdeep Singh 35) lost to Pioneer Club 148/6 in 25.3 overs (Ankit Mishra 54, Aarush Malhotra 46, Arpit Rana 45, Bhaskar Kumar 3/33) bt Ravindra Academy 135 in 23.1 overs (Bhaskar Kumar 31, Prince Rana 3/25).

## Pioneer Club beats Var Sports

Vansh Bedi and Yash Kumar batted Pioneer Club to a four-wicket win against Var Sports in the Swasthik Cup Under-17 tournament.

**The scores:** Var Sports 143 in 25.3 overs (Gaurav Kumar 36, Manavdeep Singh 35) lost to Pioneer Club 148/6 in 25.3 overs (Ankit Mishra 54, Aarush Malhotra 46, Arpit Rana 45, Bhaskar Kumar 3/33) bt Ravindra Academy 135 in 23.1 overs (Bhaskar Kumar 31, Prince Rana 3/25).

## Naitik and Aman shine for TNM

Mohammad Aman's four-wicket haul and 57 by Naitik Yadav helped TNM Academy beat West Delhi

Academy by 50 runs in the Turf Youth Cup Under-15 tournament.

**The scores:** TNM Academy 155 in 37.4 overs (Naitik Yadav 54, Vishwas Bajpai 7/34) bt West Delhi Academy 105 in 29.3 overs (Mohammad Aman 4/20, Adhikansh Bharadwaj 2/9).

## Centuries for Satish and Anurag

Satish Pathak and Anurag Notiyal slumped centuries as Delhi University Press XI beat Acharya Narendra Dev College by 75 runs in the Ramanujan Centenary T20 tournament.

**The scores:** Delhi University

Press XI 291/6 in 20 overs (Satish Pathak 138 n.o., Anurag Notiyal 115, Chaman Singh 3/59) bt AND College 216/7 in 20 overs (Bharat Lab 58, Mukesh Sharma 45, Rajesh Chaudhary 36, Hari Mehta 2/21).

## Turf Academy, RCC Club win in Endurance League

Sarthak Pal's match-winning century helped RCC Club beat Gyanti Academy by five wickets in the Endurance Under-15 league. In another match, Aryan Dabas' 49 and three wickets by Rajiv Suri helped Turf Academy beat Vidya Jain Cricket Academy by 70 runs.

**The scores:** Turf Academy 206 in 34.2 overs (Aryan Dabas 49, Nasa Kumar 42, Shivansh Gosain 3/34) bt VJCA 136/9 in 35 overs (Sachin Yadav 56, Rajiv Suri 4/19); Gyanti Academy 171 in 34.5 overs (Aryan Tejpal 43, Jasraj Singh Arora 40) lost to RCC Club 172/5 in 25.1 overs (Sarthak Pal 102, Priyanshu Chahal 47).

## Manchester United perched on top

## EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS

Manchester United moved three points clear at the