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### NEARBY



#### SC asks for NIA response on Navlakha's bail plea

NEW DELHI The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to respond to a plea filed by activist Gautam Navlakha for bail in the Bhima-Koregaon case.

NORTH & EAST ▶ PAGE 5

#### AAP wins 4 out of 5 wards in civic bypolls

NEW DELHI The Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday won four out of five wards in the municipal corporation bypolls. The Congress won the Chauhan Banger ward in north-east Delhi, which witnessed communal violence last year.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2



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## Sasikala announces decision to withdraw from politics

Jayalalithaa's aide gives no reason for her surprise move

T. RAMAKRISHNAN

CHENNAI



Call for unity: V.K.Sasikala paying tribute to Jayalalithaa on her 73rd birth anniversary, in this file photo. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

V.K.Sasikala, aide of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa and former interim general secretary of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), on Wednesday announced her decision to step aside from politics.

In a two-page statement, she did not give any reason for her decision. But she called upon "true followers" of Jayalalithaa to "remain united, act wisely and work hard" during the Assembly election so that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, "our common enemy and evil force, as identified by Amma [Jayalalithaa], does not return to power and the golden rule of Amma is established in Tamil Nadu".

**'Never keen on power'**  
Thanking all those who had shown "affection and concern" towards her, Ms. Sasikala claimed she was "never

keen on occupying any office or position of authority. I will ever remain indebted to Puratchi Thalaivi's [Jayalalithaa's] affectionate followers and people of Tamil Nadu". She added that she would "continue to pray [to] Puratchi Thalaivi and god for the establishment of the golden reign of Amma".

Sasikala's decision comes against the backdrop of the reported suggestion of the

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## I-T conducts searches on Anurag Kashyap, Taapsee

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI



Taapsee Pannu and, right, Anurag Kashyap. ■ FILE PHOTO

The Income-Tax Department on Wednesday conducted searches on 30 locations linked to filmmaker Anurag Kashyap, producer Vikas Bahl, producer-distributor Madhu Mantena and actor Taapsee Pannu in Mumbai and Pune.

The action, according to an agency official, was part of a tax evasion probe against Phantom Films launched by Mr. Kashyap but dissolved in 2018. Mr. Bahl and Mr. Mantena were the co-promoters of Phantom Films.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) said the raids were an attempt to suppress voices of dissent against the Central government.

"Central agencies are being used to take action against those who take an anti-government stand and speak against its policies," said Nawab Malik, Maharashtra's Minority Affairs Minister.

(With inputs from PTI, and Mumbai bureau)

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## 17-year-old arrested for rape, murder of minor

Police say he confessed to the crime

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GHAZIABAD

The Aligarh police have arrested a 17-year-old teenager for the rape and murder of a minor Dalit girl in a village in Akbarabad area of the district on Wednesday.

Muniraj G., Senior Superintendent of Police, Aligarh, said the Class 8 dropout from the neighbouring village was in police custody and had confessed to the crime.

The accused was watering a wheat crop around noon on February 28 when the victim came to the field to collect fodder for her goats.

"He was watching a porn film on his mobile. He tried

to sexually assault the girl and when she resisted, he strangled her with her chunni (stole). He then dragged her body for a few metres to hide it in another field," Mr. Muniraj said.

He threw her stole in the canal and her slippers in another field.

The boy had led them to the slippers of the deceased, Mr. Muniraj said.

Police sources said the accused knew the deceased as he used to go to her village to fetch milk. He knew that the girl had a speech impairment.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

## Voicing dissent against govt. is not sedition: SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Vocing dissent against the government does not amount to sedition, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while rejecting a plea to "terminate" the Lok Sabha membership of National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah and book him for sedition.

"The expression of a view which is a dissent from a decision taken by the Central government itself cannot be said to be seditious," the court said.

A Bench, led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, said there was nothing in Dr. Abdullah's statement "which we find so offensive as to give a cause of action for a court to initiate proceedings", trashing the plea as a "clear case of publicity interest litigation" by petitioners who want to get their names in the press.

The Bench dismissed the case levying costs on the petitioners to the tune of ₹50,000 to be deposited with the Supreme Court Advocates Welfare Fund in four weeks.

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## Covaxin shows 81% efficacy, also works against variants

Interim analysis is based on a study of 43 cases; vaccine has low adverse events

N. RAVI KUMAR  
 HYDERABAD

Covaxin, India's first COVID-19 vaccine, has demonstrated an interim clinical efficacy of 80.6%. The analysis is based on 43 COVID-19 cases, of which seven were observed in the vaccinated group and 36 in the placebo group. The efficacy of select vaccines

### Effective shot

Covaxin demonstrated an interim clinical efficacy of 80.6%. The analysis is based on 43 COVID-19 cases, of which seven were observed in the vaccinated group and 36 in the placebo group. The efficacy of select vaccines

Company	Efficacy	Total cases; in placebo group; in vaccinated group
Bharat Biotech	80.6%	43 ; 36 ; 7
Pfizer-BioNTech	95%	170 ; 162 ; 8
Moderna	94.5%	95 ; 90 ; 5
Oxford-AstraZeneca	82.4%*	131 ; NA ; NA
Gamaleya (Sputnik V)	91.6%	78 ; 62 ; 16

\* WHEN TWO DOSES WERE GIVEN OVER 12 WEEKS APART | NA: NOT AVAILABLE

first occurrence of Polymyositis with onset at least 14 days after the second dose.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Vaccine can be taken 24/7

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday reiterated that the Centre had done away with the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. timeline for giving COVID-19 vaccination and beneficiaries can take it round the clock. ▶ PAGE 10

Antibody level lifts in 14 days

Antibodies against COVID-19 begin to appear only 14 days after a vaccine injection. But in people who have already been infected, the increase can be observed in a week. According to several sero surveys, 21% to 60% of India may have been exposed to the virus. ▶ PAGE 10

## U.S. thinktank report classifies India as 'partly free'

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN

Freedoms in India have reduced, according to a report from a U.S. thinktank, Freedom House, resulting in In-

dia being classified as 'partly free'. India's score was 67, a drop from 71/100 from last year (reflecting 2019 data)

category last year (based on 2020 data).

"The government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and its State-level allies

continued to crack down on critics during the year..." the report said.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

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# ENJOY GUARANTEED

# 'Poll results are answer to 15 years of BJP's incompetence'

People were unhappy with its politics of violence: Kejriwal

## STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI  
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday told party workers that the results of the by-polls show that Delhiites are happy with AAP's work and angry with "15 years of BJP's incompetence" in the municipal corporations.

The AAP won four out of the five wards while the BJP won zero seats.

AAP workers danced to drum beats, exchanged sweets and smeared colours on each other's faces at the party headquarters to celebrate the win.

"The people of Delhi have made us win four out of five seats... none went to the BJP. I want to congratulate you all. In the 2015 Assembly elections, we got 67 out of 70 seats, and in 2020, we got 62 out of 70. After six years, the people of Delhi have again shown their faith in us and they want us to continue the way we are working. If so-

**C** The results of the by-elections are indicating that in the upcoming municipal polls next year, the BJP will be thrown out of power

DURGESH PATHAK  
AAP in-charge of municipal corporations

our government takes charge of the civic bodies, we will make Delhi shine," Mr. Kejriwal said. He added that the people of Delhi want to change the corporations and they want the corporations to run as effectively as the Delhi government.

"In 2017, we were still a new party. But now we had enough work to show the people and they believe in the party. This is what worked for us," AAP chief spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said.

Leaders also said that the party will focus on telling people about the work done by the Delhi government and promise the people similar development in the corporations for the 2022 municipal elections.

"The results of the by-elections is indicating that in the upcoming civic body election next year, the BJP will be thrown out of power," said Durgesh Pathak, AAP in-charge of the municipalities, where it has been in

meone wants to know what AAP has achieved, people from across the country will tell you how we have improved schools, hospitals, electricity, water, and roads," Mr. Kejriwal said at the party headquarters.

**D**elhi will shine'

He said that people didn't like the "politics of violence" that the BJP indulged in and recalled how the party launched attacks at Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's house and the Delhi Jal Board office.

"We have bettered education, hospitals, and roads... But cleanliness is left. When

the by-polls saw the three parties launch strong campaigns with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal holding roadshows to set the tone for the municipal election next year. Despite a landslide victory in the 2015 Assembly election, the AAP was unable to pull off a similar performance in the 2017 municipal election and has been at loggerheads with the BJP-ruled corporations.

The AAP has stated that it aims to end the monopoly that the BJP has in the municipalities, where it has been in

## कार्यपालक अधिकारी का कार्यालय, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, जमशेदपुर

Email ID - eedwsd.jamschedpur@gmail.com

अन्यकालीनई. निविदा

सूचना संख्या-RWSS -12 / JSR / 2020-21

दिनांक:-02.03.2021

The undersigned, on behalf of the Government of Jharkhand, invites bids for the work mentioned in table below through e-Procurement from eligible and approved Contractors, registered in Drinking Water & Sanitation Department, Government of Jharkhand, Central Government/ State Govt, or any PSU or any agency of International or National repute may participate in the bid but registration with Drinking Water & Sanitation Department, Government of Jharkhand will be essential within a period of two months from date of award after issue of Letter of Acceptance. The bid shall be submitted online in the Website https://jharkhandtenders.gov.in. The bidder(s) should have necessary portal enrolment with their own Digital Signature Certificate:

क्रमांक	विवरणी	विस्तृत विवरणी
1	कार्य का नाम	Detailed survey, designing and drawing, Construction of 5.0 M dia R.C.C. Intake well cum pump house, Gangway 40 mtr. Length and 3.00 mtr. Wide, 1.00 MLD capacity Water Treatment Plant, 1 No. ESR Infiltration Gallery, Compound wall, Supplying and laying Raw/Clear Water rising main & Laying Distribution Network, Supplying and Installation of Vertical turbine and Centrifugal pump motor, five years Operation and Maintenance with allied works etc. all complete job for work of <b>Junbani Rural Water Supply Scheme</b> under D.W. & S. Division Jamshedpur on turnkey basis. "Year 2020-21.
2	प्राकालित राशि	74632000.00 (सात लाख सौतीन हजार)
3	अधिकमजमानतकी राशि	747000.00 (सात लाख सौतीन हजार)
4	परिमाण विवर का मूल्य	10000.00 (दस हजार)
5	कार्य पूर्ण करने का समय	24 Month+3 Month (Trial and Run)
6	वेबसाइट करने पर अलाउड करने की तिथि	05.03.2021 को 9.00 पूर्वाहन
7	प्री बीमी सीटीम की तिथि एवं समय	09.03.2021 को 11.30 पूर्वाहन, अधिकारी प्रमुख, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग, राँची के कार्यालय कक्ष में।
8	निविदा प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि	18.03.2021 को 4.00 अप्रह्लान तक।
9	परिमाण विवर एवं अधिकमजमानतकी राशि जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि (रूल रूप में) एवं रक्षण	19.03.2021 को 2.00 बाद अप्रह्लान तक। 1) कार्यपालक अधिकारी, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, जमशेदपुर. 2) अधिकारी प्रमुख, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता अंचल, जमशेदपुर. 3) क्षेत्रीय मूल्य अधिकारी, पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग, राँची के प्रक्षेत्र, राँची।
10	निविदा खोलने की तिथि	20.03.2021 को 5.00 बजे।
11	निविदा करने वाले कार्यालय का नाम एवं पता	पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता प्रमण्डल, जमशेदपुर
12	निविदा खोले जाने वाले पदविकारी एवं कार्यालय का नाम	PHED कालोनी, आदित्यपुर प्रांगण, आदित्यपुर।
13	निविदा करने वाले कार्यालय का संपर्क संख्या	0657 - 2371051
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CM YK

# AAP wins 4 out of 5 wards in civic bypolls

BJP fails to retain Shalimar Bagh seat, Cong. wins Chauhan Banger ward in riot-affected north-east Delhi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday won four out of five wards in the municipal corporation bypolls. The Congress won the Chauhan Banger ward located in north-east Delhi, which witnessed communal violence last year. The seat was earlier held by the AAP.

The AAP was a runner-up in four wards and placed third in the minority-dominated Chauhan Banger.

AAP candidates Dhirender Kumar, Vijay Kumar, Sunita Mishra and Ram Chander won the Kalyanpuri, Trilokpuri, Shalimar Bagh and Rohini C wards, respectively.

The victorious Congress candidate was Chaudhary Zubair Ahmad, his victory margin was the highest among the five wards.

The State Election Commission said that the AAP polled 46.10% votes, followed by 27.29% (BJP) and 21.84% by the Congress. Around 2.42 lakh people were eligible to vote in two wards under the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, and three wards under the East Delhi Municipal Corporation. The elections saw a turnout of 50.86%.

power since 2007.

The bypoll was necessitated as four of the seats fell vacant after the councillors won the Assembly elections on AAP tickets last year.

The Shalimar Bagh (North) seat fell vacant after the death of sitting BJP councillor Renu Jaju.

The bypolls saw the three parties launch strong campaigns with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal holding roadshows to set the tone for the municipal election next year. Despite a landslide victory in the 2015 Assembly election, the AAP was unable to pull off a similar performance in the 2017 municipal election and has been at loggerheads with the BJP-ruled corporations.

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Timings  
DELHI

THURSDAY, MAR. 04
RISE 06:43 SET 18:23
RISE 23:54 SET 10:07
FRIDAY, MAR. 05
RISE 06:42 SET 18:24
RISE 00:00 SET 10:51
SATURDAY, MAR. 06
RISE 06:41 SET 18:24
RISE 01:01 SET 11:40

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	31	13
Safdarjang	31	13
Palam	30	13

Delhi Palam Today
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# Protester defers wedding plans till farmers' issues are resolved

Komaldeep Singh Cheema, a popular masseur at the Singhu site, is a kabaddi player



HEMAMI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI  
The ongoing farmers' protest has changed the course of several lives, including that of Komaldeep Singh Cheema, a 37-year-old kabaddi player who's now a popular masseur at the Singhu border protest site. He has deferred his wedding indefinitely till the protest ends.

Mr. Cheema, son of a retired Army Subedar, told *The Hindu* that his wedding was scheduled for January 27 but he has decided not to go ahead with it till the farmers' issues are resolved.

"About six months ago, I got engaged to a woman. It was arranged by our parents. In our village, men and women don't talk or meet a lot till the wedding day, so we only spoke a few times," he said.

On November 26, Mr. Cheema came to Singhu border and in the next few days, began a service he proudly

Komaldeep Cheema gives a massage to an elderly person at the Singhu protest site on Wednesday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

calls "massage langar". Mr. Cheema made headlines as the man who started this rather unusual langar service of giving massages, especially to the elderly with body pain issues.

"I had made up my mind. In December, I called and told the woman's parents that I won't marry till the protest is going on. I also told the woman that she

shouldn't wait for me and go ahead if she finds a better match. Of course, I apologised but this is something I couldn't have ignored," he said.

The woman's family told him that the marriage can take place alongside the protests, but he had resolved to wait till the protest was over, Mr. Cheema said. "My family said that I can decide for myself."

self. They didn't interfere," he said.

Even if the protest continues till 2024 – the election year – the marriage stands deferred, he said.

Mr. Cheema had started playing kabaddi when he was about 10 years old and continued to play in school and college in Jalandhar where he also played on a national level. In 2005, he went to England to play kabaddi from a Birmingham Club and played for them a few times. He stayed there for a few years.

"I also teach kids how to play, especially those from the economically weaker sections," he said.

The kabaddi player has gone home twice for over 10 days each to work on his fields and put fertilizer in the farms.

Earlier at the Singhu border on Wednesday, table fans were distributed for free and construction of extending makeshift hospital began.

R-Day violence:  
student among  
5 granted bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to five persons, including a Class 10 student, in a case related to violence that erupted on Republic Day during farmers' tractor parade against the Centre's new farm laws.

The court said they cannot be kept in custody merely on the apprehension that they might commit similar offence again.

Additional Sessions Judge Sudhanshu Kaushik granted bail to Ravi, Ashish, Parvesh, Deepak Singh, and a Class 10 student on furnishing a bail bond of ₹30,000 with one surety of like amount each in the case of violence in Nangloi.

The court noted that police alleged that the accused were amongst the protesters who attacked officers.

The counsel for the accused claimed they had been falsely implicated in the case.

'CoWIN process smooth unlike past two days'

Beneficiary numbers are rising steadily

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Many beneficiaries, mostly senior citizens, who took the vaccine on Wednesday said that the process was smooth.

Officials of multiple hospitals also said there were no issues with the CoWIN platform, where details of beneficiaries are entered and checked before vaccination, on Wednesday unlike the past two days.

A total of 25,054 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Wednesday and there were four Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI), said a Delhi government spokesperson.

Of the total beneficiaries, 13,794 were people who are 60 years of age and above, 1,625 people were between 45 and 59 years of age.

The number of people belonging to both age groups taking the vaccination have increased steadily since it started Monday.

The rest of the people vaccinated on Wednesday were healthcare workers and front-line workers.

Arun Jain, 69, a resident of Green Park, who took the vaccine at Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Hospital, said that the process was "smooth". "I had to wait for only 10 minutes to get the vaccine. It is my first time at the hospital and it was very clean and my overall experience was good," he said.

Nand Kishore Agarwal, 61, said that he had come alone to take the vaccine and he had to wait only for about "5-minutes".

## 240 fresh cases

Delhi witnessed 240 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,39,921, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Wednesday.

Three deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths stood at 10,914.

## HC drops murder charge against two in riots case

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Completely baffled by Delhi police's attempt to charge two persons for offence of attempt to murder a man during the north-east Delhi riots, when the victim himself is missing from police investigation, a Delhi Court remarked "presumption can't be stretched to take the shape of proof/evidence".

Discharging both accused persons – Imran alias Teli and Babu – from the charge,

## Muzaffarpur shelter case: ED takes possession of accused's property

Money laundering probe on against Brajesh Thakur

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has taken possession of a multistorey building in Delhi in connection with the Muzaffarpur shelter home case in which several minor girls were allegedly sexually and physically abused.

The agency has taken possession of the building worth ₹1.45 crore located in Delhi's

Palam Colony and a fixed deposit amounting to ₹2.07 lakh in the name of Aadar Mahila Shilp Kala Kendra.

The money laundering probe is based on two FIRs registered by the Mahila police station in Bihar's Muzaffarpur and one case lodged with the CBI, against Brajesh Thakur and others.

The ED has alleged misappropriation of funds and

grants received from the government and other agencies in the name of non-government organisation, Sewa Sankalp Ewam Vikas Samiti and its sister organisations, where Thakur was the "de facto owner".

The shelter home was run by Sewa Sankalp Ewam Vikas Samiti. The ED had earlier attached assets worth ₹8.77 crore.

## NGT takes cognisance of illegal factory fire, issues notices to govt. authorities

5-member panel to ascertain extent of damage and relief

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

poration and the District Magistrate.

A

Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel also constituted a five-member committee which has been asked to ascertain the extent of damage caused and compensation to be paid for damage to the environment and loss of life.

In its order, the tribunal noted that from initial re-

ports, subject to verification, there appeared to be non-compliance of statutory safeguards under the provisions of relevant law.

The panel added, "Except for visit to the site at least once, the committee will be free to conduct its proceedings online. It will be free to take the assistance from any other expert or organisation."

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**ME/PI** : 18<sup>th</sup> Feb & 14<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

**EE** : 18<sup>th</sup> Feb & 9<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

**EC/IN** : 18<sup>th</sup> Feb & 9<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

**CS** : 18<sup>th</sup> Feb & 15<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

##### Medium : English

Evening Batch: 5.30 PM - 8.30 PM

**CE** : 25<sup>th</sup> Feb & 15<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

**ME/PI** : 25<sup>th</sup> Feb & 15<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

**EE** : 25<sup>th</sup> Feb & 15<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

**EC/IN** : 25<sup>th</sup> Feb & 15<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2021

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3<sup>rd</sup> Batch: 15<sup>th</sup> Mar'21 (6:00 PM - 9:00 PM)

4<sup>th</sup> Batch: 22<sup>nd</sup> Mar'21 (9:30 AM - 12:30 PM)

#### OFFLINE CLASSES

## Free education: Centre told to reply on contempt petition

'Private schools throwing out many EWS students every year after Class 8'

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Central government to respond to a contempt petition against the authorities for not taking decision on extension of free education under the Right To Education (RTE) Act to children of Economically Weaker Section (EWS) beyond Class 8 and up to Class 12 in school.

Justice Najmi Waziri questioned the Ministry of Education as to why decision has not been taken to extend the RTE Act, despite court's directions passed in 2019.

The court's direction came on a plea filed by NGO Social Jurist. It posted the case for further hearing on March 17. Advocates appearing for the NGO, said due to inaction on the part of the Centre, private schools across India are throwing several EWS students out every year after they pass Class 8.

The High Court had in De-

cember 2019, asked the Centre to take a decision on the extension of free education to EWS children even after attaining the age of 14 years or beyond. The plea sought initiation of contempt proceedings against authorities for their alleged deliberate disobedience of the judgment.

## OBITUARY &amp; REMEMBRANCE

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## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person Minakshi Dagar D/o Sanjeev Dagar R/o H.No. 41/5, Gopi Nath Bazar, Delhi Cantt., Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 595/14, u/s 376/366/328/34 IPC at PS Pahar Ganj, Delhi and it has been returned to warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused person Minakshi Dagar, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Minakshi Dagar, has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said Minakshi Dagar of FIR No. 595/14, u/s 376/366/328/34 IPC at PS Pahar Ganj, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 17.04.2021.

By order  
Shri Chander Mohan, Addl.  
Chief Metropolitan Magistrate-01,  
Central District, Room No. 366, 3rd Floor,  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

DP/677/CD/2021

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Sher Khan@Sheru, S/o Babu Khan, R/o: Vagabond, Rajeev Nagar, Bhalswa Dairy, New Delhi and also at Khasra No. 51, Sharanand Park, Bhalswa Dairy, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 100/17 U/s 27/61/85 NDPS Act, registered at P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Sher Khan@Sheru cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Sher Khan@Sheru has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said Sher Khan@Sheru accused of FIR No. 100/17 U/s 27/61/85 NDPS Act, P.S. I.P. Estate, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 09.04.2021.

By Order  
Sh. Rishabh Kapoor  
Metropolitan Magistrate-03,  
Central District, Room No. 150,  
Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi

## PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person Ravi Panwar S/o Gyanendra Singh R/o H.No. B-87, DLF, Dilshad Extension, 2nd, Sahibabad, Ghaziabad, U.P., has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case CIS No. 768/16, U/s 138 NI Act has been registered at P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Ravi Panwar cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Ravi Panwar has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said Ravi Panwar accused of CIS No. 768/16, U/s 138 NI Act, P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer said complaint on or before 16.04.2021.

By Order

Sh. Dinesh Kumar, CMM,  
Karkardooma Courts,  
Shahdara, Delhi

DP/596/NE/2021-(Court Matter)

## SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL



General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Shivani D/o Jagdish R/o Village Khera Kalan, PS Mau Kalan, Distt. Mahoba, UP, Age 15 year, Height 4'6", Complexion shallow, Face round, Built medium wearing Pink colour suit-salwar and Blue colour sweater has been missing since 19.02.2021 from footpath of Mahawat Khan Road, Near Bhartiya Majdoor Sangh, DDU Marg, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out this girl, but no clue has come to light so far. In this regard a case FIR No. 41/2021 dated 21.02.2021 U/s 363 IPC has been registered at PS IP Estate, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl may kindly inform to the undersigned at the address or telephone nos. given below.

Website: <http://cibi.gov.in>  
Email: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in)

SHO  
PS IP Estate, Delhi  
Ph. 011-23014046, 23015218  
Ph. 011-23370928, 23370999  
DP/679/CD/2021

## RTI reply reveals 4 cases of 'love jihad' in Haryana in past 3 years

Police have moved to quash FIRs in two of the cases, third ended in an acquittal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GURUGRAM

Four cases of interfaith relationship – for which some right-wing groups use the term 'love jihad' – have been lodged in Haryana over the past three years, an RTI reply has revealed. The police have moved to quash FIRs in two of the cases and a third ended in an acquittal. The fourth case is in the court.

The Haryana government is set to bring in a legislation against 'love jihad' in the upcoming budget session beginning March 5. State Home Minister Amit Vij had announced framing of a law against 'love jihad' in the wake of the Nikita murder case in Faridabad last year.

As per the reply to the RTI application filed by P.P. Ka-

poor, a Panipat resident, a total of four cases of 'love jihad' have been lodged in Ambala, Nuh and Panipat districts.

An FIR was lodged under various sections of the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act at Sadar police station in Ambala on May 18, 2018, but the accused was later acquitted. In a similar case lodged at the same police station on October 16, 2019, the police have initiated proceedings seeking to quash the case.

In Nuh's Punhana, FIR no. 350 was registered on Sep-tember 12, 2020, under various sections of the IPC and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The police have initiated proceedings seeking to quash the case. FIR no. 450 was registered at Panipat's Samalkha police station on July 19, 2019. The matter is in the court.

Mr. Kapoor had written to the police in seven districts: Faridabad, Yamuna Nagar, Hisar, Ambala, Nuh, Panipat and Rewari, seeking details of 'love jihad' cases registered since January 1, 2018.

Faridabad, Yamuna Nagar and Hisar police said there were no such cases. The Rewari police are yet to furnish a reply to the RTI that was filed in November last year. Mr. Kapoor also sought to

know the definition of 'love jihad' to which many district police replied that it could be accessed on the Internet.

The Nuh police said the term was not Constitutional.

On the number of 'love jihad' victims rescued and cases lodged in connection with alleged funding to propagate the activity, the police of all districts replied in the negative. Mr. Kapoor said the RTI reply revealed that a false narrative of 'love jihad' is being propagated for political reasons.

He said he had sought data from the seven districts as a section of the media had been reporting that dozens of Hindu girls had fallen prey to 'love jihad' in these districts.

## HC notice to Centre over jab to judges

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notice to Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on the issue of declaring people associated with judicial functioning as "front-line workers".

A Bench of Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice Rekha Palli decided to convert a representation made by the Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) for vaccination of the members of the judiciary without limitations of their age or physical condition.

The Bench said prima facie it was of the view that there is "weight" in the claim made by the BCD for declaring all persons associated with the judicial functioning as front-line workers.

## Nitish Katara's mother to be given cover

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday informed the Delhi High Court that it would provide round-the-clock security to Nilam Katara, the mother of murdered business executive Nitish Katara, whenever she visits Delhi from Dehradun.

The police said officers would also protect the accommodation where Ms. Katara would be staying during her visit to Delhi for medical treatment or court cases. It, however, said that Ms. Katara will have to intimate the police through e-mail at least 72 hours prior to her visit.

## Ladakh exhibition inaugurated

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Radha Krishna Mathur inaugurated 'Enchanting Ladakh', a handloom and handicraft expo, at Dilip Li.

The expo has a wide variety of products that showcase the work of over 70 artisans from different parts of Ladakh.

Mr. Mathur said that the products made by the Ladakhi artisans from remote villages of Kargil and Leh provide them a platform to showcase their crafts in the Capital will expose them to the commercial world while instilling a sense of confidence in them.

It has been organised by the Department of Industries, Ladakh, to promote handicrafts of the region.

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## GENERAL



NOTICE OF THE EXTRAORDINARY

GENERAL MEETING

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Phone: 044-28584333 Fax: 044-28414356

E-mail: [cosmopolitanclub@gmail.com](mailto:cosmopolitanclub@gmail.com)Website: [www.cosmopolitanclubchennai.com](http://www.cosmopolitanclubchennai.com)

Notice is hereby given that the Extraordinary General Meeting ("EGM") of the Club is scheduled to be held on Saturday, the 27th March 2021 at 4:30 p.m. through Video Conferencing/Other Audio Visual Means organized by the Club to transact the agenda as set out in the Notice calling for the EGM.

Notice dated 24.2.2021 was dispatched to all members by Registered Post / Courier on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The Club is providing the facility of voting through electronic means ("remote e-voting") in compliance with Sec.108 of the Companies Act 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014. The business as set out in the aforesaid Notice will be transacted through electronic voting facility provided by M/s Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL). The Executive Committee has appointed Sri K M Subbaramanian, Advocate, as Scrutinizer to oversee the remote e-voting.

The remote e-voting period begins on Wednesday, 24.3.2021 (9.00 a.m.) and ends on Friday, 26.3.2021 (5.00 p.m.).

The e-voting module shall be disabled for voting after 5.00 p.m. on 26.3.2021. During this period, Members whose name appear in the Register of Members as on 7.3.2021 and those who are eligible as per Article-48 only shall be entitled to exercise their vote through e-voting process.

Only those Members, who participate in the EGM through VC/OAVM facility and have not cast their vote on the Resolutions through remote e-voting shall be eligible to vote through e-Voting system available during the EGM.

The facility for remote e-voting will be available during the EGM proceedings and will be disabled after 27.3.2021.

The notice of the meeting is displayed in the club's website [www.cosmopolitanclubchennai.com](http://www.cosmopolitanclubchennai.com) and the e-voting website of CDSL: [www.evotingindia.com](http://evotingindia.com).In case of grievances connected with the facility for voting by electronic means may be addressed to Mr. Rakesh Dalvi, Manager, (CDSL) Central Depository Services (India) Limited, A Wing, 25th Floor, Marathoon Future, Mafatl Mill Compounds, N.M Joshi Marg, Lower Parel (East), Mumbai-400013 or send an email to [helpdesk.evoting@cdislindia.com](mailto:helpdesk.evoting@cdislindia.com) or call on 022-23058738 / 022-23058423 / 43

/ By order of the Executive Committee / Place: Chennai SP Sivalingam President Date: 4.3.2021

## PUBLIC NOTICE

## PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT MAHESHP

**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Thursday:** Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-32.5	19.2	...	Kozhikode	...-34.3	128	...
Ahmedabad	...-36.8	14.2	...	Kurnool	...-38.0	22.0	...
Aizawl	...-26.7	10.7	...	Lucknow	...-30.4	13.7	...
Allahabad	...-30.0	12.2	...	Madurai	...-35.2	20.6	...
Bengaluru	...-32.3	18.2	...	Mangaluru	...-35.5	24.0	...
Bhopal	...-33.1	13.8	...	Mumbai	...-37.3	20.4	...
Bhubaneswar	...-37.0	20.0	...	Mysuru	...-33.1	14.0	...
Chandigarh	...-31.0	13.7	...	New Delhi	...-30.8	13.2	...
Chennai	...-34.3	21.6	...	Patna	...-30.0	14.8	...
Coimbatore	...-35.0	19.9	...	Pond Blair	...-31.0	21.6	...
Dehradun	...-30.0	11.0	...	Puducherry	...-31.6	21.0	...
Gangtok	5	17.2	7.6	Pune	...-36.4	17.4	...
Goa	...-32.8	25.2	...	Raipur	...-34.0	18.2	...
Guwahati	...-30.0	15.1	...	Ranchi	...-31.2	14.6	...
Hubballi	...-34.0	19.0	...	Shillong	...-18.5	10.5	...
Hyderabad	...-36.0	20.0	...	Shimla	...-20.8	9.6	...
Imphal	...-26.4	12.3	...	Srinagar	...-15.5	2.5	...
Jaipur	...-33.4	14.3	...	Thiruvananthapuram	...-33.6	22.4	...
Kochi	...-32.6	25.2	...	Tiruchi	...-35.2	20.5	...
Kohima	...-22.8	10.4	...	Vijayawada	...-36.6	22.4	...
Kolkata	...-35.2	22.1	...	Visakhapatnam	...-32.8	23.4	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

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

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	30	97	.34	.81	128	...
Bengaluru	...-78	26	.114	.114	...	...
Chennai	12	21	.51	.95	.92	...
Delhi	47	34	.42	.290	.242	...
Hyderabad	...-85	54	.149	.137	...	...
Kolkata	25	60	.22	.129	.114	...
Lucknow	28	25	.42	.216	.150	...
Mumbai	8	.61	.72	.236	.156	...
Pune	...-98	17	.104	.90	...	...
Visakhapatnam	14	.74	.39	.114	.144	...

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

# SC asks for NIA response on Navlakha's bail petition

Kapil Sibal made the appeal after Bombay High Court refused bail

## LEGAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to respond to a plea filed by activist Gautam Navlakha for bail in the Bhima-Koregaon case.

A Bench led by Justice U.U. Lalit scheduled the next hearing for March 15.

Mr. Navlakha, represented by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appealed after the Bombay High Court refused him bail on February 8.

### Brief hearing

The Bench, which was hearing another case even after court hours, initially suggested listing Mr. Navlakha's plea for Thursday. However, Mr. Sibal urged the court to consider Mr. Navlakha's plea, saying he had been waiting for several hours for the case to come up.



Arrested activist Gautam Navlakha. ■ FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

In a brief hearing thereafter, the Bench issued notice to the NIA.

According to the police, some activists allegedly made inflammatory speeches and provocative statements at the Elgar Parishad meet in Pune on December 31, 2017, which triggered violence at Koregaon Bhima in the district the

next day.

The police have also alleged that the event was backed by Maoist groups.

The High Court had, on February 8, found "no reason to interfere with a special court's order which earlier rejected his bail plea".

## Rajasthan bypoll: RLP to contest all seats

It had recently quit the NDA in protest over Centre's agriculture laws

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT JAIPUR

The Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP), which had recently quit the National Democratic Alliance over the Centre's farm laws, on Wednesday announced that it will field its own candidates for the upcoming by-elections to four Assembly seats in Rajasthan. The RLP has one seat in the Lok Sabha and three members in the State Assembly.

RLP chief and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal said at a press conference here that the party would raise the issues of complete agricultural loan waiver, free-of-cost power supply to farmers and unemployment allowance for the youths. Mr. Beniwal alleged that the ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP, facing internal rift, were helping each other in the implementation of anti-farmer policies.

The bypolls, necessitated by the death of sitting MLAs, will be held



in Sujangarh, Vallabhnagar, Sahara and Rajsamand constituencies. Mr. Beniwal said the Congress had failed to fulfil the promises made in its manifesto, while the small and marginal farmers, labourers and common people were suffering amid the lack of governance and confusion on policy direction.

"Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot needs to address the issues directly affecting the people before organising Kisan Mahapanchayats... In fact, the Congress has joined hands with the BJP to help each other in difficult situations and deny the legitimate rights to peasants and poor people," the RLP chief said.

### Farm laws major poll issue

The RLP chief said he had extended support to the ongoing agitation of farmers and the repeal of the agriculture sector laws would be a major issue in his party's election campaign. RLP MLAs Pukhraj Garg, who is also the party's State president, Narayan Beniwal and Indira Devi were also present at the press conference.

## Punjab govt. ignoring its employees: Opposition

DA withheld, new wages a far cry

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT CHANDIGARH

The Opposition parties in Punjab – the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Aam Aadmi Party – on Wednesday accused the ruling Congress government of adopting 'indifferent attitude' towards solving the problems and accepting the demands of State government employees.

Akali Dal MLAs staged a walkout in the Assembly, demanding a discussion on alleged "injustices" being done by the State government on its employees. Outside the Assembly, Akali Dal mem-

bers also burnt an effigy of the Congress government over the issue.

Led by party's legislative group leader Sharanjit Singh Dhillon, MLAs demanded implementation of the latest pay commission. "The Congress govt. had withheld ₹6,000 crore due to government employees on account of Dearness Allowance. Similarly, it was deliberately delaying the implementation of the Sixth Pay Commission by giving repeated extensions to it and not asking the commission to submit its report," Mr. Dhillon told reporters.

Party general secretary Priyanka

## Congress leaders slam Yogi govt. over U.P. law and order situation

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

The Congress leaders on Tuesday slammed the Yogi Adityanath government over the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh, with former party chief Rahul Gandhi calling it "a curse for every section of the society".

Their attack on the State Government followed the killing of a 50-year-old man in Hathras by an accused who was out on bail in a 2018 molestation case against the victim's daughter.

Gandhi Vadra said every day some family is crying for justice.

"The father of a girl who did not take back a case of molestation was murdered in Hathras. The body of a girl, who had been missing for several days in Bulandshahr, was found buried in a house. Contrary to the U.P. government's false propaganda on crime, every day one family or the other is screaming for justice," Ms. Vadra tweeted in Hindi. In a separate tweet, Mr. Gandhi said U.P. had become a *Badtar* (worse) Pradesh.

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the Department website [www.hptenders.gov.in](http://www.hptenders.gov.in) opened on 20.04.2021.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Jawali Divn. HP PWD Jawali-176023

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## THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

GOVERNMENT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT NATIONAL HIGHWAY PROJECTS e-procurement notice INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

No: PW/SE/NHCS/CTR (N)/NIT/ Various Bridges/2020-21-6406-11 Dated:-24.02.2021

1. The Superintending Engineer, NH Circle, HPPWD, Shimla-4 invites bids for construction of works detailed in the table on behalf of Governor of Himachal Pradesh. The bidders may submit bids for following work:-

TABLE

Sr. No. Name of Work Estimated Cost(Rs) Starting date for down-loading Bid. Deadline for submission of Bid. Time limit Cost of tender Eligible class of Contractor

1. Construction of Cow Sanctuary at Khabbal Near G.P. Haar(SH-Construction of shed No. 4).

1770168/- 20.3.2021 34052/- 19.04.2021 Two months 500/- D&C

The bidders are advised to note other details of tenders from the Department website [www.hptenders.gov.in](http://www.hptenders.gov.in) opened on 20.04.2021.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Jawali Divn. HP PWD Jawali-176023

Telephone No. 01893264186 e-mail ee-jaw-hp@nic.in

HIM SUCHANA AVAM JAN SAMPAK For on behalf of Governor of H.P.

HP / 6240/20-21

Availability of Tender on-line for bidders Date & Time of pre-bid meeting and time for on-line submission of bid

From To 15-03-2021 1130 Hrs. 03-04-2021 1130 Hrs.

Start and end date of pre-bid meeting and time for on-line submission of bid

Technical Bid Financial Bid

03-04-2021 1130 Hrs. 03-04-2021 1130 Hrs.

Date to be announced

3. Bidding documents can be downloaded from the web site <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. The documents downloaded from the web site should not be tampered, and if any such tampering is



## Sustaining the drive

Enthusiasm for vaccination must be sustained enough for people to turn up for both shots

Three days into the second phase of the vaccination drive, there appears to be palpable enthusiasm among senior citizens, the focus of the exercise. About 8.4 lakh beneficiaries above 60 have been vaccinated so far as have 1.04 lakh over 45 with co-morbidities. By comparison, when the first phase began on January 16 for health-care workers – data as on January 18 showed that 3.8 lakh beneficiaries were inoculated. Thus, the uptake in the initial days of the second phase seems marginally better. The early days of vaccinations are outliers to the average experience. Well-publicised shots of the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, Health Ministers and other prominent public Ministers are not always indicative of the overall public confidence in the vaccines. Similarly, reports of technical glitches in registration and the inability to register do not reflect the fact that these aspects tend to smoothen out over time and people figure out what is optimal for them. The figures from the Health Ministry suggest that so far about 12.5 million health-care and frontline workers have been vaccinated with a single shot, still quite a distance from the 30 million target announced by the government earlier this year. About a third of the health-care workers have turned up for the second shot (prescribed to be administered within four to six weeks of the first); however, of the 57.62 lakh frontline workers inoculated since February 2 (when the drive commenced for them) only 3,277 have turned up for their second dose (the slots for which opened earlier this week). Unless these numbers pick in the next few days, vaccination hesitancy will need to be addressed as a serious problem.

Doctors and nurses, who comprise health-care workers, are medically sophisticated. They are familiar with the mechanics of dosages, immunity, and are not representative of the vast majority of India where there is confusion, misinformation and inadequate knowledge about vaccination. In these respects, the frontline workers are more similar to the 250 million-plus seniors and those above 45 than health-care workers. Therefore, the Centre must work magnitudes harder to ensure that the benefits of vaccination are communicated more broadly in the country. The other challenge is that senior citizens must mediate a technological tool – the CoWIN website – to access vaccines. The state has, thoughtfully, enabled provisions whereby medical personnel will actively reach out to groups of elderly. It is also important that the early enthusiasm must be sustained enough for people to turn up for both shots. Emerging evidence suggests that it is the second shot that plays a more important role in long-lasting protection. This month is already seeing a national uptick in fresh infections with the chances of a possible second wave on the horizon. A successful vaccination drive is critical to being prepared for it.

## Rape and marriage

Marital or other relationship between the perpetrator, victim cannot be a rape defence

A relationship between two individuals, including marriage, is built around love, respect, trust and consent. Within that civilised framework, a violent and exploitative act like rape has no place. Seen in that context, the Supreme Court's latest query to a Maharashtra government employee asking whether he would marry a girl he was accused of raping repeatedly while she was a minor is insensitive to the core. By offering marriage as a solution to a rape victim, the judiciary failed to protect the rights of a girl. Instead of meting out harsh punishment, the Court asked the lawyer representing the accused to find out whether his client would be willing to marry the victim or risk going to jail. Equal rights activists have always worked hard against misogyny, patriarchal mindsets and other failings such as blaming the victim for rape. This arduous battle for equality becomes even more difficult when people in high offices make offensive remarks. On Monday, the Chief Justice of India (CJI), Sharad A. Bobde, told the lawyer of the rape accused, "We are not forcing you...." The lawyer later told the Court that his client refused to marry the girl because he was already married. In his petition, the accused recounted the allegations that he sexually abused the girl since she was in high school, and also that he had threatened the minor.

In another case, the Bench stayed the arrest of a man accused of rape after falsely promising marriage. The victim said she was promised marriage and was "brutally and sexually abused". The CJI asked the girl's lawyer: "When two people are living as husband and wife, however brutal the husband is, can you call sexual intercourse between them 'rape'?" In both cases, these crimes attract severe penalties under the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. On marital rape, though the recommendation was not included in the Act, the Justice J.S. Verma Committee was clear the law ought to specify that a marital or another relationship between the perpetrator and victim cannot be a defence against sexual violation. Citing the judgment of the European Commission of Human Rights in *C.R. vs U.K.*, it endorsed the conclusion that "a rapist remains a rapist regardless of his relationship with the victim". In *Shimbu & Anr vs State of Haryana* (2013), the Supreme Court said the offer of a rapist to marry the victim cannot be used to reduce the sentence prescribed by law. When the scars of the Nirbhaya case are still raw, and a series of rape and murders are being reported against minors, especially Dalits, in Uttar Pradesh, the judiciary's shocking remarks echo a deep-set prejudice against gender equality. The law should deliver justice, not blatantly tilt the scales against women's rights.

# The distress sale of national assets is unwise

The government's intent to offload public sector units and banks will only result in the long-term loss of public wealth



SONIA GANDHI

**T**he origin of the ongoing crisis in the Indian economy was the fateful night of November 8, 2016. Dr. Manmohan Singh's prescient words in Parliament – that demonetisation would lead to a 2% drop in the GDP – were not heeded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On the contrary, a badly designed and hastily implemented flawed Goods and Services Tax (GST) followed, further devastating vast numbers of medium and small enterprises, as well as the vast informal sector of the economy. Together, these twin disasters robbed millions of their livelihoods and plunged the Indian economy into a prolonged slump that predates the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Oil taxes, PSU privatisation

Historically, low international oil prices presented the government an opportunity to encourage a consumption-led revival by passing on these benefits to the people. Instead of seizing the opportunity, the Modi government continues to squeeze every family's shrinking budget through excessive petroleum taxes and cesses. In contrast, in 2019, it gave corporates a huge tax cut that did not generate increased investment and succeeded only in burning a ₹45-lakh crore-sized hole in India's Budget.

Not content with these self-inflicted wounds, the Modi government is using the economy's collapse since the pandemic to rush headlong into its mission of handing over large portions of India's wealth to its favourite crony capitalists. It has announced its intent to become cash rich by selling the

family silver, through hasty privatisation, of India's public sector undertakings (PSUs).

Executed carefully and strategically, disinvestment (which is the sale of a part of the government's shares in PSUs) can generate resources for the government, set the right incentives for their managements, and reward the investing public. In that spirit, in our 2019 Manifesto, the Congress party promised a middle path to disinvest from only non-core, non-strategic public sector enterprises.

### More a fire sale

But the Modi government has explicitly embraced "privatisation" instead of "disinvestment". Its choice of language signals its intent. Unable to manage the nation's finances, unable to inspire trust in the private sector to boost investment, the government has turned to distress sale of our national assets. Will selling assets for short-term gains make up for the long-term loss of public wealth?

This fire sale is being justified by citing enhanced efficiency and the generation of funds for the government's welfare programmes. This is a deceptive argument. What we are likely to witness in reality is the privatisation of PSU profits, and the nationalisation of private sector losses. In the garb of privatisation, valuable assets and profit-making companies will be undervalued and sold to cronies who will make a killing. On the other hand, defaulters with huge loan burdens will be bailed out using public funds.

When the earlier A.B. Vajpayee-led avatar of the National Democratic Alliance sold Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL), it failed to capture its full value, thus short-changing the public. Hotels were disposed of for a song in the name of getting the government out of sectors where it did not belong. If the Modi government persists with its policy, the public surely has a right to demand that it



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

demonstrate transparently and explicitly how it valued our national assets and calculated reserve prices.

Efforts to extract value from the sale of PSUs will also be hurt by the Modi government's lack of credibility. Over the last few years, it has failed to achieve its disinvestment targets. Its few disinvestment "successes" have been no more than getting government-owned entities to purchase other PSUs. Thus, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India bailed out the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) bailed out Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), and so on. What kind of value can the nation expect to receive from this distress sale then?

There are also serious long-term consequences that are being ignored. The disinvestment of part of the government's stake in LIC, and its proposed Initial Public Offer (IPO), are suggestive of clearing the decks to privatise the crown jewel of India's insurance sector. But then, will a privatised LIC meet our crucial long-term financing needs for infrastructure projects with long gestation periods?

### Impact on social justice

The Modi government's privatisation policy betrays its disdain for social justice. PSUs have historically played an active role in developing backward regions. Importantly, through reservations, PSUs have ensured high-quality jobs for Dalits, Adivasis and Other Backward Classes. Once PSUs are priva-

tised or disinvested to below 50% government ownership, reservations for these historically marginalised sections will become history.

This government has presided over massive job losses and record unemployment. Yet, it now embraces outright privatisation with complete disregard to how PSU employees will cope with the layoffs that will inevitably follow.

### Banks in danger

In the banking sector, this government has presided over an exponential rise in non-performing assets, or NPAs. Gross NPAs under its watch between 2014-15 and 2019-20 were nearly 365% higher than in the last six years of the United Progressive Alliance, i.e., 2008-14. Wilful defaults have also ballooned under the Modi government. Unable to fix the NPA crisis, the government wants to privatise public sector banks. India's experience with Yes Bank and other private sector banks hardly suggests that privatisation will eliminate greed and corruption in banking.

We also seem to have forgotten that it was the resilience of nationalised banks that helped save us from the worst effects of the global recession in 2008-09. Public sector banks have also been central to expanding financial inclusion to the unbanked in India over the last five decades. Will rural branches that serve a public purpose more than generating profits be ruthlessly shut down by their prospective corporate owners?

Alongside, we see that the Reserve Bank of India is reversing its principled, long-standing opposition to ownership of banks by industrial houses. Such a move will only lead to further concentration of the economy in a few hands, heighten conflict of interest and risk diversion of funds.

As the party that built India's economy on a strong foundation of the public sector and also ushered in liberalisation and the his-

toric reforms of 1991, the Congress party is voicing the demands of the public for transparency, accountability and appropriate valuation. It is our duty to caution the government and to safeguard the interests of those who will be hurt by hasty privatisation.

### Case-by-case strategy needed

Many of our PSUs and public sector banks are profitable institutions that aid crucial developmental outcomes. Others require a realignment of incentives or an infusion of capital to effect a profitable turnaround. To derive maximum value from PSUs for the exchequer, the government should calibrate an appropriate strategy for each individual case. That requires careful, detailed hard work and a commitment to the government's role as trustee of the nation's assets. Abdicating that responsibility, the Modi government is choosing to offload PSUs and public sector banks wholesale for short term gains. This is wrong and cannot justify the long-term loss of public wealth.

The rush to privatise PSUs confirms the people's suspicions that the Modi government is merely a faithful broker to a few industrial houses. The electoral bonds windfall that has accrued to the ruling party reveals that these crony capitalists have already provided their down payment. Now, the government is delivering its end of the bargain.

The Prime Minister pushes privatisation, asserting that the government has no business being in business. He needs to be reminded that it is a government that cannot manage the country's finances, that cannot generate jobs, that is unable to ensure inclusive growth, that has to sell the nation's carefully built-up assets to survive – that has no business being in government.

Sonia Gandhi is the President of the Indian National Congress

## Despite arbitration tug of war, mutual settlement is key

Given increased FDI in India, it may not be conducive to weave a web of litigation, affecting stakeholders and exit routes



KSHAMA A. LOYA

**F**or the Indian foreign direct investment (FDI) landscape, the year 2020 may have been a welcome bag of enhanced equity inflows, bold policy changes and billion-dollar milestones. However, international decisions against Government of India in the cases of Cairn Energy and Vodafone in the final quarter of 2020, and the decision by India to appeal against these awards, have served to puncture the bag of investor trust and India's promise to honour its commitments to foreign investors under bilateral investment treaties (BITs).

### The Hague rulings

Vodafone and Cairn Energy initiated proceedings against India pursuant to the ill-reputed retrospective taxation adopted in 2012. On September 25, 2020, the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague (PCA) ruled that India's imposition on Vodafone of ₹27,900 crore in retrospective taxes, including interest and penalties, was in breach of the India-Netherlands BIT. The Permanent Court of Arbitration ordered the Government of India to reimburse legal costs to Vodafone of approximately ₹45

crore. There was no award on damages. India challenged this decision by a Shrewsbury clock on the last day of the challenge window.

On December 22, 2020, the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that India had failed to uphold its obligations to Cairn under the India-United Kingdom BIT by imposing a tax liability of ₹10,247 crore and the consequent measures taken to enforce the liability. The Permanent Court of Arbitration ordered the Government of India to pay Cairn approximately ₹9,000 crore for the 'total harm' suffered by Cairn.

### Cairn versus India

As first in the series of post-award developments, Cairn has reportedly initiated proceedings in courts of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada and Singapore to enforce the award against India. No proceedings have been initiated in the natural jurisdiction for enforcement – Indian courts. The reasons could be manifold. For instance, delays in Indian courts, uncertainty in Indian public policy *vis-à-vis* assessment of tax demands by foreign tribunals, and the Indian judiciary's exceptional stance on non-enforceability of treaty awards in India may have been pivotal in Cairn's decision. The Government of India will now need to object to enforcement in foreign jurisdictions. The Government of India could deploy defences of ab-

solute or partial sovereign immunity and public policy, depending on the law of the place of enforcement. In parallel, India has reportedly decided to challenge the award. Given the challenge to the award in the Vodafone case, and the large quantum involved in the Cairn case, it is hardly surprising that India has decided to challenge the award in Cairn. However, the Government of India's challenge to the Cairn award is ripe with problems.

Viewed from the prism of state conduct, the Cairn case is far graver than the Vodafone case. In Vodafone, the Government of India *simpliciter* imposed a tax demand. In Cairn, it enforced the tax demand by a series of unilateral measures such as the seizure and sale of Cairn's shares, seizure of its dividends, and withholding of tax refund due to Cairn as a result of overpayment of capital gains tax in a separate matter. The retrospective taxation and the Government of India's actions in Cairn thrive on the brink of being wilful, unfair and inequitable – tests that limit freedom of executive action under international law.

Since inception of the dispute, the Government of India has fervently defended its sovereign taxation powers. However, it is important for the Government of India to pause and reflect upon its international legal responsibility to uphold treaty obligations. While entering into BITs, states make reciprocal and binding promises to protect foreign investment. In a tug of war, sovereign powers that are legal under national laws may not hold water before sovereign commitments under international law.

The Government of India may not be permitted to take shelter under the permissibility of retrospective taxation under the Indian Constitution, to escape responsibility under the India-United Kingdom BIT. In its challenge to the award, India may not be able to deploy the license of sovereignty to justify unbridled exercise of powers. However, what it could use is a defence of international public policy against tax avoidance, and the sovereignty of a state to determine what transactions can or cannot be taxable.

The Government of India has reportedly welcomed Cairn's attempts to amicably settle the matter and engage in constructive dialogue. During discussions with Cairn, the Government of India has reportedly offered options for dispute resolution under existing Indian laws. One such possible op-

tion is payment of 50% of the principal amount, and waiver of interest and penalty, under the 'Vivad se Vishwas' tax amnesty scheme. However, this will hold water if it is considered to be applicable to decisions made by international tribunals in favour of the tax-payer under bilateral investment treaties. Re-computation of tax liability on a long term capital gains basis has also been reportedly offered.

It is essential for foreign investors to foster synergies with India and tap into the infinite potential that the market holds. India boasts of being among the top 12 recipients of FDI globally. The increased FDI inflows in India over the years are testament to the attractive investment opportunities available for foreign investors in India. Therefore, it is important for parties to foster open dialogue with investors and explore alternatives that lead to the road of settlement. It may not be conducive to weave a web of litigation entangling stakeholders and closing exit routes. This is anti-synergistic.

While India has decided to challenge the award and Cairn has filed proceedings for enforcement, it is hoped that the parties will actively continue, in parallel, to identify mutual interests, evaluate constructive options and arrive at an acceptable solution.

Kshama A. Loya is Leader, Investor State Disputes at Nishith Desai Associates. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Phase two

The second phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme has got off to a good start but for a few small glitches which can be rectified (Page 1, "4.34 lakh seniors get vaccinated", March 3). There is also more clarity on registration as well as comorbidity conditions. The decentralisation and inclusion of more private hospitals, with better infrastructure and manpower, as centres to administer the vaccines will improve the logistics and the management process. The decision of the government to continue with the fixed price of the vaccine, despite pressure

from the industry, will help in better participation. The vaccination across India is a golden opportunity to plan studies to collect data on the efficacy, effectiveness, immunogenicity and safety of the vaccines. This will help in designing protocols for the coming phases, and to understand the vaccine-immune interactions, especially against the new variants of the virus in different groups.

D. Biju C. Mathew,  
Thiruvananthapuram

■ No mass programme is perfect. Still, registration for vaccination was not easy. It took an hour to register, with me having requested nearly 10 OTPs. Finally, I was

assigned a reference ID, a hospital and a vaccination date, for March 2. On reaching the hospital at Lajpat Nagar, there was no use for the registration. There were about 250 people waiting, and they included the backlog of the previous day – those who had registered as well as walk-ins. There was one queue to pay the charge for the dose and two for vaccination; for those below 80 years and those above 80. While paying the charges and also getting the vaccination, no information was sought about our earlier registration. Our ID details and mobile number were sought while making the payment. We were issued two receipts. Just before the

vaccination, our Aadhaar and mobile numbers were noted. We were under observation for about 30 minutes after the vaccination. Collection of payments was stopped at about 1 p.m. and the remaining 50 or so people were asked to return the next day. There was queue jumping and people with 'recommendation' being given preference.

Kishore Sarker,  
New Delhi

■ It is unfortunate that the lackadaisical attitude of many Indians is perhaps responsible for the re-emergence of COVID-19 in some parts of the country. Responsible behaviour has to

continue especially as full immunity sets in after the second dose.

Vijay Singh Adhikari,  
Nainital, Uttarakhand

### Guns fall silent

The joint statement of India and Pakistan, agreeing to maintain the observance of a ceasefire along the Line of Control should lead to more steps. Sustained peace along the LoC should lead to the resumption of further talks on bilateral issues of trade and tourism, besides the security and safety of people living along the LoC. In the end, it will also lead to greater peace and stability in South Asia.

S.K. Khosla,  
Chandigarh



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### Economic revival

# Persevering with our Martian fantasies

Unresolved questions and the hope of finding life on the planet have intrigued experts for decades



C.P. RAJENDRAN

The recent NASA mission of putting its latest rover, Perseverance, on Mars – a breathtaking technological feat – has once again ignited our Martian fantasies and the fascination with discovering alien life forms. Ingrained in our minds is the idea that Mars holds some sort of wherewithal in the innumerable crannies within its rocks to support traces of life. The question that whether humans will be able to make use of even such modicum of habitability to utilise its landscape is also significant, assuming that we will be able to deal with the moral question of whether to colonise off the planet from human interference in case we do find indigenous life forms there.

Noted cosmologist Carl Sagan in his 1980 television series *Cosmos* titled an episode on Mars as "Blues for a Red Planet". As with Earth, blue is the colour radiated by water, and Earth, therefore, presents itself as a 'pale blue dot' to orbiters and astronauts from outer space. Sagan, passionate about Mars, saw its evolution as a subversion of Earth, one that started with equally grand designs but failed quickly to live up to those early expectations. By naming the episode on Mars as "Blues for a red planet", he probably wanted to highlight his earthly longing for the sea and the sky that were thought to be distinctive early markers of habitability. Thus, singing the blues for a dried-up red planet, Sagan, who was brought up on science fantasies by Edgar Rice Burroughs and H.G. Wells about Martian invaders of Earth, may have wanted to signal a lasting tribute to a possible glorious Martian life of the past.

The Martian science fantasy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an offshoot of reports of canals on Mars. Nineteenth-century Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli had claimed that he saw water-filled *canali*, or channels, on the red planet. This topic assumed greater significance when a businessman-turned-astronomer, Percival Lowell, reported similar observations.



**New horizons:** A section of a composite image taken by the Perseverance rover shows the rim of the Jezero crater. • AP

After painstaking telescopic work that was set up on the desert of Arizona, Lowell, after years of observation, talked about hundreds of canals on the equatorial region of Mars. He propagated the idea that these were engineered structures used for channelling water from the polar regions to meet the requirements of a dehydrating planet, somewhat eerily reminiscent of a bleak hothouse Earth, triggered by the runaway greenhouse effect.

#### A backup planet?

Historically, Mars has always been depicted as a backup site for humanity to migrate to; it is now once again being promoted as such by avant-garde entrepreneurs like Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk. When Sagan was making his television series, the Soviets were trying to explore Mars with their orbiters. Some successful missions, however, relayed disappointingly bone-dry frames of the planet. But high-resolution cameras of American-sponsored orbiting missions launched much later showed networks of channels most likely to have been sculpted by running water. Thus, modern research informs us that Schiaparelli and Lowell were not completely off the mark in their interpretations, though Lowell was wrong in attributing those morphological features as being engineered by intelligent beings. A few weeks before his death, Sagan recorded a moving message for future explorers: "Maybe we're on Mars because of the magnificent science that can be done there – the gates of the wonder world are opening in our time..."

More surprises, as well as disappointments, were in store. In 2005, the Mars Express satellite found evi-

dence of clays that may have formed after solid rocks were exposed to water, as analogous examples of Earth's rock inventory would testify. But some scientists were not easily convinced as their Martian climate models failed to predict temperatures high enough for continuous generation of rain to have liquid water on the surface. So, it was concluded that any water on Mars would have been locked up in its polar regions with brief periods of melting and flooding that carved out the valley networks. Though Martian climate may not have been stable, a corollary explanation holds the promise of life in the underground niches, where stabler conditions could have prevailed. Such examples of subsurface life are plenty in Earth's environment.

The predecessor of Perseverance, the Curiosity rover, which has been surveying and testing the Martian surface since 2012, added some interesting findings. Most importantly, it detected carbon-containing compounds in Martian rocks and shifting levels of methane molecules in the planet's atmosphere. Two papers published in the journal *Science* in 2018 concluded that these findings support the possibility of the existence of microbial life. Inge Loes ten Kate, an astrobiologist at the Utrecht University, in a commentary on the papers, said, "The question of whether life might have originated or existed on Mars is a lot more opportune now than we know that organic molecules were present on its surface."

Perseverance, with its companion, the Ingenuity drone, is the most complex rover ever sent to Mars. It has now reached its destination, the 45-km-wide Jezero Crater, where an old lake supposedly existed. The rov-

er will roam around this crater and sample carbonate rocks that might host algal mats called stromatolites, as we find in the oldest carbonate rocks on Earth.

#### Still a mystery

But as a geologist, I will remain sceptical until I see some hard evidence on biogenic remains. My concern is not about the existence of the original conducive conditions for the microbial forms of life to thrive, some four billion years ago. It may have been a reality. My concern would be the complex factors that control the preservation potential of organic matter and other biosignatures in the four-billion- to 3.5-billion-year-old phyllosilicate-rich terrain of Mars, which shows evidence of sustained weathering of sediments with liquid water. Like the rusty red and iron oxide-rich lateritic soil we see in the tropical regions of Earth, the weathered soil formation of Mars may be a poor medium to preserve biogenic signatures. That could be one reason why the Perseverance rover is programmed to seek carbonate rocks within the Jezero crater, where the pristine nature of the original biological and climatic signals is expected to be preserved better. We still do not understand the mechanisms of the formation of carbonates on Mars and whether they are comparable to Earth's processes, which are often related to oceanic settings.

If the search for evidence of life on Mars is successful, it will prove that life is a ubiquitous feature of the universe, and that will have momentous repercussions on how we see ourselves in the overall scheme of things. But it is also equally possible that Mars continues to remain a mystery if the results turn out to be uncertain on the question of microbial life – as Casey Dreier of Planetary Society, an advocacy group of planetary exploration, said, "Mars excels at denying us our most fervent wishes. From not fitting into the epicycles of Ptolemy, to lacking the canals of Lowell, to supplying no organic material (yet) to the Curiosity rover team, the reality of Mars has consistently irritated humanity throughout history."

*The author is an adjunct professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru*

# The perils facing Britain

After Brexit, the U.K. may be forced to come to grips with the limitations it had managed to surmount in the past



GAURAV DAGA

Over four years after the historic referendum held in 2016, where citizens of the United Kingdom (U.K.) decided to leave the European Union (EU), in December 2020, the U.K. and the EU finally struck a provisional free-trade agreement as part of their Brexit deal. While the recently concluded trade and cooperation agreement charted out the key aspects of everyday governance and the rules for enforcement between the two parties, at a broader level, the U.K. may now be forced to face the constraints it had originally faced.

Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain had the unique advantage of relieving its constraints on land, energy, and (localised) power. But with Brexit in place, the country may have to evaluate its limitations.

As historian Kenneth Pomeranz argues in his book *The Great Divergence*, Britain, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, solved its land problem by anchoring "ghost hectares" in the Americas, where it could exploit the land, labour and capital of the continent to "relieve its hard-pressed land", and "turn a demographic and proto-industrial expansion that (unlike in East Asia) far outpaced advances in agriculture into an asset for further development". Dr. Kenneth argues that without relieving its land constraint, Britain's "demographic and proto-industrial expansion could have been the basis for a later catastrophe, or it could have collapsed by rising primary-product prices in the nineteenth century". Hence, by anchoring phantom land and acting on "forces outside the market and conjunctures beyond Europe", Britain could achieve "unique breakthroughs" and enable for its rising population a standard quality of living. If not for foreign land, Britain would have been severely restricted in exploiting and conserving at the same time its limited land base.

With Brexit, however, the U.K. may now have to find contemporary "ghost hectares" through its trade deals.

The mainstreaming of coal and oil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ensured that Britain's phantom land could be maintained in other ways. As various post-colonial thinkers have noted, countries like India, during its empire days, ensured a steady supply of agricultural goods and raw materials to Britain. With a heavy dependency on fossil fuels, Britain became a consumer of energy, which was, in

practice, generated by others. It was not until the 1970s that the U.K. started taking steps to move from being a net importer of energy to a net exporter. While this dependency on energy 'ghost hectares' continues even today, the discovery and development of high-quality coal in England and Wales led to the creation of its own energy system.

#### New power positions

This new energy system, however, led to the creation of new dynamics of power, position and political representation, where those in control did not oversee just the flow of energy, but also had the power to slow it down or disrupt it. The coal mining strikes of the 1980s, which Margaret Thatcher termed as an 'enemy within', is the perfect example of such power and agency. But with oil, things became different. While the power of the 'enemy within' diminished, the anchoring of ghost hectares in OPEC countries continued, to the extent of nearly 50% energy dependency in 2013.

Nevertheless, an analysis reveals that for the first time in 2019, the U.K. generated more electricity from renewables than fossil fuels.

While this is a welcome step, and the U.K.'s presidency at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference indicates its commitment towards the Paris Agreement, a lot is yet to be achieved. The withdrawal of the U.K. from the EU only complicates the issue. The anchoring of coastal 'ghost hectares' via offshore wind farms is an example of the choices the country will be forced to weigh up – including the issues around living on a thin critical zone of Earth.

Lastly, by the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, it was argued by many scholars that a liberal democracy with access to a free market is the best way to organise societies. An idea that all nations should pursue unequivocally is globalisation. It was envisaged that the infinite expansion would last forever and national citizens will eventually become 'global citizens'. It was in this swell that the Maastricht Treaty of the 1990s led to the creation of the European Union – a Europe without frontiers. But with Brexit, where do the citizens of the U.K. go?

For the first time in centuries, the U.K. faces these constraints together, with an added burden of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will have to learn to pass this astounding hailstorm and become 'earthbound', as French sociologist Bruno Latour calls it, and rethink its organising structure and the relationship it will have with its land.

Gaurav Daga is Associate Vice-President at Guidance, Industries Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. Views expressed are personal.

## Climate and consciousness

The Uttarakhand floods and the Texas cold snap must serve as lessons to galvanise climate action

VINOD THOMAS

targets, ideally by a decade. The stakes are laid out in alarming reports, which show that India is particularly vulnerable. While HSBC ranks India at the top among 67 nations in climate vulnerability (2018), Germanwatch ranks India fifth among 181 nations in terms of climate risks (2020). But public spending does not reflect these perils.

#### Budgetary allocations

A vital step should be explicitly including policies for climate mitigation in the government budget, along with energy, roads, health and education. Specifically, growth targets should include timelines for switching to cleaner energy. The government needs to launch a major campaign to mobilise climate finance.

Even if major economies speed up climate mitigation, catastrophes like Uttarakhand will become more frequent due to the accumulated carbon emissions in the atmosphere. So, climate adaptation needs to be a priority. India's Central and State governments must increase allocations for risk reduction, such as better defences against floods, or agricultural innovations to withstand droughts.

A big worry is that the Uttarakhand government and the Centre have been diluting, instead of strengthening, climate safeguards for hydroelectric and road projects. Studies had flagged ice loss across the Himalayas, and the dangers to densely populated catchments, but policy response has been lacking. Similarly, Kerala ignored a landmark study calling for regulation of mining, quarrying and dam construction in ecologically sensitive places, which contributed to the massive floods in 2018 and 2019.

Sustainable growth depends on timely climate action. For that to happen, policymaking needs to connect the dots between carbon emissions, atmospheric warming, melting glaciers, extreme floods and storms. Events like Uttarakhand and Texas should be treated as lessons to change people's minds and for the public to demand urgent action.

The author is a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore, and former senior Vice-President at the World Bank



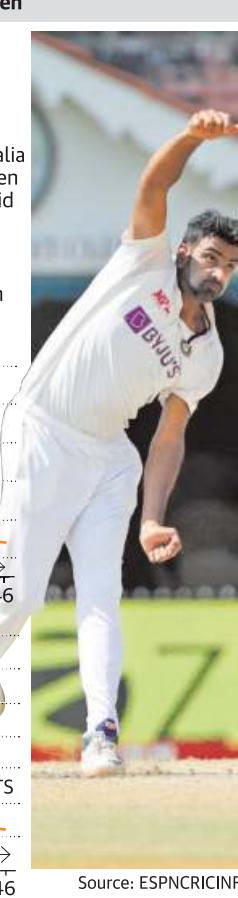
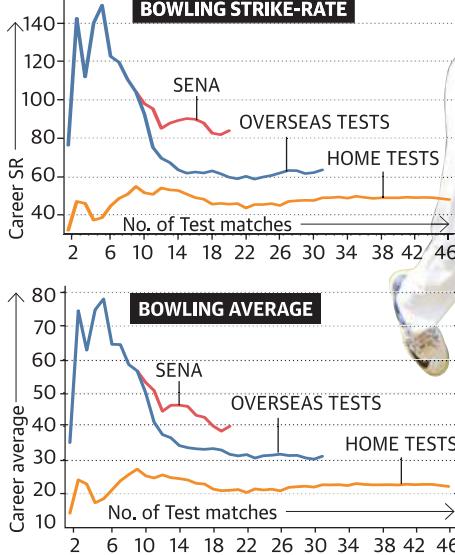
#### DATA POINT

### A cut above the rest

With 401 wickets R. Ashwin is now one of the only three Indian spinners to cross the 400-wickets milestone in Tests. The off-spinner achieved the mark in just 77 Tests, second fastest behind Sri Lankan maestro M. Muralitharan's 72 Tests. His career strike rate (53.76) and average (24.95) are among the best ever and a look at his career progression shows that his lethality at home remains intact even as his overseas record is getting better over time. Among spinners with more than 200 Test wickets, Ashwin also registered a very good relative SR and average, thereby marking a presence among the all-time elite. By Srinivasan Ramani and Suman Sen

#### BOWLING AVERAGE AND STRIKE RATE

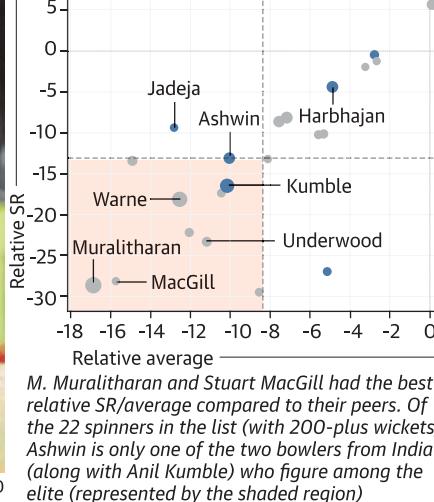
The chart depicts the progression of Ashwin's bowling average (runs conceded/wicket) and strike rate (balls bowled/wickets) through his career in Tests played at home, away, and in South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia (SENA). His SR/average at home has always been superior compared to Tests abroad. While he did not have a great start playing in foreign conditions, he fared significantly better later. His average/SR in the SENA countries also improved over time, indicating that he became an effective bowler even on pace-friendly pitches



Source: ESPNCRICINFO

#### RELATIVE SUPERIORITY |

One way to compare a spinner with others is to calculate the bowler's relative SR/average. This can be done by calculating the difference between the bowler's overall SR/average and that of rest of the spinners who played the same Tests as the said bowler. For instance, Ashwin's relative average is -10.07, which is the difference between his career average of 24.95 and the average of all spinners who have played in the matches he has played in (35.02). The lower the net relative SR/average, the more superior is the spinner compared to others. The size of the circles correspond to the overall wickets taken



M. Muralitharan and Stuart MacGill had the best relative SR/average compared to their peers. Of the 22 spinners in the list (with 200-plus wickets), Ashwin is only one of the two bowlers from India (along with Anil Kumble) who figure among the elite (represented by the shaded region)

The Hindu

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 4, 1971

U.S. missions to help Saigon troops

[Saigon, March 3] United States' warplanes to-day roamed over wide areas of Indo-China, including North Vietnam, in an intensified campaign to ease pressure on nearly 40,000 South Vietnamese ground troops sweeping across Laos and Cambodia.

South Vietnamese forces killed 268 North Vietnamese troops yesterday in the two drives, most of them by air and artillery strikes. In a delayed report, headquarters claimed another 200 communists were killed on Monday in a major battle along Highway 9 that intersects the Ho Chi Minh trail in Southern Laos. South Vietnamese losses were 22 killed and 89 wounded, a communiqué said. American B-52 heavy bombers, tactical fighter bombers and helicopters of all types had flown nearly 25,000 missions in support of the parallel South Vietnamese operations in Laos and Cambodia, U.S. military sources said. — AP and Reuters

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 4, 1921

The Nankana horror

*The Khalsa Advocate*, an English weekly of the Sikhs issued from Amritsar, published blood-curdling accounts of the Nankana massacre. "We cannot help saying," comments our contemporary on the incident, "that the whole affair seems to have been premeditated, fully matured and cut and dried. Deliberate and calculated arrangements for giving such a horrid attack to the Sikhs cannot be the development of one single day or merely spurred by the moment. Nor can this development be the brainwork of one single man. An organised and deliberate conspiracy seems to have been at work not for weeks but for months together." The Mahant, it would appear, had not disguised part at least of his atrocious intentions. "The strangest and the most distressing part of the whole thing which pinches and galls us the most," says the Sikh paper, "is the studied indifference (or shall we say wanton) of the ubiquitous C.I.D. Ever since the Nankana Sahib fair in November last, even before it, the Sikh Press had been constantly rending the skies with the cries that Mahant Narain Das had been manufacturing a large number of *Chhavis* and *Gundassis* with a view to arming his accomplices with these sinews of war to give a formidable attack to the Panth who was determined to effect the reform of their historic Gurudwara at Nankana Sahib by pronouncedly non-violent methods.

FROM PAGE ONE

## Covaxin efficacy is 81%, works against variants

The interim analysis is based on 43 cases, of which 36 COVID-19 cases were observed in the placebo group and seven in the Covaxin group, a point estimate of vaccine efficacy of 80.6%.

The interim analysis showed that severe, serious, and medically attended adverse events were at low levels and balanced between vaccine and placebo groups. The National Institute of Virology indicated that vaccine-induced antibodies "can neutralize UK variant strains and other heterologous strains," the company said. The vaccine demonstrated the interim efficacy in preventing COVID-19 in those without prior infection after the second dose, and the 25,800 participants received a vaccine or placebo in a 1:1 ratio, the company said. The clin-

ical trial will continue through to final analysis at 130 confirmed cases to evaluate the efficacy of Covaxin in additional secondary study endpoints.

Mr. Ella said, "Today is an important milestone in vaccine discovery, for science and our fight against coronavirus. With today's results from our Phase 3 clinical trials, we have reported data on our COVID-19 vaccine from Phase 1, 2, and 3 trials involving around 27,000 participants."

Covaxin (BBV152) contains a whole virus inactivated SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, which is produced in Vero cells (a lineage of cells used in cell cultures), and the manufacturing platform has a better safety profile compared to other vaccine platforms, the company said.

## Voicing dissent against govt. is not sedition: SC

Petitioner Rajat Sharma accused Dr. Abdullah, president of the National Conference of Jammu and Kashmir, of stating that "in Kashmir he will get Article 370 of the Constitution restored with the help of China" during a speech on September 24.

Mr. Sharma argued that Article 370 had been deleted from the Constitution by majority in Parliament.

"Everybody knows that there are only two countries in the world which are trying to grab the Indian part of Indian territories, namely China and Pakistan, which mean that Farooq Abdullah is trying to hand over the Kashmir to China or Pakistan, which is totally contrary to the provision of the Constitution and amounts to sedition," his plea said.

## Sasikala to withdraw from politics

The announcement came as a surprise, considering that she had been very keen on playing an active political role after her release from a Bengaluru prison where she served a four-year term in a corruption case. On February 8-9, when she returned to Chennai, her journey lasted nearly 23 hours, and she received an "enthusiastic welcome" from her followers.

On the occasion of Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary on February 24, she made a fresh call for unity to the departed leader's "genuine followers", which the AIADMK promptly rebuffed. She added then that she would soon meet the followers.

Press releases, issued by her office located at her present residence in T. Nagar here in

A long-time observer of the AIADMK compared Ms. Sasikala's move with the decision of Janaki Ramachandran, wife of the AIADMK founder and former chief minister M.G. Ramachandran, to retire from politics in 1989 and said that while the latter had taken the step only after her faction lost badly in the 1989 Assembly election that saw the return of the DMK to power, the former's decision came well ahead of the Assembly poll.

## 17-year-old arrested for rape, murder in Aligarh

When she went to drink water from the water canal near the tree where he was sitting, he overpowered her and forced her to indulge in unnatural sex. When she refused, he first smothered her and then strangled her. He dragged her body into the field of a resident of her village so that suspicion would fall on him.

The 14-year-old victim was living with her maternal grandmother. The postmortem report indicated death

by strangulation. Injury marks were found on the face, neck and chest. Rectal and vaginal swabs had been sent for forensic investigation. He said the accused would be prosecuted under sections 302 and 376 of the IPC, and relevant sections of the POCSO Act 2012.

Mr. Muniraj said the police would conduct a drive in rural areas to spread awareness among families against juveniles watching porn material.

## I-T searches on Anurag Kashyap, Taapsee

"Both Kashyap and Pannu have voiced their opposition to certain government policies in the past. It is no coincidence that only they have been raided," said Mr. Malik, who is also the Mumbai unit president of the NCP.

Maharashtra Congress president and MLA Nana Patole criticised the Centre for selectively targeting celebrities. "We have seen in many instances that those who speak against the govern-

ment are subjected to action by Central agencies," he said.

Maharashtra's PWD Minister Ashok Chavan told presspersons, "This is not new. We have been seeing this happening often. Those who put forth facts are being pressurised in this way so that they don't speak up."

It is learnt that Mr. Kashyap and Ms. Pannu were in Pune at the time of the searches.

## Karnataka Minister quits over harassment case

Jarkiholi had to step down following a nudge from BJP high command

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister and BJP leader Ramesh Jarkiholi resigned from the Cabinet on Wednesday, within 24 hours of facing allegations of seeking sexual favours from a woman in return for a government job. He held the Major and Medium Irrigation portfolio.

Mr. Jarkiholi sent his resignation letter to Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa in which he said he was relinquishing the post to save the BJP from embarrassment, though the allegations were "far from true".

He sought a speedy investigation into the case. The resignation was accepted by Go-

ernor Vajubhai R. Vala later in the day.

### Damage-control mode

It is learnt that Mr. Jarkiholi had to quit following a nudge from the BJP high command, whose direction the Chief Minister had sought. BJP central leaders were of the view that he should immediately resign as a damage-control exercise, ahead of the budget session that starts on Thursday. Karnataka is also set to face bypolls for a Lok Sabha seat in Belagavi (Mr. Jarkiholi's home district) and three Assembly segments in north Karnataka.

Meanwhile, a CD submitted to the Cubbon Park pol-



**Day of protests:** Congress supporters seeking action against Ramesh Jarkiholi in Belagavi on Wednesday. ■ P.K. BADIGER

ice, allegedly containing recordings of Mr. Jarkiholi's private moments with the woman, is under investigation. The alleged victim is yet to make a statement to the police.

While Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai promised a transparent inquiry into the

allegations, Opposition leaders continued to express outrage over the developments.

Leader of the Opposition and former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Mr. Jarkiholi had not only defamed himself and the party but also the people of Karnataka.

Earlier, Mr. Ramesh Jarki-

holi's brother and BJP leader Balachandra Jarkiholi met the Chief Minister and sought a CBI probe. Leaders close to Mr. Ramesh Jarkiholi claim that he has been assured of reinduction if the charges are proved false.

The day saw protests by his supporters at Gokak in

Belagavi alleging political conspiracy to dislodge him. Mr. Ramesh Jarkiholi had led a team of 17 MLAs from the Opposition parties who switched to the BJP from the Congress, resulting in the fall of the Congress-JDS coalition government and formation of the BJP government.

## Pinarayi writes to EC on ED probe into KIIFB

Model code is being violated, says Kerala CM

**S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has sought the intervention of the Election Commission of India to ensure that the Central investigation agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) follow the 'statute in letter and spirit' and 'act in a politically neutral manner'.

"This is absolutely essential to retain the spirit of the model code of conduct and to ensure free and fair elections in the State," Mr. Vijayan pointed out in a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora.

### Summons to CEO

The move comes in the wake of the ED's probe into the masala bonds of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), the flagship infrastructure funding and development agency of the State. The agency had is-



Pinarayi Vijayan

sued summons to K.M. Abraham, CEO of KIIFB, to be present at its Kochi office on March 5 and Deputy Managing Director Vikramjit Singh to appear on March 4 for questioning.

The model code put in place is being 'conveniently violated, torpedoed at the instance of some Union Ministers and its very spirit is being destroyed'.

### Poll gains

"The authority conferred on investigating agency is being wrongly appropriated for electoral gains of the ruling party at the Centre and for the Opposition in the State,"

### A cover for corruption: BJP

The ED case against KIIFB is an example of how the Left Democratic Front government has violated all laws and norms in place to facilitate corruption, BJP State president K. Surendran has said.

the Chief Minister said. The matter is neither one of recent occurrence nor of urgent nature.

Some of the officials, including women, called by the ED to Kochi had been subjected to 'temperate behaviour', he said.

The move came close on the heels of a speech by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman criticising KIIFB and the State Budget, during the BJP's Vijay Yatra in Kochi on February 28.

"The ED is misusing its power and the aim is to conduct a smear campaign against the State government," he said.

Orthodox Church episcopal synod secretary Yohanna Mar Diascoros said the

## RSS leader meets church factions

Orthodox, Jacobites are locked in fight

**S. ANANDAN**  
HIRAN UNNICKRISHNAN  
KOCHI/KOTTAYAM

A senior functionary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Wednesday gave audience separately to the Orthodox and Jacobite factions of the Malankara church, which have been locked in a bitter fight over ownership of parish churches in central Kerala.

Sources said RSS joint general secretary Manmohan Vaidya, who was in Kochi, held back-to-back meetings with Geevarghese Mar Yulios and Yakoob Mar Irenios, metropolitans respectively in charge of the Ahmedabad and Kochi dioceses of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, and Joseph Mar Gregorios, metropolitan trustee of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church, along with Jacobites Church secretary Peter Elias, priest trustee Fr. Sleeba Paul Vattavellil and lay trustee Shaji Choodayil.

Orthodox Church episcopal synod secretary Yohanna Mar Diascoros said the

Orthodox metropolitans had met the RSS leadership to express the Church's gratitude to the organisation in protecting the St. George's Orthodox Church at Cheppad in Alappuzha. The church, a centuries-old monument that faced the risk of demolition for widening of a National Highway, is now set to be protected as a monument of national importance by the Archaeological Survey of India.

"The two metropolitans, met the RSS leader to convey the Church's gratitude for intervening in the issue. The meeting had nothing to do with the upcoming Assembly elections," said synod secretary.

The Jacobites said the meeting was a follow-up to the discussions they had with Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier. "We presented the issues we faced, including our ouster from parish churches. We were assured of all help in resolving the issue," Jacobite Church spokesperson Kurianose Mar Theophilus said.



**Gold worth ₹74 lakh seized at airport**

**HYDERABAD**  
A woman passenger who arrived at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) from Dubai was detained by Customs officials on Tuesday for trying to smuggle in around 1.6 kg gold paste worth ₹74 lakh. In a separate incident, a 41-year-old man, who was in possession of 40,000 cigarette sticks, was detained at RGIA early on Wednesday.

### TTD to procure eight 'Prachara Rathams'

**TIRUMALA**  
The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) is set to procure eight 'Dharma Prachara Rathams', including six small ones, which would be used for publicity programmes run by it. The cost of a small vehicle (24 feet in length) has been estimated to be around ₹32 lakh, while the big ones (33 feet) would cost around ₹50 lakh each.

### Two IISc students die on campus

**BENGALURU**  
Two students of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, died under different circumstances on the campus on Tuesday. "One of them, pursuing his Ph.D. in the Centre for Nano Science and Engineering, died by suicide," the IISc said. Another collapsed while playing football and was declared dead brought to hospital.

### 3,040 kg ganja seized in A.P., van driver held

**VISAKHAPATNAM**  
The police on Wednesday seized around 3,040 kg of ganja and arrested a person while he was transporting it in a van at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. According to the police, its market value may be more than ₹3 crore. The police intercepted the van at Chodavaram around 2 a.m., according to an official. The driver was reportedly taking the ganja to Anakapalle.

## HC punishes two Collectors for contempt

RDO also found guilty; judge awards 3 months' simple imprisonment, fine

**R. AVADHANI**  
SIDDIPET

The Telangana High Court has sentenced Sircilla Collector D. Krishna Bhaskar, the then Joint Collector (now Collector of Wanaparthy) Yashmin Basha and Land Acquisition Officer N. Srinivas Rao to simple imprisonment of three months and imposed a fine of ₹2,000 in a contempt case.

They should also pay costs of ₹10,000 to each of the petitioners within four weeks. The sentence is suspended for six weeks. An adverse entry would be



Sircilla Collector  
D. Krishna Bhaskar

this was nothing but contempt of court. All of them demanded implementation of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LA Act, 2013). They al-

leged that the authorities had not followed the mandatory procedures.

### Lands submerged

In 2018, the petitioners urged the court to restrain the respondents from taking possession of their agriculture lands mentioned in the declaration issued on January 1, 2017 and May 16, 2017 from taking up any construction work.

They alleged that their lands got submerged as a result of the works from upstream in October 2019.

"I hold that petitioners were dispossessed from their lands in October 2019 itself and their lands were

submerged as alleged in the contempt case and all the respondents have wilfully disobeyed the order dated 12.10.2018 in Interim Appeal Number 1 of 2018 in Writ Petition Number 37623 of 2018," observed the judge.

"Our lands were forcibly acquired and inundated in the Antangi reservoir in 2019 despite our cases pending with the High Court. So far we were not paid compensation for our lands or rehabilitation and resettlement.

Hence, we approached the High Court again," Kolanupaka Narayana Reddy, an oustee from Anantagiri told *The Hindu*.

## Bombay HC asks Amazon to take down Telugu film

Actor Sakshi Malik alleges unauthorised use of her image

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed Amazon Seller Services Private Ltd., which provides content to over-the-top streaming service of Amazon Web Services, to take down the Telugu film *V* within 24 hours until the image of actor Sakshi Malik is completely deleted from it.

A single Bench of Justice G.S. Patel was hearing an interim application filed by Ms. Malik through advocate Saveena T. Bedi. She has alleged illegal use of her still image in the film that was released on Amazon Prime on September 5, 2020. She has

filed a defamation suit for ₹30 crore, mandatory injunction and damages. Ms. Malik commissioned a photographer on July 24, 2017 and the photo shoot took place on August 1. She later uploaded a part of the photo portfolio in her Instagram account. It is pointed out that her photograph was used in the film when there is a reference to a female escort or a commercial sex worker. Ms. Malik in her complaint said the unauthorised use of private material was an invasion of privacy. The court noted that the argument was *prima facie* correct. "Indeed, I do not believe there is any other way of looking at it."

The court directed Amazon to take down all versions of the film until such time as Venkateshwara Creations Pvt Ltd. had completely deleted all images of Ms. Malik from their work. Merely pixelating or blurring the image was not acceptable.



# Vaccine can be taken 24/7, says Centre

Time restriction of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. has been removed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

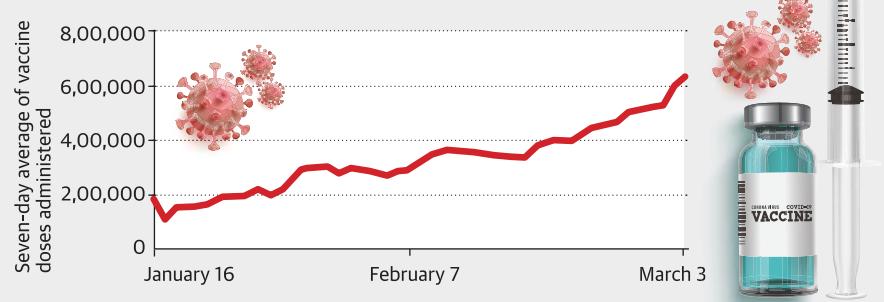
Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday reiterated that the government had done away with the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. timeline for giving COVID-19 vaccination and that beneficiaries could take the vaccine round the clock.

"The government has lifted the time restriction to increase the speed of vaccination. People can now get vaccinated 24x7 according to their convenience. Prime Minister Narendra Modi understands the value of health as well as the time of citizens," Dr. Vardhan tweeted in Hindi.

On Tuesday, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan had announced that the time restriction of vaccinating beneficiaries from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. had been done away

## Marching on

The pace of COVID-19 vaccinations continued its steady increase three days into the second phase of the campaign. As many as 6,92,889 doses were administered on Wednesday as of 7 p.m., about 83,000 more than the previous day



with, and it was up to the hospitals to decide whether they wanted to continue administering vaccines even after that.

"CoWIN 2.0 allows flexibility of time and if a hospital has the capacity, the system permits it to do vaccination even after 5 p.m. in consultation with the State government. This has been briefed both to the State governments as well as the private

and government hospitals," he said. The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country crossed 1.63 crore on Wednesday, said the provisional report till 7 p.m. on Wednesday.

### Numbers so far

"These include 67,75,619 Health Care Workers (HCW) who have taken the 1st dose and 28,24,311 HCWs who

have taken the 2nd dose, 57,62,131 frontline workers (1st dose), 3,277 FLWs (2nd dose), 8,44,884 beneficiaries more than 60 years old and 1,04,263 beneficiaries aged 45 and above with specific co-morbidities," said a release issued by the Ministry.

The release said that total 6,92,889 vaccine doses were given till 7 p.m. on March 3, the 47th day of nationwide COVID-19 vaccination.

## Trinamool against use of PM's photo

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

Expressing reservation over the use of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photograph on vaccination certificates, the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal said the model code of conduct had been violated.

A delegation of Trinamool leaders, led by Minister for Urban Development Firhad Hakim, have complained to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, West Bengal, stating that government machinery was being used for furthering political purposes.

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh said the vaccination drive had started before the announcement of the election dates.

His vaccination came just a couple of days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken the first shot of Covax-

# All who are eligible should take vaccine, says President

Ram Nath Kovind gets his first shot at Army hospital

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday was administered the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at the Army's Research and Referral Hospital.

"President Ram Nath Kovind, accompanied by his daughter, was administered the vaccine at the Army R&R Hospital, Delhi, today," tweeted the official handle of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Mr. Kovind, 75, thanked "all the doctors, nurses, health workers and administrators who are successfully implementing the largest vaccination drive in history and urged all eligible citizens to get vaccinated".

His vaccination came just a couple of days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had taken the first shot of Covax-



**First dose:** President Ram Nath Kovind getting vaccinated in New Delhi on Wednesday. • PTI

in developed in India by Bharat Biotech.

On March 1, the government rolled out the second phase in which health workers and other frontline workers are being vaccinated.

Though there were demands for the Prime Minister and other Ministers to be vaccinated, apart from the Prime Minister, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad too had tweeted a photo of him taking his first.

## U.P. working to improve vaccine access

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LUCKNOW

People in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh should not be sent back from COVID-19 vaccination centres because of poor Internet connectivity, the State government has instructed all district administrative and medical heads.

"There is a problem of Internet connectivity in rural areas," Amit Mohan Prasad, Principal Secretary, Health, wrote to all District Magistrates and Chief Medical Officers.

In rural areas, the process of photographing the beneficiary and other formalities should be completed and the vaccine could be administered. The data could be uploaded later once the Internet connection was available.

In urban vaccination centres, 60% of the slots would be kept for free registration while 40% would be for walk-ins. In rural areas, this would be 50-50.

## Six States continue to see a rise in COVID-19 numbers

14,989 new cases registered; Maharashtra tops with 7,863

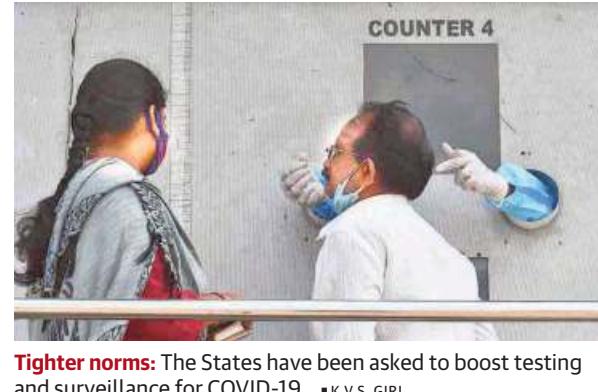
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Karnataka continued reporting an increase in daily new cases of COVID-19, together accounting for 85.95% of the cases reported in the 24 hours till 8 a.m. on Wednesday, the Union Health Ministry said in a release on Wednesday.

As many as 14,989 new cases were registered across India, and Maharashtra reported the highest of 7,863, followed by Kerala (2,938) and Punjab (729), the release said.

Data released by the Ministry show that Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Karnataka have shown the most increase in new cases on a week-on-week basis. Maharashtra alone accounted for a weekly increase of 16,012 cases in terms of the



**Tighter norms:** The States have been asked to boost testing and surveillance for COVID-19. • K.V.S. GIRI

number of cases. In percentage terms, Punjab reported a weekly increase of 71.5% (1,783 cases).

The country's total active caseload had reached 1,70,126 currently, while 1,08,12,044 people had recovered so far and 13,123 patients discharged in the 24 hours.

Ninety-eight deaths were reported in the country in the 24 hours. Four States accounted for 88.78% of them. Maharashtra saw the highest casualties of 54.

Also, 86.58% of the new recovered cases were observed to be concentrated in

six States, with Maharashtra reporting the highest number of single-day recoveries of 6,332.

In Kerala, 3,512 people recovered in the 24 hours, and Tamil Nadu followed it with 473 recoveries.

Ninety-eight deaths were reported in the country in the 24 hours. Four States accounted for 88.78% of them. Maharashtra saw the highest casualties of 54.

The study, yet to be for-

## 'Vaccine lifts antibody level in 14 days'

Study, however, says those already infected by the virus get this boost in a week

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

Antibodies against the novel coronavirus begin to appear significantly only 14 days after a vaccine injection. But in people who have already been infected by SARS-CoV-2 before, the increase can be observed in a week, a study has found.

While underlining the importance of the follow-up second shot, scientists associated with the study suggest that in mass vaccination campaigns, individuals who have been infected previously be prioritised below those unexposed.

According to several serology surveys, anywhere from 21% to 60% of India may have been exposed to the virus since March. While India currently does not face supply constraints – there are more vaccines available than those registering for shots as of now – this could change as more groups become eligible for the vaccine.

The study, yet to be for-



**Taking stock:** India does not face supply constraints but this could change as more groups become eligible. • NISSAR AHMAD

mally published but available as a preprint, measured antibodies generated in 135 healthcare workers administered with Covishield at different weeks or time points (0, 7, 14, 28 days). A third of the workers had already been exposed to the virus and in them, the antibody response progressively increased at each of those time points. In contrast, the antibody response started to show only after 14 days or la-

ter in 88 of the rest, who had been unexposed to the virus. Three did not develop any antibody response even at day 28 of the vaccination.

The results also showed that antibodies in those infected earlier started to stabilise, even decline, after day 14 but were still substantially higher – in one instance nearly thousand-fold at day 28 – than those who were inoculated with Covishield but with no prior exposure to

the virus. Currently, the longevity of antibodies after a COVID-19 infection has not been firmly established, nor is the immunity after being exposed to a particular strain of the virus.

"Our data suggests that ChAdOx1 (or Covishield) is highly immunogenic, particularly so where previous SARS-CoV-2 antibody-response is established. Given the high background seropositivity in India, this may be useful in determining optimal timing of the second dose during mass immunisation," say the authors, comprising scientists from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), New Delhi and the Max Group of Hospitals.

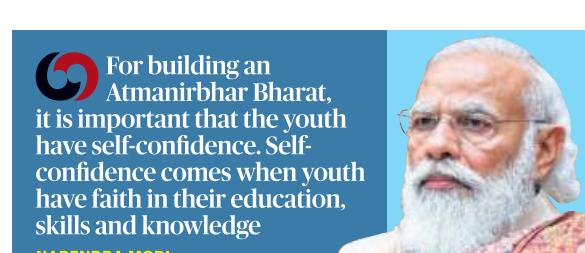
The results also showed that antibodies in those infected earlier started to stabilise, even decline, after day 14 but were still substantially higher – in one instance nearly thousand-fold at day 28 – than those who were inoculated with Covishield but with no prior exposure to

"We were surprised by the number of antibodies generated in those already exposed to the infection," Shantanu Sengupta, Scientist, CSIR-IGIB, told *The Hindu*. "It is encouraging that the antibody response is strong and sustained even after 14 days of vaccination."

In urban vaccination centres, 60% of the slots would be kept for free registration while 40% would be for walk-ins. In rural areas, this would be 50-50.

## Linguistic barriers to education must go'

Prime Minister says national education policy focuses on learning in local languages



There was no lack of talent in the country, and those who knew only their own languages should not be excluded from its development journey. It was important to work in mission mode to ensure that the talent of those from rural areas or from poor families were not al-

lowed to die, but were rather given opportunities to bloom, he urged. "For building an Atmanirbhar Bharat, it is important that the youth have self-confidence. Self-confidence comes when youth have faith in their education, skills and knowledge," he observed.

Mr. Modi pointed out that

It was the responsibility of all academics and language experts to make sure that the best content in the country and the world were available in Indian languages. This was definitely possible in this era of technology.

### Back to basics

This must be done from primary to higher education, with content creation in Indian languages for all subjects, whether medical, engineering, technology or management. The National Language Translation Mission was also key to ensuring this, he noted.

Mr. Modi pointed out that

limiting knowledge and research was a big injustice to the country's potential. In fact, opportunities were opening in sectors such as space, atomic energy and agriculture for talented youth.

The Union Budget, he asserted, had broadened the government's efforts to link education with employability and entrepreneurial capability. There was an emphasis on equity of access and institution building. He pointed to the National Research Foundation, which was being set up with an earmarked budget of ₹50,000 crore.

The awards are presented in recognition of outstanding work done by news publishers, in digital media. The winners were honoured virtually at the Digital Media India 2021 Conference held on Wednesday.

The Hindu #KeepTheHabit campaign won a gold and silver in 'Best Native Advertising/Branded Content Campaign' and 'Best in Audience Engagement', respectively.

*Sportstar*'s website (*sportstar.thehindu.com*) won a gold in 'Best in Lifestyle, Sports, Entertainment Website or Mobile Services' and *The Hindu*'s website (*thehindu.com*) won a silver in 'Best Paid Content Strategy' (including pay wall, membership or crowdfunding models).

Among other winners were *BBC News*, *Malayala Manorama*, *Mathrubhumi*, *ABP*, *NDTV Convergence*, *TV18* and *The Quint*.

The court asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General Vikramjit Banerjee to appear before it on March 4 to finalise the departments and officials who ought to be made part of the committee.

Speaking at the virtual ceremony and accepting the honour, L.V. Navaneeth, Chief Executive Officer, The Hindu Group of Publica-

## The Hindu Group is 'Champion Publisher'

WAN-IFRA bestows title at virtual event

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

The Hindu Group won two golds and two silvers at WAN-IFRA's South Asian Digital Media Awards, culminating in being named 'Champion Publisher of the Year', owing to the highest tally on the points table.

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The World Association of News Publishers or WAN-IFRA, is a global organisation of the world's press, with a network of 3,000 news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, and 60 member publisher associations representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries.

For more details, visit <https://bit.ly/3e1kK8g> or scan the QR code.



L.V. Navaneeth, CEO of The Hindu Group of Publications, with the award

tions, said, "I am extremely grateful and humbled to receive this recognition. I am receiving this on behalf of 2,400 of my colleagues who have had an incredibly tough year and managed to put our products out and do a stellar job. What is doubly heartening is the overall quality of entries and the company we are in. It is great to be amongst this august body of work," he said.

The World Association of News Publishers or WAN-IFRA, is a global organisation of the world's press, with a network of 3,000 news publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs, and 60 member publisher associations representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries.

# A knotty STORY

With Women's Day around the corner, we take a look at how an increasing number of women are interested in becoming priests and qazis, and what it takes to be one

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Love found them easily but it took 10 months for Maya McManus and her fiancé Shamaun Ahmed to find an authority to solemnise their *nikkah*.

"It was quite the hunt," laughs Maya, as the couple was keen on having a woman *qazi* conduct the wedding. "There was no information anywhere either online or in person," she says. They got in touch with the Bhartiya Mahila Muslim Andolan (BMMA), Mumbai, and got a lead. And in December 2018, just a month before their wedding in Kolkata, Maya and Shamaun found Hakima Khatoon, their *qazi*.

"I didn't know what the legalities were. Around the same time I saw a newspaper article that said it was legal for women to become *qazis*," says Maya, adding that both her family and her fiancé's were quite proud about this decision and there was no opposition.

Hakima, on her part, was delighted. "It gave me immense satisfaction to carry out such a big task successfully. Everybody was excited to see a woman *qazi*," says Hakima of her first-ever tryst with this profession. An employee then with Nari-O-Shishu-Kalyan Kendra in Howrah, West Bengal, which counsels women and works with victims of domestic violence, Hakima says when the opportunity presented itself to train as a *qazi* in 2017, she signed up for it, along with her colleague Jamila Lasker.

"Before setting out to pursue my course in Gujarat and Mumbai, I spoke to the *imam* at the mosque and he assured me it was absolutely fine as there are equal rights for all in Islam," she says, adding that during the lockdown, she was approached by a number of women who were interested in signing up with a woman *qazi*.

Recently, actor Dia Mirza's wedding was officiated by a woman priest. The foray of women into priesthood is a progressive trend but not entirely new. In the '80s and '90s, Kolkata-based Gauri Dharmapal conducted a clutch of weddings, including that of actor Aparna Sen's elder daughter. Gauri's daughter, Rohini Dharmapal, who carries on the tradition is currently booked till 2023. "When 'high' society people engage a female priest it is more or less a style statement but when the middle class does it, it is a sign that the society is changing," says Rohini.

#### Updating tradition

"My mother was a Sanskrit teacher at Lady Brabourne College. She translated Sanskrit *mantras* into Bengali to make it understandable for all at the wedding," says Rohini. Now Rohini and her team also explain the *mantras* in English if the bride and groom ask for it.

"One of the things that *ma* did was talk families out of performing *kanyadaan*," says Rohini. In her capacity, Rohini also encourages families to do away with practices that are "considered regressive".

She explains how, in the Vedas, the wedding is about promises that the couple makes to one another. Rituals like *maala badal*, *sindur daan*, *kanya daan*... came much later. "Why should the bride alone wear *sindur* to depict that she is married? Why should she cover her face? Why should the mother of the bride not attend a ceremony? We don't advocate wearing *shaakha pola* either. We do not force, we



#### CLOSER HOME

Chennai-based Sheela K Sarah has officiated around 19 weddings in the city as well as in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Mangalore, New York, Los Angeles and Las Vegas. "I am not an ordained priest," she says. "I belong to the Brahma Samaj, where any older person close to the family can officiate a wedding," she says. Watching her father perform weddings, Sheela picked up on it. In 2002, she conducted her niece's wedding in the US. Interestingly, she also conducted her daughter's wedding.



just educate. My son says we must reform with the times."

Agrees Brahmarama Madeshwari, a woman priest based out of Mysuru. "The bride is not an object. So why use the word *daan*?" she says. Since 2000, she has conducted more than 1,000 weddings as well as *griha pravesh pujas*, *upanayana* and *homams*. This awareness is spreading across India, and also the world. The current slew of Indian women priests have travelled far and wide from Detroit to Darjeeling binding people in holy matrimony. They also organise online classes for learners in India, Sweden, Australia etc.

Nagpur-based Shuba Tai trained at a *mandir* in her city.

"There is no fixed duration for the course. It depends on one's grasping power. It could take six months to a year or more," says Shuba. She started practising at around the same time as Brahmarama. It was a male-dominated field back then, she says. "They asked, 'why are you doing a man's work?' But as more people encouraged me, I went ahead with it." She has noticed a lot more women entering this profession. "Shaadi havan is quite elaborate and it takes time to master it," she adds.

#### Beauty in simplicity

With women becoming independent, they no longer want to adhere to age-old customs that take

away from the progress society is making, says Shuba. She adds, "I was conducting a wedding in Bihar, where the bride's mother was insistent on *kanyadaan* but the bride and groom refused," says Shuba, adding that sometimes they are not just priests but also end up as the referee.

Rohini had to intervene when a family brought their daughter who did not want to wear *sindoor*. "They expected me to take up for them but I, of course, was on the daughter's side," she says.

More than over-the-top rituals, what is important is to understand what the *Veda* says, adds Brahmarama. "It says commitment is very important. Once you hold hands, you don't

leave. I explain everything in detail so the participants at the ceremony understand what the *mantras* mean," she says, explaining the meaning of the word *vivah*. It comes from *vi* meaning special relation between body, mind and soul, and *vah* meaning *vahan*, a vehicle that carries them ahead.

For Rohini, what gives her satisfaction is when the couple chants the *mantras* together and understands each word. "They are able to understand it because I translate it for them," she says.

As a result, people who got married 50 years back want to get married again to better soak it all in.

"A couple celebrating their

**Equally wed** Scenes from weddings solemnised by a woman *qazi* and women priests ■ ARPAN BANERJEE AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

10th anniversary in 2022 has already booked me to conduct their wedding all over again," laughs Rohini. She and her team of six believe in a practical approach. The idea is to modernise it; the rituals are about an hour long.

"In the Upanishads it is mentioned, *mata nirmata bhavati* means mother creates everything," says Brahmarama. "We are the boss, so why should we not choose to profess whatever we like."

Up in the air, down in the volcanoes — Sony BBC Earth's *A Perfect Planet*, narrated by David Attenborough, travels across 31 countries to explain earth sciences through animal behaviour

## What makes Earth home



The Goldilocks theory (Below) Series producer Huw Cordey ■ HUW CORDEY / SILVERBACK FILMS 2019

SWETA AKUNDI

Volcanoes, thunderstorms, oceans, the sun — life on Earth flourishes when there is a perfect balance between these varied geological and climatic conditions. Sony BBC Earth's *A Perfect Planet* adds a fifth driving force: humans.

Produced by Huw Cordey and narrated by David Attenborough, *A Perfect Planet* marries earth sciences with animal behaviour in BBC's familiar style of blue chip filmmaking. Edited excerpts from an email interview with Huw:

Why do you believe a series like this one is timely?

● When we started in January 2016, we could never have imagined the world we now find ourselves vis-à-vis the pandemic. The pandemic has ex-

posed our vulnerability as a species. We might have thought we were all-conquering but the virus has shown that we are not quite as 'in control' as it appeared. As a consequence, climate change is now pretty much universally accepted and most people now realise that it's going to have a massive impact on us — that is, if we don't do something about it. There has never been a better time, therefore, to wean ourselves off fossil fuels and move towards a green economy.

#### What are the locations you shot in?

● We filmed in a lot of very challenging and extreme locations. For instance, Lake Natron in Tanzania, where we filmed nesting lesser flamingos, is one of the world's

most corrosive bodies of water — so toxic it can burn skin. The only way to access the flamingo colony, out in the centre, is by hovercraft which we shipped out to Tanzania from the UK.

We filmed in the active volcanic crater on Fernandina Island in the Galapagos. This volcano actually erupted two weeks before the shoot. The aim was to film land iguanas descending the crater slopes and laying their eggs in the warm volcanic ash at the bottom. This required the crew to descend to the bottom too, which, due to the threat of earthquakes and rock avalanches, was a hazardous operation. It's why more people have been in space than the bottom of this volcano.

Each story obviously needed to illustrate the theme of the episode. But when the themes are the planet's natural forces, this is challenging. How do you show animals benefiting from ocean currents, which you can't actually see?

Visuals in blue-chip series,

wondrous and dramatic as they are, can get repetitive. How do you make sure each series has a personality of its own?

● Yes, this is one of the biggest challenges in our genre — particularly as animal behaviour doesn't really change from one generation to the next (a lion hunts a wildebeest in exactly the same way today as it did a thousand years ago). Each big blue-chip series must somehow still raise the bar on what has gone before it and technology is often the answer to how we do this.

Technological developments can either give a fresh feel to a familiar story or allow you to film something for the first time. Currently, sequences are very character driven but there's a lot you can do, of course, with narration and music.

**It is amazing that David Attenborough is voicing the series at 94...**

● I worked with David on *Life of Mammals* (LOM), 20 years ago, and people were talking about who the next David A was going to be! My first shoot with him was in Alaska, filming bears. It was especially memorable because we got an amazing shot of a bear leaping on a salmon behind David and right on cue with his words!

On *A Perfect Planet*, lockdown happened in the early stages of the post production, so three out of five scripts had to be done at his home in London. He recorded them from his dining room, with the walls covered in duvet covers to stop sound bouncing around, and a cable running from the microphone to our dubbing mixer in the garden. I was monitoring it from Bristol on a Zoom link.

Clearly, this was far from a traditional way of recording for a major BBC series but David took it all in his stride. That kind of sums David up. Nothing seems to faze him!

A Perfect Planet premieres in India on March 8, 9 pm on Sony BBC Earth.



## A facelift for the past

The revamped ICF gallery at Chennai Rail Museum takes one through the agency's manufacturing history — from sleeper wagons and Metro coaches to the Vande Bharat Express

PRADEEP KUMAR

The Chennai Rail Museum on New Avadi Road is attracting a steady stream of visitors since reopening late last year, post lifting of lockdown restrictions. Whilst the toy train experience alone is something worth the ₹50 entry ticket, the museum is home to a treasure trove of information for those prepared to go off the rails to know more about the journey of India's indigenous train wagon manufacturing history.

However, standing out amid the various exhibits and galleries is the recently revamped ICF gallery (previously the Diamond Jubilee gallery).

Revamped in late 2019, but closed to the public soon after since a national lockdown was enforced, the ICF gallery takes visitors on a journey — with the help of photographic exhibits and miniature models — from the formative years of Integral Coach Factory to the present day.

The re-de-

signed gallery is the handiwork of Chennai-based interior designer Nalini Radhakrishnan, who has previously worked on revamp projects for the Madras High Court museum and the Government Museum in Egmore.

The miniatures on display at the ICF gallery reflect the agency's various contributions over the years to Indian Railways — from humble sleeper coaches to the wagons that are now a part of the Vande Bharat Express. With a chestnut colour scheme, rounded pillars and miniature focus lights (replacing the humble 'Government office tubelight') for illuminating the exhibits, the ICF gallery stands out.

Nalini, who manages the firm InterScape Interiors and Landscaping, prefers working with wood, as evidenced by the work that has undergone in converting the pillars in the gallery. What were once bland con-

crete pillars are now dark and glossy. Nalini says she has used actual wood to create a false enclosure around the concrete pillars. "It is the style of pillars you would find in the Madras High Court museum. I took a few Railway officials to show them my work there, and they were impressed by the pillars that they insisted they wanted the same for the ICF gallery as well," she adds.

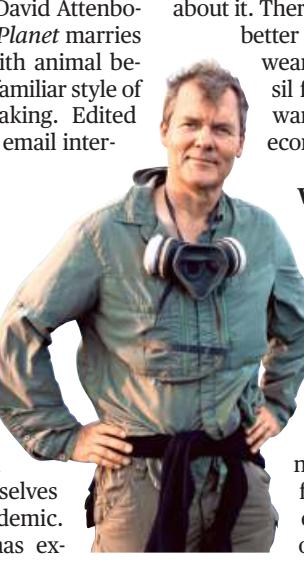
Nalini, who also undertakes civil projects through her firm, has a history of taking up Government projects, something she says involves balancing differing opinions in terms of conceptualising and aesthetics.

For instance, at the ICF gallery, she says the Railways management wanted to use LCD boxes to display archived images of former Prime Ministers, Railway Ministers and the Queen of England visiting the ICF.

"I wanted to use stained glass windows for the exhibits and create an arched entrance into the gallery, but the budget wasn't there," she adds.

Nevertheless, scores of families continue to visit the ICF gallery and revel in the history of the Indian Railways. And also, ride that toy train.

On track Nalini Radhakrishnan; (top left) toy train at the Rail Museum; the ICF gallery ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Artisan brand Naviluna is restoring a heritage bungalow, at walking distance from the Mysore Palace, and converting it to a brasserie

# Rebuilding with bricks, oysters and chocolate

SHONALI MUTHALALY

Battered by age, a 120-year-old bungalow in the heart of Mysuru has found an unlikely raison d'être: Chocolate.

Helming the restoration is David Belo, who delights in tilting at windmills. Ten years ago David arrived in Mysuru on another Quixotic mission: to create a wholly Indian, artisan chocolate from bean to bar. His artisan brand Earthloaf – renamed Naviluna – exceeded expectations when it was launched in 2012.

Using underrated Indian cacao beans, the bars are hand-crafted at low temperatures to highlight their terroir-influenced personalities.

Given the pleasing complexity of the bars, it is not surprising that their creator David is a restless maverick, eager to learn from every adventure. Born in Cape Town, he worked as a bartender in London and Sharm El Sheikh (Egypt), moved into artisan baking in Glastonbury, and – between all this – found the time to become a "front man and guitar shredder" with a punk rock band for two years in London.

Over the phone from Mysuru, where he is knee deep in lime plaster, bricks and wooden beams, David sounds elated with the busy chaos. Determined to restore a graceful heritage bungalow in the town's central business district by converting it into a chocolate factory and brasserie, David teamed up with INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) and the family that owns it, to plan the restoration as lockdown eased in June last year. Work began in



November.

They were about 70% through when David realised they were running short of funds. So Naviluna turned to Kickstarter, and managed to hit their £5,000 goal in a nail biting finish. Back on track, they aim to complete restoration by April 2021, and open two months later.



the family's history. There is a central courtyard with wooden pillars, typical of what you would see in Madras."

The bungalow retains its original stained glass teal windows, in vibrant scarlet and deep blue, and has stoically weathered the years.

Explaining that they have to "use the materials used at that time for restoration" David says they are working with natural oxide colours sourced from Rajasthan.

"And we have artisans from Jharkhand here who are crushing oyster shells for the lime plaster," he adds. "The mortar is all lime plaster. There is no steel reinforcement, all clay bricks."

Fortunately, the project was not

A June opening The heritage building in Mysuru being restored by Naviluna's David Belo (inset)

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

overwhelming as David got in some practice beforehand. "I was quite lucky. I moved into a 100-year-old house and finished the restoration with the owner before moving in." He jokes about unintentionally joining the family business. "My grandfather, originally from Portugal, was a contractor and a builder in Mozambique," he says, adding enthusiastically, "I'm loving the process."

David's plans for the bungalow, which is walking distance from Mysore Palace, include setting up a brasserie, dessert room, artisan bakery and alfresco café. On Kickstarter, their stretch goals include kombucha on tap and a luxe espresso machine. The café will have desks for co-working. David hopes to create a space that will evolve into a cultural hub.

For the food, like his chocolate, he intends to keep the soul South Indian. "The idea is that the flavours will be local, and the ingredients local, but the composition will be European," he says. "The heritage culture here is great," he states, adding that he loves the local fish curry and masala dosas. "However there is space for a new age gourmet culture."

Plans include serving cured fish on the terrace. But David has not started working on the menu yet. "So far, I am only thinking about flavours," he states, adding with a laugh, "First, I need to do the electric lines and plumbing."

The Chettinad Vintage Gallery in Pillaiyarpatti has a motley collection of rare cars, clocks, cameras and more – all in working condition

NAHLA NAINAR

In many ways, L M Lakshmanan is living his boyhood dream. "I got interested in automobiles because of my grandfather, who had a Standard Companion, (a 1955 estate car) with a big boot, and as children, we used to love travelling in it and around Karaikudi. I used to feel sad that I didn't have enough money to buy the car myself."

Decades later, Lakshmanan, who runs a security camera business with clients in Karaikudi and Chennai, owns a museum full of not just vintage cars, but also two-wheelers and three-wheelers. And as an extension of his love for other forms of classic technology, he has added toys, cameras and recording equipment to the collection at his Chettinad Vintage Gallery in Pillaiyarpatti, Tirupattur Taluk.

Situated in the midst of a busy pilgrimage route that covers the historic local Karpaga Vinayagar temple and the nearby Kunnamkudi Shanmughanathar temple, Chettinad Vintage Gallery is a time capsule of the passions that once drove the Nagarathar Chettiar community of this culture-rich region of Tamil Nadu.

"The Chettiar were among the first non-resident Indians (NRIs) of our State. They made their name overseas in finance and trade from the 1920s, and brought back beautiful things from wherever they travelled. Many of the old foreign goods in this region can be traced back to that period. I have even seen a 1920 Willys Overland car (made in Canada) in a nearby village," says Lakshmanan.

**Antique land**

Chettinad today is a cluster of 60-70 villages mainly in the Sivagangai district, with a small portion in the neighbouring Pudukkottai district. It is known for its stately homes furnished with Burma teakwood and other imported material.



Old is gold (Clockwise from left) Restored cars from different generations; museum founder L M Lakshmanan with an Edison Audiophone ■ NAHLA NAINAR



# Museum in motion

"The community was badly hit first by the repatriation from Burma following the Second World War and in the 1960s, and then in India by the ban on the pawnbroking business [among the main Chettiar occupations] during the Emergency. Many families started selling off their possessions to finance their children's education and shift to bigger cities," says Lakshmanan.

Ironically, this led to a new line of business, in Chettinad antiques, and as a visit to Karaikudi's famed flea market will show, nearly everything, from ornately carved cast iron furniture to teakwood doorways and ceramic cupboard handles plucked from the palatial homes in the region, is up for sale.

"I sourced many of the things for my collection, especially the clocks, metal toys and some cars, from the Chettiar family homes in and around Pillaiyarpatti," says Lakshmanan. "I was amazed to see the novelties that people collected in those days."

**Auto history**

A framed driving licence from the 1950s greets visitors at the entrance. The walls are decorated with road

signs and vintage motoring advertisements, and a collection of black-and-white photographs of local residents posing with their automobiles.

"Cars in those days were often passed down from father to son, like property," says Lakshmanan, adding that his uncle inherited his grandfather's Champion, and drove it well into the 1990s.

Automobile lovers can take a closer look at several restored models here, ranging from a striking red Austin 10 Tourer 1933 convertible with wooden spoke wheels, bought from a restorer in Jaipur. Next to it is parked a 1951 Morris Minor made in England.

"It took me two years to restore this car," Lakshmanan says, as he turns on its distinctive pop-up 'semaphore' indicator lights. During lockdown, he has been working on the undercarriage of a 1956 baby blue Plymouth, bought from a film producer in Chennai.

Lakshmanan's tin toys have retained their lustrous paintwork; here too, miniature cars are in the majority. There are transistors and telephones, and some unique office equipment like a 1930s German Brunsiga (Brains of Steel) calculator salvaged from a

shop.

As a tribute to Karaikudi's historical links with Tamil cinema production, the museum also has an enclosure devoted to vintage film cameras. "It is difficult to believe today that there were at least 4,000 camera brands in the market at one time."

For some reason, spy cameras seem to have been popular, as Lakshmanan shows us a vitrine filled with samples. "This is a sub-miniature Petzitz camera, only 2cm high and 3cm wide, made in West Germany," he says.

During the World Wars, many of these were strapped on to pigeons and used as a rudimentary type of wartime 'drone' surveillance and aerial photography.

It's easy to lose track of time (despite all the clocks in the 4,000 square feet hall) in the Chettinad Vintage Gallery, but Lakshmanan is happy to have visitors linger.

"We are so lost in our smartphones these days, that we often forget how we created so much technology," he says. "My museum is for people, especially children, who want to relive the golden era when machines were not just functional but also beautiful."



# The eight-anna rule

Don the garb of a weaver and create patterns in this boardgame, inspired by Kanchipuram's famed weaving traditions and fabrics



GOWRI S

Dice are rolled, tokens are secured, moves are planned... All to find one's way to a textile pattern and earn an anna (ancient Indian currency).

Once you clinch *etta anna* (eight annas), you win. For today, you are a weaver hailing from Kanchipuram and your tasks include making patterns and decoding others, to put your creative abilities and colour sense to test. There are chances of other weavers disrupting your efforts, and being quick and efficient is key.

Time halts at the temple town of Kanchipuram, known for its silks that are eponymous with every occasion in South India, in this unlikely strategy board game. Title *Ettana* – The Looms of Kanchi, the two-to-four player, peacock blue-hued, strategy game is a tribute to the looms and renowned craftsmanship of weavers there. The design of the game says as much, replete with traditional motifs – dancing girls on the cover, action cards sporting Bharatanatyam *mudras* and a colour scheme designed to appeal to Indian sensibilities.

*Ettana* is in fact a direct portal to her Tamil roots, says Zurich-based Madhumita Mani, the creator of the game and founder of Mad4Fun Games. An avid board game enthusiast, Madhumita feels that *Ettana*... reflects a part of her own cultural identity. "The concept follows the idea of depicting the workings of a loom onto a board game. And, how the weavers come up with designs that are one-of-a-kind, which can't be seen anywhere else," says Madhumita.

Recognising and further shining light on the artform of weaving remain at the centre of the game

and cards. The complexity of each design and their worth, vary. There are 36 different designs. The first player who manages to create patterns worth eight annas, wins the 35-40 minutes-long game.

Apart from the concept, the design is what makes *Ettana* intriguing. On the elaborately designed box are figurines of dancing girls engaged in different stages of weaving. They are accompanied by sculptural motifs that are specific to the temples of Kanchipuram.

"The recall value of the design is very high. If you are familiar with Kanchipuram and handloom, any component of the game will take you back instantly," says the designer of the game Darshini Sundar. Her educational background in textiles aided this journey, adds the Bengaluru-based illustrator.

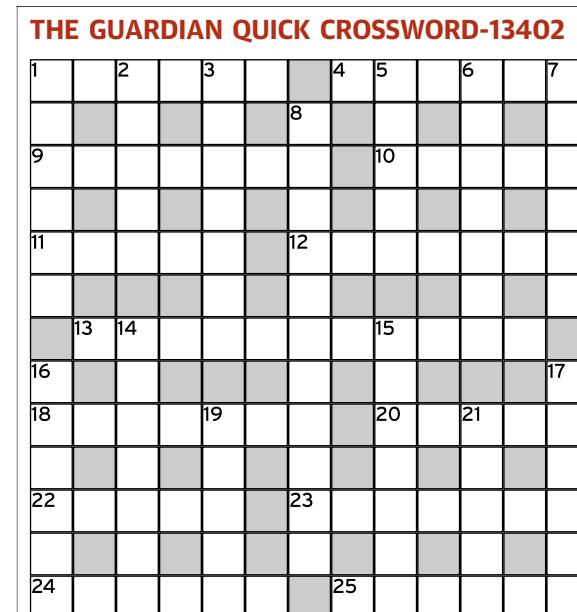
Her past work with THDC (Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation) and DakshinaChitra including a curation of an exhibition showing the handloom process, helped this project. While the board itself is not made of fabric, it tries to replicate patterns that are often seen in Kanchipuram silks along with temple motifs that give it a distinct South Indian identity.

Is there a reason for choosing Kanchipuram silks? "We are both women, we are from Chennai, we love silk sarees and we have been brides!" says Darshini, laughing. Madhumita joins in, "Since I was a child, I have always had this fascination towards fabrics and sarees, particularly with incredible designs that are not so visible these days."

Having said that, any other weaving style of fabric would still have made sense for the game, if not Kanchipuram silks, she adds. "Ultimately, it is a manifestation of how tradition meets the modern," says Madhumita. It is a piece of India that you get to carry, concludes Darshini.

The game's pilot samples are out and production will begin in April. For queries and pre-orders, write to info@mad4fungames.com

## THE GUARDIAN QUICK CROSSWORD-13402



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

terror (7)  
5 Puts in jeopardy (5)  
6 Light automatic rifle - nice bra (anag) (7)  
7 Go to bed (6)  
8 Boxing? (3,5,3)  
14 Raunchy material (7)  
15 Well-behaved – soldier attending to a superior officer (7)  
16 Crams (6)  
17 Public speaker (6)  
19 Fluid said to flow in the veins of the gods (5)  
21 Contradict (5)

Solution will appear in MetroPlus dated March 11, 2021

Solution No. 13401

- Across  
1 Actually (2,4)  
4 Food retailer (6)  
9 Blindly imitative (7)  
10 small fish used to catch mackerel? (5)  
11 Basket (for a mackerel once caught?) (5)  
12 Retsina (anag) – not so nice (7)  
13 Suffering from intense grief (11)
- Down  
18 Play away? (3-4)  
20 German artist, d. 1528 (5)  
22 Unshakeable belief (5)  
23 Melted cheese on toast (7)  
24 Astral (6)  
25 Native – seafood (6)
- Across  
1 Six-footer (6)  
2 Distress signal (5)  
3 Book that arouses

CMK

# At least 38 protesters killed in Myanmar

Security forces crack down on activists in multiple cities; Britain calls for UNSC meeting to discuss crisis

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

At least 38 people were killed in Myanmar on Wednesday as security forces opened fire on pro-democracy protesters in a number of cities, the UN confirmed, calling it the "bloodiest day" of protests against military rule in the country.

"Only today, 38 people died," UN envoy to Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener told reporters, adding that more than 50 people had died in total since the military takeover, with many wounded.

Myanmar has been in uproar since February 1, when the military launched a coup and detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, ending the nation's decade-long experiment with democracy and sparking daily mass protests.

"Today was the bloodiest day since the coup happened," she noted, without providing any further details, including a breakdown of the deaths.

International pressure is mounting – Western powers



**Under attack:** Protesters behind a barricade are enveloped by tear gas during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon on Wednesday. ■ AFP

have repeatedly hit the generals with sanctions – and Britain has called for a United Nations Security Council meeting on Friday. But the junta has ignored the global condemnation, responding to the uprising with escalating strength, and security services used lethal force on demonstrators again on Wednesday.

Earlier, AFP recorded at least 17 deaths across Myanmar on Wednesday, with Myanma in the central Sagaing region registering at least seven.

"What we can confirm is seven people have died," said an emergency doctor, who declined to provide his name.

In the outskirts of commercial hub Yangon at least six demonstrators died, ac-

cording to a rescue worker and local journalist.

In Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city, two demonstrators were killed, a doctor confirmed, adding that one of the victims was 19 years old and was shot in the head.

Another 19-year-old protester, engineering student Aung Myint Myat, died after being shot in Salin.

## Six journalists charged over coup coverage

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

Myanmar's military authorities have charged an Associated Press photographer and five other journalists over their coverage of anti-coup protests, their lawyer said on Wednesday.

AP photographer Thein Zaw, 32, was arrested on Saturday as he covered a demonstration in Yangon.

Mr. Zaw's lawyer said he and the five other journalists had been charged under a law against "causing fear, spreading false news or agitating directly or indirectly a government employee". The junta amended the law last month, to increase the maximum sentence from two years to three years in jail.

The agency has called for the immediate release of the photographer.



# Neera Tanden withdraws nomination as budget chief

Her tweets were central to the opposition to her candidacy

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

The Biden administration will stop pursuing the nomination of Indian American Neera Tanden for Director of the powerful Office of Management and Budget (OMB), after Ms. Tanden wrote to the President withdrawing her nomination on Tuesday.

It had increasingly become clear that Ms. Tanden could not win enough support in an evenly divided Senate.

Her strongly worded tweets were central to the opposition to her candidacy from Senators on both sides of the aisle, as was her work at the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank that Ms. Tanden has led.

Had she won the nomination, Ms. Tanden would have become the first person of colour to lead the White House Budget Office, which decides funding priorities and ensures that agency rules and proposed legislation are in sync with the administration's policies and budget.

Ms. Tanden, who was an adviser for Hillary Clinton's 2008 and 2016 campaigns, worked as a director for domestic policy in the Bill Clinton White House and also advised Barack Obama in his 2008 campaign.

Her nomination has been at risk ever since Joe Manchin, a moderate Democratic Senator from West Virginia, opposed her candidacy last month, saying that her "overly partisan statements will have a toxic and detrimental impact on the important working relationship between members of Congress and the next director of the Office of Management and Budget".

Former Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Bernie Sanders, who heads the budget committee that grilled Ms. Tanden, had also expressed concern over her suitability for the job during the confirmation hearing. He had asked Ms. Tanden if she would be influenced by corporations that had donated to the Center for Ameri-

can Progress and brought up attacks from Ms. Tanden against him and his staff (a reference to a 2008 incident with Faiz Shakir, who eventually ran the 2016 Sanders campaign).

The White House persisted with Ms. Tanden's nomination despite the growing uncertainty, hoping to make up for opposition from the Democratic side of the aisle with support from moderate Republicans.

With centrist Republicans like Susan Collins of Maine having signalled their opposition to Ms. Tanden, things reached an inflection point this week following a meeting between Ms. Tanden and moderate Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. President Joe Biden and Ms. Tanden had decided on Tuesday evening to give up her nomination, the *New York Times* reported, though Ms. Murkowski said she had never confirmed opposing Ms. Tanden.

"Unfortunately, it now seems clear that there is no path forward to gain confirmation, and I do not want continued consideration of my nomination to be a distraction from your other priorities," Ms. Tanden wrote in a letter to Mr. Biden on Tuesday, a copy of which was released by the White House.

Saying he accepted Ms. Tanden's decision to withdraw her nomination, Mr. Biden suggested a different role in the administration for her.

"I have the utmost respect for her record of accomplishment, her experience and her counsel, and I look forward to having her serve in a role in my Administration. She will bring valuable perspective and insight to our work," he said.

# IS claims killing of 3 women media workers in Afghanistan

The government had blamed the Taliban for the incident

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KABUL

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for the killing of three women working for a local radio and TV station in eastern Afghanistan, the latest in a spike in targeted killings across the war-torn country.

Dozens of people gathered on Wednesday for the funerals of the three media workers.

The women were gunned down on Tuesday in separate attacks, according to the news editor of the privately owned station and officials in Nangarhar province.

Afghan officials said the police arrested the alleged killer, identifying him as Qari Baser and insisting he was a Taliban – a claim promptly denied by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid.

Nangarhar police chief,

Gen. Juma Gul Hemat, said Baser had used a pistol with a silencer in the attacks.

The IS claim, posted late on Tuesday, contradicted the Afghan government's accusations against the Taliban.

The militants said the three journalists were targeted because they worked for one of the "media stations loyal to the apostate Afghan government" in Jalalabad.

## Indian aircraft take part in Sri Lanka event

It marked SLAF's 70th anniversary

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

COLOMBO

As many as 23 aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Indian Navy participated in a display event in Colombo, as the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) marked its 70th anniversary.

"As a gesture of solidarity, and in keeping with years of close interaction and camaraderie between the two countries and their militaries, IAF and Indian Navy will participate in the event with

an aerobatic display by Sarang (Advance Light Helicopter), Surya Kiran (Hawks), Tejas Fighter Aircraft, Tejas Trainer and the Dornier Maritime Patrol Aircraft," a statement from the Indian High Commission said, ahead of the flypast and display events in Colombo on Wednesday. IAF chief Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhaduria participated in the event, where President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was the main guest.

## Eight injured in 'terrorist stabbings' in Sweden

'Man in his 20s used a sharp weapon'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

STOCKHOLM

A man attacked eight people with a "sharp weapon", seriously injuring two, in the Swedish city of Västlanda on Wednesday, the police said, in what they called a suspected terrorist crime.

The assailant was taken to hospital after being shot in the leg by the police when he was taken into custody, following the attack in the southern Swedish city in mid-afternoon.

The police said the man in his twenties had used a "sharp weapon", while local media reported that the man had brandished a knife.

The police originally treated the incident as "at-

tempted murder" but later changed it, in a statement, to a "suspected terrorist crime", without giving further details.

In Sweden, the intelligence services consider the terrorist threat to be high.

The Scandinavian country has been targeted twice by attacks in recent years.

In December 2010, a man carried out a suicide bomb attack in the centre of Stockholm. He was killed but only slightly injured passers-by.

In April 2017, a rejected and radicalized Uzbek asylum seeker mowed down pedestrians in Stockholm with a stolen truck, killing five people. He was sentenced to life in jail in June 2018.

## Rockets hit Iraq base hosting U.S. troops

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BAGHDAD

A U.S. contractor died of cardiac failure after rocket fire hit an Iraqi base hosting coalition troops on Wednesday, the Pentagon said.

Around 10 rockets slammed into the Ain al-Asad military base in Iraq's western desert after several weeks of escalating U.S.-Iran tensions on Iraqi soil.

"A U.S. civilian contractor suffered a cardiac episode while sheltering and sadly passed away shortly after," the U.S. Defense Department said. Ain al-Asad hosts Iraqi forces and U.S.-led coalition troops helping fight the Islamic State.

Security sources said the rockets were Iranian-made Arash models.

The contractor's death marked the third fatality in recent rocket strikes.

## ELSEWHERE

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Department of Commerce is preparing to tax aluminium sheet exporters from 18 countries after determining on Tuesday that they had benefited from subsidies and dumping.

The US International Trade Commission (ITC), an independent body, must approve the final decision by April 15 to impose anti-dumping or countervailing duties, a department statement said.

The investigation,

launched under the Donald Trump administration, had been requested by nearly a dozen U.S. aluminium alloy manufacturers, including

## Blinken calls China the 'biggest geopolitical test' for U.S.

We will engage Beijing from a position of strength, he says

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that the United States was ready to confront China where need be, calling the Asian power the "biggest geopolitical test" of the century.

In his first major speech, Mr. Blinken vowed that President Joe Biden's administration will emphasize diplomacy over military action and build cooperation with the world on global challenges such as climate change and COVID-19.

"We will manage the biggest geopolitical test of the 21st century: our relationship with China," Mr. Blinken said at the State Department.

He promised to champion



the rights of Hong Kong and the ethnic Uighurs, saying that if not, "China will act with even greater impunity".

"China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system – all the rules, values and rela-

tionships that make the world work the way we want it to," he said.

"Our relationship with China will be competitive when it should be, collaborative when it can be and adversarial when it must be. And we will engage China from a position of strength."

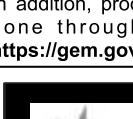
Mr. Blinken indicated that Mr. Biden would be sparing in military action despite ordering an air strike last week in Syria against Iranian-linked Iraqi Shiite paramilitaries.

"In future cases when we must take military action, we will do so only when the objectives and mission are clear and achievable, consistent with our values and laws and with the informed consent of the American people," he said.

"China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system – all the rules, values and rela-

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## MARKET WATCH

	03-03-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	51,445	2.28
US Dollar	72.72	0.89
Gold	44,976	0.48
Brent oil	63.62	0.03

## NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	729.85	9.35
Asian Paints	2402.10	11.70
Axis Bank	735.95	22.70
Bajaj Auto	3901.10	-42.95
Bajaj Finserv	10395.60	518.60
Bajaj Finance	5542.90	226.60
Bharti Airtel	546.30	5.10
BPCL	466.35	-2.65
Britannia Ind	3481.15	33.20
Cipla	812.50	0.70
Coal India	154.90	1.50
Divis Lab	3655.15	48.25
D Dr Reddys Lab	4502.55	97.85
Eicher Motors	2599.05	-3.25
GAIL (India)	146.95	2.15
Grasim Ind	1318.10	23.35
HCL Tech.	965.25	11.50
HDFC	2654.90	90.90
HDFC Bank	1586.85	18.65
HDFC Life	727.50	6.70
Hero MotoCorp	3424.35	52.05
Hindalco	359.35	14.10
Hind Unilever	2193.50	15.55
ICICI Bank	632.10	21.60
IndusInd Bank	1099.75	26.40
Infosys	1343.55	39.05
Indian Oil Corp	102.60	0.40
ITC	209.95	0.05
JSW Steel	428.15	14.85
Kotak Bank	1899.50	54.85
L&T	1496.90	11.25
M&M	852.05	-8.00
Maruti Suzuki	7124.70	-89.40
Nestle India Ltd.	16699.25	123.10
NTPC	112.70	0.15
ONGC	114.00	0.50
PowerGrid Corp	227.50	2.45
Reliance Ind	2202.10	9.10
SBI Life	906.45	27.30
State Bank	405.05	10.85
Shree Cement	27695.25	36.50
Sun Pharma	624.35	10.15
Tata Motors	349.50	2.75
Tata Steel	777.15	41.65
TCS	3059.10	52.75
Tech Mahindra	976.00	8.90
Titan	1474.60	3.45
UltraTech Cement	6500.50	77.40
UPL	613.60	24.15
Wipro	435.50	5.10

## EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.52	72.84
Euro	87.55	87.93
British Pound	101.18	101.63
Japanese Yen (100)	67.76	68.08
Chinese Yuan	11.22	11.27
Swiss Franc	79.03	79.42
Singapore Dollar	54.48	54.73
Canadian Dollar	57.46	57.71
Malaysian Ringgit	17.89	17.99

Source: Indian Bank

**HDFC cuts interest rate**  
MUMBAI  
HDFC cut its interest rate offering on Wednesday, making credit cheaper 0.05% to its customers. PTI

# Sensex climbs 2.3% buoyed by global rally, upbeat macro data

Index posts biggest single-day gain in a month on back of financial, energy stocks

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Continuing their winning run for the third session in a row, the BSE Sensex surged almost 1,148 points to breach the 51,000-level and the NSE Nifty recaptured the 15,200-mark on Wednesday, powered by intense buying in financial and energy stocks.

At the close, the 30-share Sensex was up 1,147.76 points, or 2.28%, at 51,444.65 – the biggest single-day rise since February 2. Likewise, the NSE Nifty climbed 326.50 points, or 2.19%, to end at 15,245.60, with 43 of its constituents closing in the green.

Over the last three sessions, the Sensex has risen



**On a tear:** The S&P BSE Sensex surged almost 1,148 points to breach the 51,000-level on Wednesday. ■PTI

by 2,344.66 points, or 4.77%.

The Sensex rally was driven by Bajaj FinServ, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, HDFC and Axis Bank.

Bajaj Finserv rose the

most by 5.15%.

Reliance rose by 4.52% a day after Reliance Jio picked up 488.35 MHz of spectrum in bands such as 800 MHz, 1800 MHz and 2300 MHz for ₹57,122.65 crore.

## 'NCLT enables R-Infra lenders to get ₹3,515 cr.'

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has upheld the petition of Doha Bank seeking priority payment for the financial creditors of Reliance InfraTech which will lead to about ₹3,515 crore recovery for the lenders, according to a source aware of the development.

The payment has to be made from the sum of about ₹4,400 crore realised from sale of assets to a Reliance Industries subsidiary via the NCLT-driven debt resolution process.

According to the source, State Bank of India will lead the list of creditors with receipt of ₹728 crore.

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

The Centre has room to cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by up to ₹8.5 per litre without impacting its target for revenue from the tax on the two fuels, analysts said.

Petrol and diesel prices hover at a historic high following a relentless increase in rates over the past nine months. There have been calls by opposition parties as well as sections of society to reduce excise duty to ease consumer pain.

"We estimate excise duty on auto fuels in FY22, if it is not cut, at ₹4.35 lakh crore versus budget estimate of

₹3.2 lakh crore. "Thus, even if excise duty is cut by ₹8.5 per litre on or before April 1, FY22 budget estimate can be met," ICICI Securities said in a note.

The firm expressed optimism for an excise duty cut given demand recovery, impending privatisation and

inflation concerns but expect it to be more modest than ₹8.5 a litre.

Excise duty was raised by ₹13 and ₹16 per litre on petrol and diesel between March and May 2020, and now stands at ₹31.8 on diesel and ₹32.9 per litre on petrol.

The increase was to mop up gains arising from international crude oil price falling to a two-decade low.

But, with oil prices recovering, it has not yet restored the taxes to their original levels.

"If the cut is more modest... FY22 excise duty will be higher than budget estimate," ICICI Securities said.

## Raise minimum selling price for sugar to ₹34.50 a kg: ISMA

Ex-mill prices under pressure, hurting liquidity: trade group



₹80 to ₹100 a quintal less than the prices during the corresponding period last year.

This has adversely affected the liquidity of sugar mills. "If such a situation

persists, cane price arrears will jump very fast to uncomfortable levels," the association said.

It appealed to the government to increase the MSP for sugar to ₹34.50 a kg. "There is a need to quickly decide on increasing the MSP of sugar to ensure that sugar mills are able to pay to farmers on time," it said.

During the 2020-2021 sugar season that commenced on October 1 last year, 502 sugar mills started operations, and 98 mills across the country ended operations by February 28, 2021.

## PayPal eyes 1,000 hires in India in 2021

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Digital payments company PayPal on Wednesday said it would hire 1,000 engineers this year for its India development centres across Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad.

PayPal said it would recruit these engineers in the areas of software product development, data science, risk analytics and business analytics at the entry level, mid level, and senior roles, the company said in a statement.

The India Technology Centres currently employ more than 4,500 people in the three locations.

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## 'Spectrum will boost Jio, Bharti's market share'

'Telcos significantly widened footprint'



secure their medium-term spectrum needs rather than a result of a bidding war, the firm said.

### 'Tariffs may rise'

The more-than-expected participation from telcos in the auctions increases the probability of a price hike as a way to offset the increase in leverage, market watchers said.

"While the March '21 auction was largely a non-event for Vodafone Idea, the company's limited ability to participate in future 5G spectrum auctions (due to its stretched balance sheet) could result in further erosion of its market share," Goldman Sachs said.

Moody's Investors Service said spectrum renewals will help incumbents protect their market positions while additional bandwidth purchases will drive improved network coverage.

## Agar is Australia's hero

## AUS IN NZ

## AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WELLINGTON

Spinner Ashton Agar produced the best bowling performance in Australia's Twenty20 International history in a 64-run win over New Zealand here on Wednesday.

Agar's match-turning six for 30, including three in one over, derailed a New Zealand fightback as Australia avoided a series loss in the third T20I.

The scores: Australia 208/4

in 20 overs (Aaron Finch 69,

Josh Philippe 43, Glenn Maxwell 70, Ish Sodhi 2/32) bt New Zealand 144 in 17.1 overs (Martin Guptill 43, Devon Conway 38, Riley Meredith 2/24, Ashton Agar 6/30).

Australia finished its 20 overs at 208 for four after

being put in. In reply, New Zealand was bundled out for 144 in 17.1 overs thanks to Agar's heroics.

Under-fire skipper Aaron Finch hit 69, his best T20I score for more than two years, and Glenn Maxwell smashed 70 from 31 balls.

The result leaves the five-match series at 2-1 in New Zealand's favour with two games to go.

The scores: Australia 208/4

in 20 overs (Aaron Finch 69,

Josh Philippe 43, Glenn Maxwell 70, Ish Sodhi 2/32) bt New Zealand 144 in 17.1 overs (Sean Williams 105, Sikandar Raza 43, Amir Hamza 6/75) & 17 for 3.2 overs.

After Williams made 105 to guide Zimbabwe to 250 in reply to Afghanistan's 131, the latter was bowled out for 135 in the second innings. That left Zimbabwe with a target of 17.

This is Afghanistan's third defeat in five matches after gaining Test status in 2017.

The second Test begins here on March 10.

The scores: Afghanistan

131 & 135 in 45.3 overs (Ibrahim Zadran 76) lost to Zimbabwe 250 in 72 overs (Sean Williams 105, Sikandar Raza 43, Amir Hamza 6

# WTC final spot on the line, pitch still the focus in Motera showdown

India, 2-1 ahead, will qualify with a win or a draw on a surface expected to aid spin; England can play spoilsport if it gets its act together and levels the series

## ENGLAND IN INDIA

AMOL KARHADKAR  
AHMEDABAD

Despite India's attempts to shift the narrative away from a sub-standard surface for the third Test, the pitch will remain the focal point on the first morning of the fourth and final Test against England. While the visiting team has been cautious in reacting to the pitch, it will be interesting to see whether Joe Root & Co. can put up a fight after being annihilated in the previous two Tests.

Such was the dominance of India's spin duo in the second and third matches that England's win in the series-opener seems to be almost forgotten. It will be a monumental task, in terms of skill-set and mindset, for England's batsmen to be competitive against the relentless pair of R. Ashwin and Axar Patel at Motera over the next five days.

### Out of contention

Despite the odds stacked firmly against it, England, if it can get its act together, can play spoilsport for India in the race for the World Test Championship final on yet another spin-friendly track. England is out of contention, but India cannot afford to lose the last Test if it wants to set up a grand finale against New Zealand at Lord's in June.

India captain Virat Kohli

tried his best to play down the WTC angle during his interaction on Wednesday. Still, with veterans Ajinkya Rahane and Ishant Sharma

having equated WTC with the World Cup, the Indian camp will be eager to seal the final spot in style.

In its quest, India will be



COMPILATION BY R. NARAYANAN & G. PRASAD

cord in India, Umesh is likely to be preferred over Mohammed Siraj, the other pacer in the squad.

Despite Washington Sundar having played little part in the pink-ball Test, either with bat or ball, he is set to be persisted with in the fourth Test.

Besides the minor tinkering with its combination, India will be hoping for the specialist batsmen to fire. Barring opener Rohit Sharma, no Indian batsman has been able to score runs consistently so far in challenging conditions and they would be eager to turn the tide around.

England, meanwhile, has no option but to recall offie Dom Bess at the cost of one of its pacers. It remains to be seen who partners Jofra Archer on Thursday. As for the batting department, England will be tempted to re-

place Jonny Bairstow, who returned with a pair at Motera last week, with youngster Dan Lawrence.

### The teams (from):

**India:** Virat Kohli (Capt.), Ajinkya Rahane (vice-capt.), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, K.L. Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), R. Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ishant Sharma, Umesh Yadav, and Mohammed Siraj.

**England:** Joe Root (Capt.), Rory Burns, Dom Sibley, Zak Crawley, Dan Lawrence, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes, Ollie Pope, Ben Foakes (wk), Dom Bess, Jack Leach, Stuart Broad, James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Olly Stone, and Mark Wood.

**On-field umpires:** Nitin Menon and Virender Sharma; **Third umpire:** Anil Chaudhary; **Fourth umpire:** Shamshuddin; **Match referee:** Jagaval Srinath.

**Hours of play:** 9.30 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.; 12.10 p.m. to 2.10 p.m.; 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

## 'Defensive skills have fallen behind'

Kohli says white-ball cricket has changed the approach of batsmen

AMOL KARHADKAR  
AHMEDABAD

In addition to provoking a debate over turning tracks, the ongoing series between India and England has also exposed the lack of skills while batting on spin-friendly pitches. India captain Virat Kohli admitted that the increasing emphasis on short-form cricket has compromised the defensive skills of batsmen.

"Defence is very important," Kohli said on Wednesday. "From the pattern I've seen in Test cricket – take any match, if two batsmen are facing a 45-minute period of difficult bowling, are they able to score 10 runs and survive without offering any chances?"

"Because of the influence of white-ball cricket, we're getting results in Test cricket, but we also have this by-product that defence, which is also a part of the game, is



**Grinding it out:** Shubman Gill honing his skills at a training session ahead of the fourth Test. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

getting compromised. This is why people say, score 300-350 quickly. I don't think they focus on that grind of four or five sessions these days, probably because they don't focus on defence so much, because they're needing to switch formats, and the game is very fast-paced."

### Own method

"There is a requirement for skill in playing on spinning tracks, and not necessarily just playing the sweep. You

find your own method, and from my point of view, my best solution is a defensive shot, where I know I can defend and the ball won't go to silly-point or short-leg, and that's an aspect of the game that's fallen behind."

The third Test of the series lasted a little over five sessions and turned out to be the shortest Test in terms of balls since World War II. It has led to several fans venting their ire for being robbed of witnessing a contest at the newly built stadium.

Kohli didn't answer a direct query on whether teams are robbing fans of quality Test cricket in a bid to make the most of home advantage. "It would be lovely if you asked us this question on an England/New Zealand/Australia tour," he said. "Not when you've seen two turning pitches in India, so that question for me is irrelevant at this point of time."

without pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah for the second time this series. Bumrah has been released from the squad after the third Test for his impending wedding. In his absence, Umesh Yadav is set to return in white flannels.

With his outstanding re-

England skipper Joe Root wants his batsmen to figure out a way to score runs and not worry about the pitch too much in the fourth Test that starts on Thursday.

"I think the most important thing is that as a batting group we are very clear about how to play. We are going to the game full of confidence, we have no scars from the last two and we will play in a controlled and fearless way," said Root.

"We shouldn't be scared about the surface in any sort of way or about the guys bowling on it. It is really important that we stay very calm, clear about how we are going to score runs and trust both defence and those shots that make us the players we are," he added.

When asked about his take on how the pitch will play, Root said, "It is looking

very similar to what it was two days out from the last games as well. We will see. I mean, it could change again overnight. I think the most important thing is that we learn all the lessons from the last two two Test matches and make sure we're better for it."

"It is important that if we get ourselves in a similar position in the first innings, we really make that count. And try and get some scoreboard pressure in the game, you know, early on."

Root also hinted that off-spinner Dom Bess, who was dropped after the first Chennai Test, will be in contention for selection.



Joe Root. ■ SPORTZPICS/BCCI

## Sindhu and Srikanth advance

Ajay and Sourabh also move up; Prannoy, Lakshya exit

### SWISS OPEN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BASEL  
P.V. Sindhu and K. Srikanth entered the Round of 16 at the Swiss Open tournament after winning their opening matches on Wednesday.

While World champion Sindhu beat Yigit Nur of Turkey 21-16, 21-19, Srikanth bounced back to overcome compatriot Sameer Verma 18-21, 21-18, 21-11.

In other matches, Sourabh Verma won his opener against Switzerland's Christian Kirchmayr 21-19, 21-18



K. Srikanth. ■ FILE PHOTO

France's Mark Calijouw (19-21, 21-9, 17-21) and Denmark's Victor Svendsen (16-21, 12-21).

**Doubles results (first round):**

**Men:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty bt Christopher Grimeley & Matthew Grimeley (Sco) 21-18, 19-21, 21-16.

**Women:** Ashwini Ponnappa & N. Sikki Reddy bt Annabella Jaeger & Stine Kuspert (Ger) 21-5, 21-19.

**Mixed:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Ashwini Ponnappa bt Hafiz Faizal & Gloria Emanuelle Widjaja (Ind) 21-18, 21-10; Marcus Ellis & Lauren Smith (Eng) bt Pranaav Jerry Chopra & N. Sikki Reddy 21-18, 21-15.

and Ajay Jayaram went past Sitthikom Thammasin of Thailand 21-12, 21-13. However, H.S. Prannoy and Lakshya Sen exited after losing to

## Sharath survives, Sathiyan falls at the first hurdle



On the ball: Despite being taken the distance, Sharath did not waver in concentration. ■ FILE PHOTO: G. RAMAKRISHNA

### WTT CONTENDER

RAKESH RAO

Sharath Kamal won a close five-game battle against Czech Republic's Pavel Sirucek minutes before G. Sathiyan lost to Aruna Quadri in the opening round of the World Table Tennis Contender event in Doha on Wednesday.

Sharath, ranked 32nd, twice led by a game but still had to go the distance for a 17-15, 9-11, 8-11, 11-9 triumph.

Sathiyan, ranked 37th, found World No. 21 Quadri too hot to handle. The Niger-

ian won 11-7, 11-4, 11-8.

Sharath's roller-coaster ride was laced with long, exciting rallies and plenty of action. In the initial phase of the marathon opening game, Sharath faltered with his serves and also when receiving them. To his credit, Sharath focused on getting some rhythm, battled back from 7-10 to save three game-points and led 11-10. He squandered four successive game-points before Sirucek moved to 15-14. Undeterred, Sharath kept attacking and won the next three points to seize the game.

In the second, Sharath stayed ahead until 8-6 but

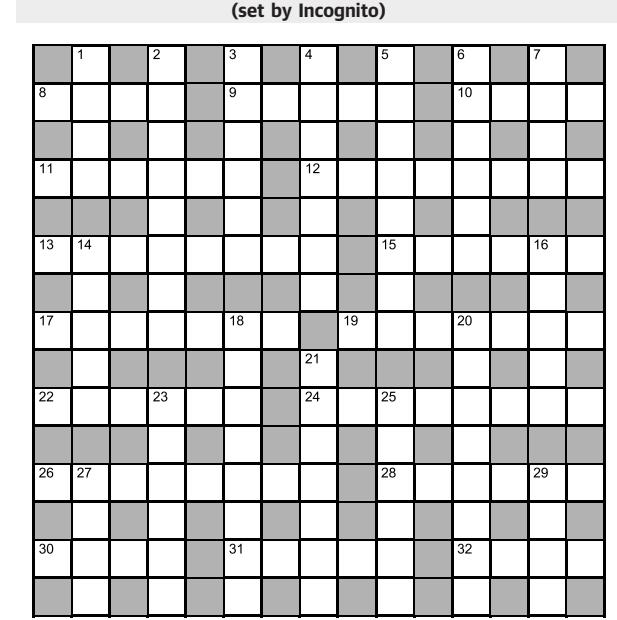
the fighting Czech produced four straight points and capitalised on his second game-point to level the match 11-11.

If Sharath dominated the third game, Sirucek returned the favour in the fourth to force a decider. Sharath jumped to leads of 5-1, 7-2 and 9-5 but the lanky Czech clawed back to 9-10 before netting a backhand on the third match-point.

The highest-ranked Indian next plays World No. 7 Yun-Jin Lin of Chinese Taipei. Sharath won their first encounter in the team championship of the 2018 Asian Games but lost to him in the 2019 Asia Cup.

### CROSSWORD

(set by Incognito)



- 17 Haphazardly crossing without signal at first and succeeding in getting run (7)
- 19 Delivery woman? (7)
- 22 Shout, "Start to block person who has lost his head" (6)
- 24 Lifting device held by reportedly high queen for person who forcibly takes over vehicle (8)
- 26 Female has torn garment scrap (8)
- 28 Lubricate rotating gear and ends of spindle (6)
- 30 Snake gets head of tuna in vessel (4)
- 31 Hay strewn around English animal (5)
- 32 Endure final (4)
- DOWN
- 1 River in Heidelberg (4)
- 2 Get Croat gyrating for rural resident (8)
- 3 Fight with soldiers in Greek city state (6)
- 4 Acknowledges, "Bums sit awkwardly" (7)
- 5 Bah, Dubai becomes another Middle Eastern emirate (3,5)
- 6 Meek medicine man on island in France (6)
- 7 Wager, accompanied by a letter (4)
- 14 Compère gets Military Cross after end of programme with ease, one hears (5)
- 16 German enemy author? (5)
- 18 Blending wine held in capital (3,5)
- 20 Student wearing crumpled dickey follows head of waitresses with bad intentions (8)
- 21 Camera part that is moved to capture image of an object that is closer (7)
- 23 Illuminates answers that you are filling up in this grid (6)
- 25 Was returning after dance? It can be puzzling! (6)
- 27 Leaders of rebellious individuals orchestrate turmoil and anarchy (4)
- 29 Silence after South African band (4)

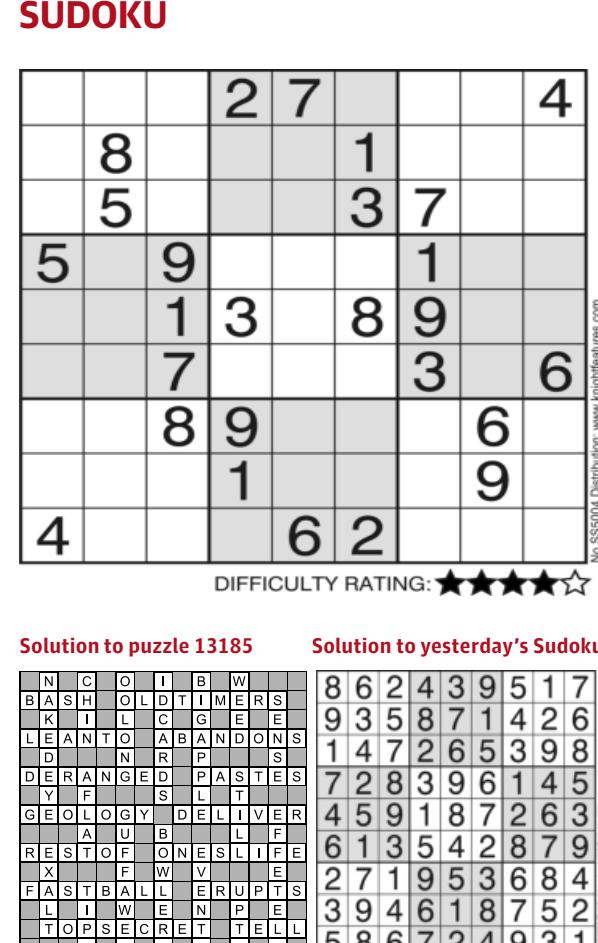
### ACROSS

- 8 Spenser left salesperson confused too (4)
- 9 Check depth of excellent bore-well in the beginning (5)
- 10 Indication from Englishman, to some extent (4)
- 11 Landlord's epistle (6)
- 12 Shatter grail after silly poem (8)
- 13 Dress material for soldier and NCO (8)
- 15 A law-man confiscates general's plan of action (6)

Display keystrokes of genius.  
Type your answers in our online grids!  
at <https://qr.page.link/jjpTn>



### SUDOKU



Solution to puzzle 13185

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

### FAITH

## Cosmic process explained

Sastras explain the mystery of relativity of the cosmic process of creation and dissolution against the backdrop of Time. In the eighth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord explains that there is His Supreme Abode which is beyond this endless cyclic course and also beyond the limits of Time. This is the ultimate goal to be attained by each and every being including Brahma, pointed out Srimati Sunanda in a discourse. The entire creation, spanning the worlds of Brahma, Indra, and other regions right to the smallest item in earth is subject to change, that is, birth, growth and decay and death and then rebirth.

Sastras also have quantified Time in terms of the yugas. There are four yugas, the Krita, the Treta, the Dwapara and the Kali. The time duration of each of them is fixed and the total of all these figures is known as one thousand divine years. To the human mind, it is a multiple of several thousands of human years. Each Yuga is distinct in its moral character. Virtue is dominant in Krita, and in the Treta, Dwapara and Kali yugas that follow, sin and moral degradation slowly enter and the present Kali Yuga is the worst, where conflict, sin and adharma dominate. One day of Brahma of a thousand divine years is the period of cosmic manifestation and one night of Brahma of equal length of time is the period of non-manifestation.

When Brahma sleeps all beings enter into state of cosmic sleep. It does not mean we get liberated. We get back to the cycle of birth when Brahma wakes up. Then creation takes place once again and all beings, the gods, human beings, etc, come into existence. But there is another Pralaya that takes place after 100 years of Brahma. The entire universe is dissolved, including Brahma who enters the absolute.

