



China building dam on Brahmaputra but BJP govt. is quiet: Priyanka
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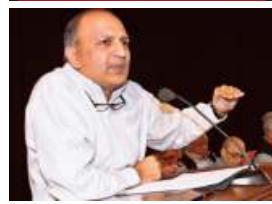
Trinamool Congress MP Sisir Adhikari joins BJP at Amit Shah's rally
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NEARBY



'University regrets events surrounding resignations'

NEW DELHI

The top functionaries of Ashoka University said in a joint statement with Professors Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Arvind Subramanian on Sunday that they regretted the events surrounding the resignations of the two.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 12

'Centre punishing AAP govt. for backing farmers'

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister and national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party Arvind Kejriwal said the Centre was punishing his government for supporting the farmers in their agitation against the three agricultural laws.

NORTH ▶ PAGE 6

Mob attacks man's house over interfaith marriage

NEW DELHI

Security has been stepped up in south-east Delhi's Harijan Basti after a mob allegedly attacked the house of a man for marrying a woman from another community.

CITY ▶ PAGE 4

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EDUCATION PLUS ▶ PAGE 7

Myanmar border shut amid strains over refugee crisis

Mizoram CM talks to Yangon Minister as Centre checks influx

DINAKAR PERI
AIZAWL

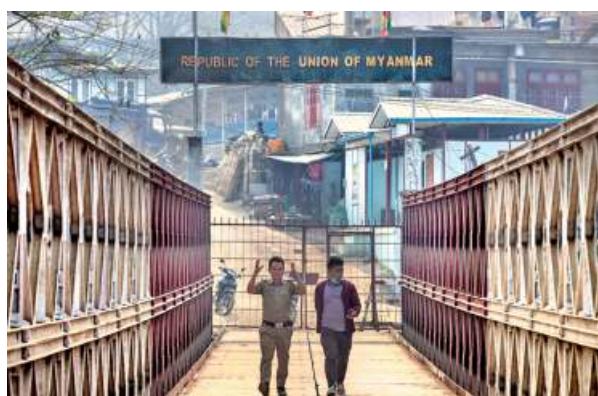
Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga held a virtual meeting on Sunday with Foreign Minister of Myanmar Zin Mar Aung amid the ongoing military crackdown following the February coup, even as India sealed all entry points along the border with the southeast Asian neighbour and is closely monitoring them to prevent any Myanmar national from entering the country.

"Had a fruitful meeting [online] this morning with Zin Mar Aung, Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Myanmar. Our thoughts and prayers are with Myanmar in these trying times," Mr. Zoramthanga said on Twitter.

He had earlier written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging intervention so that "political refugees" from Myanmar are given asylum and food and shelter in the country.

Sensitive issues
The tussle between the Centre and the State on the issue has created a tough time for New Delhi and security agencies in handling the situation on the ground, multiple officials said.

In the letter dated March 18, Mr. Zoramthanga said the people residing on both sides have close linkages. "India cannot turn a blind



On this side: An Indian policeman and a man on a bridge near the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram on Saturday. ■ AP

eye to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in front of us in our own backyard," the Chief Minister said.

The letter comes after a series of exchanges between the State and the Central governments over the handling of the refugees.

Stating that the whole of Myanmar is in turmoil and "innocent hapless citizens are being persecuted" by the military regime, who are supposed to be their guardians and protectors, Mr. Zoramthanga said the "Myanmar area bordering Mizoram is inhibited by Chin communities, who are ethnically our brethren with whom we have been having close contacts throughout all these years even before India became independent."

Following the February 1 coup when the Myanmar

military overthrew the democratically elected government, around 300 Myanmarese nationals, including many policemen, have crossed into India and sought refuge.

Deep ties

There is considerable support and sympathy among the people of Mizoram over the situation in Myanmar as many have relations across the border, a government official stated, adding that it was a very emotive and sensitive issue in the State.

India and Myanmar have an arrangement called Free Movement Regime (FMR), which allows locals on both sides to go up to 16 km across the other side and stay up to 14 days.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

MAIDAAN NAYA HAI, KHEL WAHI



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Charges against Anil Deshmukh are serious, says Sharad Pawar

NCP president says Maharashtra CM Thackeray will take a decision on Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the charges against senior NCP leader and Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, made by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, are "serious" and any decision regarding him will be taken by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

On Saturday, in an e-mail letter to the Chief Minister, Mr. Singh had alleged that the Home Minister had asked police officers, including the suspended officer Sachin Vaze, to collect ₹100 crore every month from bars and hotels in the city.

Mr. Pawar suggested an interim probe by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Julio Ribeiro, whose "credibility is beyond questioning". He claimed that Mr. Vaze, who was suspended for over 16 years for his role in a custodial death case, was rein-

stated by Mr. Singh last year and neither the Chief Minister nor the State Home Minister was responsible for it.

"The allegations against the Maharashtra Home Minister are serious. Chief Minister has the full authority to take a decision regarding an inquiry on these allegations

I don't know whether efforts are being made or not to topple the [MVA] government. All I can say is they will have no impact on the government

SHARAD PAWAR,
NCP PRESIDENT

stated by Mr. Singh last year and neither the Chief Minister nor the State Home Minister was responsible for it.

"The allegations against the Maharashtra Home Minister are serious. Chief Minister has the full authority to take a decision regarding an inquiry on these allegations against the Home Minister," Mr. Pawar said, adding, "I would suggest to Uddhav Thackeray to seek

Fadnavis calls for resignation

A day after a letter, allegedly written by Param Bir Singh, levelled "extortion" charges against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, Leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis demanded that Mr. Deshmukh resign immediately. ▶ PAGE 11

former IPS officer Julio Ribeiro's help for looking into the claims made by Param Bir Singh.

The NCP chief told reporters at his official residence in Delhi that Mr. Param Bir Singh did meet him but it was only "when his transfer orders were about to be issued by the Maharashtra government".

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

Centre warns of COVID-19 spike at Kumbh

10-20 pilgrims test positive daily, says Health Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Health Ministry team has reported that nearly 10 to 20 pilgrims and 10 to 20 locals at the ongoing Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, are being reported positive every day.

Such a positivity rate had the potential to rapidly turn into an "upsurge" in cases, the team said.

No test needed
The report assumes significance given that Uttarak-

around 50,000 rapid antigen tests and 5,000 RT-PCR tests, were inadequate, given the expected number of pilgrims.

No obstructions
Mr. Rawat's predecessor, Trivendra Singh Rawat, had mandated a negative test as part of the Standard Operation Procedure for pilgrims.

However, the CM, following a meeting of the State Cabinet last week, said while guidelines such as "masking and sanitising" would be followed, there would be no obstructions to the "smooth" movement of people.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10



Cause for concern: In this photo from earlier in March, devotees attend prayers at the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar. ■ AFP

hand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat has stated that a negative COVID-19 test

wouldn't be a requirement for those intending to visit

the festival at Haridwar.

The Uttarakhand government had also been told that the daily testing numbers being reported in Haridwar,

HC to consider transfer of Hathras case

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

Responding to an affidavit filed by the elder brother of the Hathras gang rape and murder victim to stay the trial proceedings given the "real and grave risk of a miscarriage of justice", the Allahabad High Court has asked the District Judge, Hathras, and the Inspector General, CRPF, to look into the allegations and submit a report within 15 days.

A two-judge Bench of Justices Rajan Roy and Jaspreet Singh said on Friday that it would "consider whether trial in question before the Special Judge (SC/ST), Hathras, is required to be stayed and is to be transferred elsewhere in the exercise of powers under Section 407 of CrPC".

The affidavit submitted by the victim's brother on March 18 said that on March 5, when he and his counsel, Seema Kushwaha, went to the Special Court of B.D. Bharti in Hathras to record prosecution evidence, an advocate named Tarun Hari Sharma stormed into the courtroom and charged towards him and his counsel, shouting and issuing threats. Mr. Sharma seemed to be under the influence of alcohol and said that Ms. Kushwaha could not represent the victim's family.

On account of fear for their life and security, the affidavit said, the prosecution witness could not depose properly.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF AN AGING POPULATION

With an increasing elderly population, it's time for India to rethink its strategies to provide them a safer environment. The world is on the brink of a demographic shift. Since the beginning of recorded history, young children have always outnumbered their elders. But, in a few

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The Nizamuddin centre, the headquarters of the Tablighi Jamaat, has been shut since March last year; the market near the centre.

■ SHIV KUMAR
PUSHPAKAR



Much ado about one thing

While the last batch of non-Indian Tablighis held in Delhi exited the country earlier this month, the harrowing experiences that the brouhaha over the Nizamuddin centre event of March 2020 unleashed continue to dog the attendees and those who stood by their side

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Almost a year after a nationwide crackdown was launched on people who attended a religious congregation at the Tablighi Jamaat centre in Nizamuddin during the early stage of COVID-19 proliferation, many who gave shelter to the attendees continue to face legal cases.

Four residents of the Old Delhi area who housed four female Tablighis from abroad in March last year have been slapped with Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (unlawfully or negligently doing an act likely to spread infection of any disease), 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code.

On Rizwan, Abdul Wahid, Mohammad Nosad and Feroze Siddiqui's plea seeking to quash the FIR registered at the Chandni Mahal police station, the Delhi High Court has on March 15 restrained the lower courts from passing any order in their case.

Advocate Ashima Mandla, who represented all four before the High Court, told *The Hindu* that around 60 persons continue to face different charges in connection with the Tablighi Jamaat incident.



Tablighi Jamaat chief
Maulana Saad.

plementary chargesheets were filed arraying 953 foreign nationals of 36 different countries as accused. They were charged with violating visa rules, government guidelines issued in the wake of the pandemic, Epidemic Diseases Act and Disaster Management Act rules and prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. They were also booked for the offences under Sections 188, 269, 270 and 271 (disobedience to quarantine rule) of the IPC and relevant sections of the Foreigners Act.

All the foreigners were kept in institutional quarantine till the High Court on May 25 permitted their shifting to an alternative accommodation.

Of the 953 foreigners, 911 entered plea bargains by accepting mild charges. They were let off on payment of fines ranging from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 and subsequently left the country. However, 42 of them decided not to plead guilty to the charge and claimed trial. All of them

were subsequently discharged or acquitted in the case.

On December 15, a Delhi court while acquitting 36 foreign nationals noted, "It is beyond comprehension of the court as to how the 10 [investigating officer] could have identified 952 foreign nationals [sic] out of 2,343 persons, who, as per the SHO, were found flouting the guidelines, without any TIP [Test Identification Parade], but on the basis of the list provided by MHA."

Advocate Mandla, who represented all the 953 foreigners during the trials, said the last batch of eight foreigners left for their respective countries on March 8, 2021.

Memories that haunt

Apart from the foreign nationals, most of the Indians who attended the religious congregation had to face extended periods of institutional quarantine. *The Hindu* spoke to two who recalled their time in centres and how the period impacted their life, including one who lost his job.

Mohammed Hanif, a 64-year-old from West Bengal, is now at peace but he shudders at the thought of the time he spent at a quarantine centre in east Delhi's Mandoli area. "I remember falling so sick that I couldn't get up. I was bleeding from my nose twice every day but was locked up in a room without even a window and treated badly even after I had recovered," he said.

Mr. Hanif had come to the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters on March 21, 2020 after completing his religious tour of four months and was to leave in a day or two but the lockdown forced him to stay inside the building for the next nine days. "We were taken to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital for 14

HEMANI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Next to the Hazrat Nizamuddin police station, on a street with a tricolour divider, Mohammed Iqbal exhorts passers-by to buy a plateful of roses to offer at the dargah up ahead. A lot has changed in a year since the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at the Nizamuddin Markaz (centre) grabbed national headlines after the initial proliferation of COVID-19 cases. Mr. Iqbal, whose income has dropped drastically since the event, takes solace in the fact that he can at least come to the area and sell flowers.

Last year in March, this street was cordoned off with multiple layers of barricading and security personnel standing guard - initially wearing PPE kits. The congregation at the centre, popularly known as Banglali Masjid where thousands of people from across the country and the world come to stay from time to time for religious reasons, was being tagged as a "super spreader event" after several COVID-19 cases were detected at the centre. All those staying at the centre were shifted to various quarantine centres across the Capital and criminal cases were registered in the matter.

The centre was shut down in the last week of March 2020 and has not been reopened yet. The street is still waiting to come back to its full glory. Local businesses have been severely affected and those running the shops are praying for it to open again. The income of the vendors selling food, flowers, clothing, perfumes, books and souvenirs has reduced by more than half.

No visitors, no footfall

Mohammed Nadeem, 34, runs Mahir Zaki Hotel, which was opened 60 years ago by his grandfather and was one of the go-to places for breakfast, lunch and dinner for those visiting the Nizamuddin centre.

"Our income has remained at 20% of what it was. During peak meal hours, there used to be no space to walk or even enter the hotel but now look at this," he says, pointing to the empty chairs and tables. Mr. Nadeem used to make 20 kg portions but now it has come down to about 8 kg.

He used to employ 18 workers till March last year; their number has now come down to four. Most businesses started picking up after the lockdown restrictions were eased but Mr. Nadeem is yet to start making money.

"Business was flourishing here, especially in this street, because of the markaz. Even though the centre provided food, people coming here at odd hours and wanting to eat something different used to come to our hotel," says Mr. Nadeem.

Mohammed Hasan, a 70-year-old resident of the area, switched from selling tea near the Tablighi Jamaat centre to selling 'datun' (teeth-cleaning twigs) on the street.

Mr. Hasan has six children - four sons and two daughters, none of them earning yet - and a wife to feed. He was making a decent income until the Tablighi Jamaat headquarters were

days and then to a centre in Mandoli for the next 35 days," he said. He remembered being thrown medicines at him. "We were treated worse than animals."

Mr. Hanif and others from West Bengal left for their home in a bus thereafter. He got better in about a week and there was no looking back. "I just want to forget that time," he said.

Back in Port Blair, Sharfuddin,

Nizamuddin streets await the throng of yore

Local businesses remain affected; vendors, shopkeepers pray for the Tablighi Jamaat centre to reopen soon



Dry spell continues: The market near the Nizamuddin centre is yet to pick up business.

■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

sealed. "The dargah [of Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya] also shuts at 6.30 p.m. after which this street feels as if the lockdown is on here. Thousands of people used to come here and have tea but now I am barely making ends meet," he says. "There have been days when we ate our first meal in the afternoon and had no idea how we would manage the next."

Lifestyle changes

Mohammed Khalid, 49, who sells books in a small shop, says sales have dropped 50-60% since the centre shut down. People visiting the centre used to buy religious and other books from his shop. "We have made lifestyle changes - especially in our meals - because of low income. A lot of books were bought by foreign tourists and we have no idea when that is going to happen again," he says, adding that Muslims staying abroad might think twice about visiting the centre again after last year's controversy.

Locals believe the area is more of a tourist place and if not for the dargah and the Tablighi centre, "this place has no meaning". Mr. Hasan says there's still a sense of hesitation among people to come here and blames the media and the authorities for "showing the Markaz and Nizamuddin in a negative light".

Mohammed Hussain alias Babu Bhai, a 50-year-old resident, recalls how he used to sit at home and watch Nizamuddin being shown "as a highly infected area where even breathing could infect one with COVID-19".

"We were sitting inside our houses and

from hospital and stayed there till he took a flight back on May 28.

Now, he cooks occasionally to earn some money. His wife runs a small-time tailoring business from home and his children go to school.

"I had donated plasma and have a certificate for it. For no fault of ours, we were defamed and now I am jobless," he said.

While in the Capital, the Delhi police had categorically stated

managing things peacefully, buying vegetables and necessary things from the local stores, but on TV we used to see a completely different picture," he says. The only good thing that came out of the incident was that people who did not know about the Nizamuddin centre became aware of it, adds Mr. Hussain.

Recalling the time when people residing inside the Tablighi Jamaat building were asked to leave, he says, "Thousands of people used to stay here on a daily basis. It's not like they had come here particularly around that time. When the lockdown was announced, people were asked to stay where they were and that's what people here also did. When the police and the government ordered them to leave, they left. Why turn them into villains?"

Negative publicity

Nizamuddin Dargah committee member Al-tamash Nizami says the shrine - which was instrumental in bringing back the cheer in the area - opened after nearly six months and thanks to that the shops close to it were able to make some money.

He says there was a lot of negative publicity for the area last year. "This disease [COVID-19] was not related to any religion but one religion was blamed for the spread, which was wrong. A wrong message was sent to society," says Mr. Nizami.

He is glad that the impact of the negative publicity has not lingered and people are back to the dargah and the streets of Nizamuddin, even if in relatively lesser numbers.

that they neither arrested nor detained any of the 953 foreign nationals in the case, other States took different routes.

In Mumbai, 10 Indonesian nationals were arrested on April 23 and charged with Sections 307 (attempt to murder), 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 269, 270 and 188 of the IPC.

The Indonesians were part of a group of 12 that had come to India

on February 29, 2020 and after attending the congregation in Delhi, came to Mumbai on March 7. They were remanded in judicial custody on April 28 and granted bail on May 9.

In another case, a sessions court at Dindoshi on May 5, 2020 granted anticipatory bail to 20 foreign nationals who had visited the Nizamuddin centre but had not volunteered information to the Mumbai police.

On September 21, the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court quashed an FIR filed against eight Myanmar nationals, members of the Tablighi Jamaat, who had attended the Nizamuddin event. The court said "compelling them to undergo trial would cause grave injustice" as there was "no evidence to show that they indulged in any act that was likely to spread the virus".

Eleven Bangladeshi Tablighi Jamaat members, who were arrested from Bhadohi in U.P. for flouting visa norms and put on a government travel blacklist, left the country on March 20, 2021 after a Lucknow court allowed them go on completing their punishment. They were arrested on March 31 last year from a private guest house where they had been staying after coming from the Delhi congregation.

Centre still locked

The first FIR registered on March 31, 2020 named Tablighi Jamaat leader Maulana Saad and six others on a complaint of the SHO of Nizamuddin under sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act, Disaster Management Act, Foreigners Act and other relevant sections of the IPC.

The Tablighi chief is yet to join the investigation despite being served several notices, said a senior Delhi police officer.

"We have recorded statements of Maulana Saad's sons and office-bearers of the centre in connection with the case. Most of the forensic reports of documents and electronic devices seized from the organisation's offices have come and only a few are awaited. The chargesheet is in its last phase of finalisation and will be submitted in court at the earliest," the officer said.

Almost a year since it was shut after several people contracted COVID-19 there, the Nizamuddin centre - comprising the Banglali Masjid, Madrasa Kashif-ul-Uloom and attached hostel - continues to be locked up.

The continued closure of the premises, according to the Delhi Waqf Board's plea before the High Court, is leading to "growing discontent" among members of the Muslim community.

The Board has contended that even after Unlock-1 guidelines permitted religious places outside containment zones to be opened, the centre has remained locked. The High Court has sought response from the Delhi government and the police on the plea.

With inputs from Saurabh Trivedi, and Sonam Saigal in Mumbai

Timings
DELHI

MONDAY, MAR. 22
RISE 06:23 SET 18:34
RISE 12:04 SET 01:40
TUESDAY, MAR. 23
RISE 06:22 SET 18:34
RISE 12:58 SET 02:32
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 24
RISE 06:21 SET 18:35
RISE 13:58 SET 03:22

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	35	16
Safdarjung	35	16
Palam	35	18

Delhi Palam Today
34°C One or two spell rain and thunderstorm would occur at some places with gusty winds and partly cloudy to cloudy sky likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
34°C Rain and thundershower with gusty winds and lightning activity would occur at many places. Hailstorm in pockets possible.

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COVID-19 cases continue to show upward trend in Capital

823 fresh infections reported; positivity rate above 1% for second day: bulletin

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The number of COVID-19 cases continued to show an upward trend in the Capital with 823 new cases being reported.

According to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government, 79,714 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 1.03%. This was the second day in a row that the positivity rate has been above 1%.

The bulletin added that in 24 hours, one death occurred due to the virus and 613 patients recovered. This is the highest number of cases recorded this year in the Capital, according to data by the health department.

There are currently 3,618 active cases in the city out of which 1,893 are under home



A health worker conducts a COVID-19 test at Adarsh Nagar in north Delhi. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

isolation. The total number of cases in the Capital since the beginning of the pandemic is 6,47,984 with 10,956 deaths.

Walk in to get jab

In a bid to encourage more people to get vaccinated, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Sunday that

those people eligible for the vaccine but have not registered can walk into vaccination centres between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m. and take the jab.

"Only registered beneficiaries will be given vaccine shots between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The unregistered ones can take the jabs from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m... They just need to

carry their Aadhaar card or any other valid identity proof," Mr. Jain said.

He added that arrangements were being made to increase the number of vaccination centres as well as number of people administering the vaccine at a particular site.

Aggressive testing

The Minister said that due to the recent spike in cases, the Delhi government has been conducting aggressive testing and contact tracing and authorities have been asked to take strict action against violations at markets and public places.

"The number of cases had increased during the festive season last year. So, I appeal to everyone to stay safe," Mr. Jain said.

'CM should hold meet over rising virus cases'

Widen free vaccination bracket: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Sunday said that the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the city was a cause for concern.

He appealed to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to convene an all-party meeting as well as a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) to assess the situation and make plans to tackle the surge in cases.

Fourth wave

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar alleged that the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was sweeping Delhi, as the Aam Aadmi Party government had lowered its guard when the COVID-19 positivity rate witnessed a slump.

Mr. Kumar also demand-



Ch. Anil Kumar

ed that more people should be brought under the free vaccination bracket, as the ₹50 crore earmarked in the Delhi budget for free COVID-19 jabs would cover only 5% of Delhi's population, he alleged.

"More funds should be allocated for free vaccination to all Delhites as most people are not in a position to afford vaccination on payment in private hospitals," Mr. Kumar said.

IN BRIEF

Light rain likely in Capital till tomorrow, says IMD

NEW DELHI Cloudy weather and light rain over the next two days is likely to bring the mercury down in Delhi by a few notches, the India Meteorological Department said on Sunday. The city recorded a maximum of 35.3 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal, on Sunday. PTI

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT

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सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर
हमेशा मास्क पहनें

S Social Distancing
दो गज़ की सुरक्षित दूरी
बनाएं रखें

दो गज़

हाथों को नियमित रूप से धोएं
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Man, nephew held for killing woman during robbery spree

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Two men have been arrested for allegedly killing a woman in north Delhi during a robbery attempt, the police said on Sunday.

The accused – Sameer and his nephew Faizan – were arrested from Geeta Colony on Saturday, the police said. The duo was involved in over 25 cases of robberies. On Wednesday, the duo targeted a woman near Majnu ka Tila and when she resisted, they opened fire on her. However, the bullet missed her and hit Meena, who hails from Nepal. Meena runs a snacks shop in the area. She was declared brought dead at a hospital.

Just before this, they had robbed two women of gold in Rohini Sector 7.

Mob attacks man's house over interfaith marriage

Security personnel deployed in area to maintain peace

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Security personnel have been deployed in south-east Delhi's Harjan Basti in Sarai Kale Khan after a mob allegedly attacked the house of a 22-year-old man for marrying a woman from another community, the police said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday night when around 15-20 men entered the locality and created a ruckus, they said. Four persons have been arrested in connection with the case, an officer said.

In the CCTV footage of the incident, shared on a social media platform, the mob could be seen entering the lane and breaking pots, pelting stones, damaging vehicles and banging on the doors in an attempt to break

it. Three to four people were injured in the incident.

The police said the woman's family was against their relationship.

DCP (South-East) R.P. Meena said: "The spot was visited by senior officers and it was revealed that Sumit and Khushi, both adults, of the same locality got married against the will of the woman's parents. The mob comprised woman's relatives and acquaintances."

The residents of the locality, however, alleged that they feel unsafe as the accused men are still "roaming free".

The couple got married on March 17 and a missing person report was filed by the woman's family at Sunlight Colony police station on Saturday. When the couple was called to the police station,

the woman said the wedding was conducted with her consent. Since the two were adults, they were sent back home, an officer said.

At the time of the incident, Sumit's family was not present in the locality. The couple was in Ghaziabad. Sumit's mother Rajni said the woman's family has threatened them of dire consequences.

"My son married a Muslim girl. They [woman's family] were against it. They abused us and said they will not allow us to stay here. We were called to the police station on Saturday. Khushi had even said she was happy with the marriage but after we returned from the police station, they created ruckus here. We are all scared," she added.

Over 1 lakh expected at Ghazipur on March 23'

Protesters ask more youth to join movement to mark martyrdom of Bhagat Singh

SAURABH TRivedi
NEW DELHI

A large number of protesters from Western Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, and Punjab on Sunday started gathering at the Ghazipur border ahead of the martyrdom anniversary of Shaheed Bhagat Singh on March 23.

The protesters came to the spot on vehicles that had the banners of martyrs – Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev – installed on them.



Farmers from Punjab arrive at the Ghazipur border in Delhi on Sunday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

The rally passed through various areas of both Uttarakhand and Punjab. The protesters were seen requesting more and more people to join them in their agitation against the new farm laws. Lakhveer Singh, who comes to the border from Rampur in U.P., said there will be a gathering of around one lakh protesters on March 23.

"This government is func-

tioning like East India Company and only benefiting corporate houses. Shaheed Bhagat Singh is an inspiration for every youth and teaches how to raise voice against a dumb and deaf government," he said.

Another protester Gurmeet Chaudhary said: "After the incident on January 26, many people thought that the farmers' movement will

fizzle out and we will be termed anti-India but we took control of the situation and instructed the youth not to fall into the trap of the government. We will keep fighting till our demands are met."

Women start foot march
The protesters said that to make a huge impact on the day, a similar kind of mobili-

sation have been planned at the Tikri and Singhu borders.

Kulwinder Kaur, a protester said: "A large group of women has started *padyatra* (foot march) from various cities of Punjab. Their march will culminate at Ghazipur, Tikri and Singhu borders. On March 23, we will also honour the family members of the farmers, who sacrificed their lives for the movement."

The protesters asked more youth to join them.

On Tikait's absence

After farmers' leader Rakesh Tikait, who was leading the movement at Ghazipur protest site, went to poll-bound States for campaigning, the crowd was visibly thin. The protesters leading the movement in the absence of Mr. Tikait cited hot weather and harvesting season as reasons for thin crowd.

Court refuses bail to man who killed couple in Paschim Vihar

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has refused bail to a man, who has been arrested for killing an old couple in Paschim Vihar here, after he was tipped off by the conspirator of the crime.

The court noted that Raghwender Singh alias Rinku was in constant touch with the prime accused at the time of committing the crime.

"There have been recoveries at the instance of the petitioner [Rinku]. The item recovered from his instance belonged to the deceased and this has been confirmed by their son," the court added.

It also said: "The petitioner [Rinku] is accused of a crime of double murder. The case is at initial stage, the charges are yet to be framed. The possibility of the accused fleeing from justice or from tampering evidence cannot be ruled out".

Two years ago
The case came to the fore on March 8, 2019, when a woman's body was found lying near a sewer in Sayed village, Nangloi.

Next day, another body, this time of a man, was found near the drain. The bodies were found in suitcases.

Investigation revealed that

the bodies were of Jagir Singh and Gurmeet Kaur, husband and wife. The cause of death in both cases was "asphyxia as a result of ante-mortem smothering".

The couple's children levelled allegation against their sister Davinder Kaur and her paramour Prince Dixit for the murder.

They were arrested on March 10, 2019. The police said the duo told they had hatched the conspiracy to kill the couple as they wanted the property of the victims.

The duo also said they had roped in Rinku, who committed the crime. Rinku was then arrested on March 12, 2019.

Unable to conceive, woman kills neighbour's toddler as 'sacrifice'

Tantrik from U.P. advised her to take this step, she tells police

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

A 25-year-old woman has been arrested for allegedly killing a three-year-old boy in Rohini's Budhi Vihar. The police said on Sunday. The accused has been identified as Neelam Gupta, they said.

The matter came to the fore on Saturday when the boy's parents approached the police with a missing complaint following which a search operation was launched.

During this, an officer noticed a bag on the roof of the adjacent house. When the

police opened the bag, they saw the body of the boy. He had injury marks on his neck. It was found that the toddler was strangulated, an officer said.

A murder case was then registered. During probe, family members, relatives and neighbours were questioned. It was found that the boy was last seen with Neelam, he said.

When questioned, Neelam initially tried to mislead the police but later confessed to the crime.

"She killed the toddler when he was playing alone on the roof," said Mr. Tayal. Further probe is under way, the police added.

Plea on emergency vehicle lane needs policy decision, says HC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the government to treat as representation a petition, seeking direction to reserve a lane for unrestricted movement of emergency vehicles round-the-clock.

An HC Bench said the issue raised in the petition required policy decision. "We direct the respondents to treat the petition as a representation and decide it in accordance with rules, law and policy applicable in the facts of the case," the court said.

The court's direction came while hearing a petition by Vinay Kumar seek-



ing direction to the Delhi government's Transport Department and Delhi Police to provide a dedicated reserved lane for unrestricted use of emergency services 24 hours, 7 days a week.

The petition stated that in case of emergencies, people will have the benefit of reaching the hospitals quickly if dedicated lanes are provided by the government.

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Andhra Pradesh	2004 2009 2014 2019 INC INC TDP YSRCP	Meghalaya	2008 2013 2018 INC INC INC
Arunachal Pradesh	2004 2009 2014 2019 INC INC INC BJP	Mizoram	2008 2013 2018 INC INC MNF
Assam	2006 2011 2016 INC INC BJP	Nagaland	2008 2013 2018 NPF NPF NPF
Bihar	2005 2010 2015 2020 RJD JD(U) JD(U) RJD	Odisha	2004 2009 2014 2019 BJD BJD BJD BJD
Chhattisgarh	2008 2013 2018 BJP BJP INC	Punjab	2007 2012 2017 SAD SAD INC
GOA	2007 2012 2017 INC BJP INC	Rajasthan	2008 2013 2018 INC BJP INC
Gujarat	2007 2012 2017 BJP BJP BJP	Sikkim	2004 2009 2014 2019 SDF SDF SDF SKM
Haryana	2005 2009 2014 2019 INC INC BJP BJP	Tamil Nadu	2006 2011 2016 DMK AIADMK AIADMK
Himachal Pradesh	2007 2012 2017 BJP INC BJP	Telangana	2014 2018 TRS TRS
Jammu & Kashmir	2008 2014 JKNC JKPDP	Tripura	2008 2013 2018 CPI (M) CPI (M) BJP
Jharkhand	2005 2009 2014 2019 BJP BJP & JMM	Uttarakhand	2007 2012 2017 BJP INC BJP
Karnataka	2004 2008 2013 2018 BJP BJP INC BJP	Uttar Pradesh	2007 2012 2017 BSP SP BJP
Kerala	2006 2011 2016 CPI(M) CPI(M) CPI(M)	West Bengal	2006 2011 2016 CPI (M) AITC AITC
Madhya Pradesh	2008 2013 2018 BJP BJP INC	NCT Delhi	2008 2013 2015 2020 INC BJP AAP AAP
Maharashtra	2004 2009 2014 2019 NCP INC BJP BJP	Puducherry	2006 2011 2016 INC AINRC INC
		Manipur	2007 2012 2017 INC INC INC

PARTY WITH MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SEATS IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS*

	2004	2009	2014	2019
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2nd Max. Seats	BJP 138	BJP 116	INC 44	INC 52

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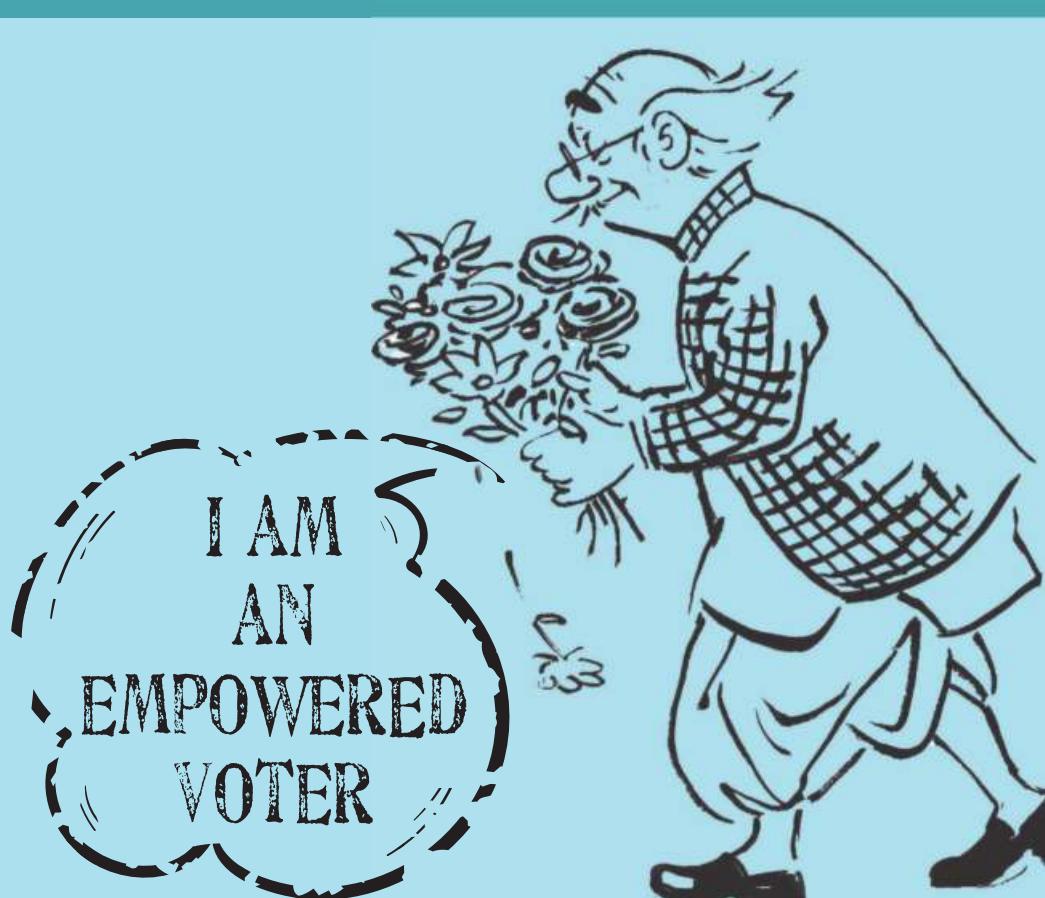
(used EVMs since 2004)

98 Crore Voters

21 Assembly
Elections

1 Loksabha
Election

(used EVMs & VVPATs since December 2017)



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ASSEMBLY POLLS

DELI THE HINDU | MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021

BJP banks on neighbourhood namghars in Assam

Annual grant of ₹2.5 lakh per community prayer hall initiated by Sonowal govt. could be a masterstroke in terms of votes

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

Mandate 2021 has made the 'namghar', a common feature across Assamese villages and urban localities, quite special.

Five centuries ago, saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva and his disciples introduced the namghars as a place of congregation for local-level spiritual, cultural and educational events. Over time, the ubiquitous structures yielded space for political discussions.

A grant appears to have made these namghars more electorally relevant than ever before. The importance of the grant was not lost when the BJP-led coalition government released ₹2.5 lakh each to 8,756 namghars in August 2020 along with ₹10 lakh

each to 377 temples, mosques and churches.

The State's Cultural Affairs Department had estimated about 1.10 lakh standalone neighbourhood namghars – structures built by communities or villages and not within a satras or Vaishnav monastery.

'Overestimation'

"Going by the number of Hindu villages – and not all of them sport a namghar – this seems to be an overestimation. A more realistic estimation may be 40,000," said Pulin Deka, who wrote a book on the namghar institution.

The Congress government had also "overestimated" the number of satras – they have considerable influence among adherents of Eksara-



A basic village namghar. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

na sect of Hinduism specific to Assam – for grants. The BJP-led government went beyond the satras to splurge on the standalone namghars.

"When you look at the number of voters associated

with a beneficiary namghar, the move could be a mathematical masterstroke," said Sandhya Goswami, retired professor of political science at Gauhati University.

An average of 70 households are associated with a

namghar. The community ownership of some namghars range from 150 to 400 families.

A village or urban locality manages its namghar. Some are run by organisations such as Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha, headquartered in central Assam's Nagaon.

'Hope it's made annual'

"We have more than 6,000 units but about 5,000 of them have namghars. Most of our namghars have received the grant, which we hope will cover all the namghars and be made annual if the BJP returns to power," the Sangha's secretary general Babul Bora told *The Hindu*.

"People are happy that Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma responded to our

proposal and provided the grant. We cannot but be grateful on the day of election," he added.

Urban areas not left out

Many of the namghars that have received the grant are in the rural areas. The urban pockets cultivated by the BJP have been on the government's radar too.

"We have received the allotment letter against which we submitted the estimate. We hope to get the grant after the elections," said Bhaskar Goswami of Guwahati's Silpkuri Rajahwua Namghar.

"Money for the namghars could translate into votes. But we are not sure if such a strategy in the name of religion can be sustained," Ms. Goswami said.

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Thunderstorm with lightning, hail and gusty winds (speeds reaching 40-50 kmph) very likely at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh and Punjab

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	36.4...	20.8	Kozhikode	3.3...	34.4...	26.3
Ahmedabad	—	38.8...	21.2	Kurnool	—	37.6...	22.6
Aizawl	—	28.8...	12.8	Lucknow	—	35.7...	17.9
Allahabad	—	37.0...	19.6	Madurai	—	37.5...	24.7
Bengaluru	—	34.0...	19.7	Mangaluru	—	36.0...	20.5
Bhopal	—	35.0...	18.6	Mumbai	—	32.2...	23.5
Bhubaneswar	—	40.0...	23.2	Mysuru	—	34.0...	18.0
Chandigarh	—	32.4...	18.6	New Delhi	—	35.2...	16.2
Chennai	—	34.6...	23.8	Patna	—	36.0...	20.4
Coimbatore	—	36.4...	23.2	Port Blair	—	31.6...	24.4
Dehradun	—	31.1...	15.5	Puducherry	—	33.2...	23.6
Gangtok	—	20.8...	11.9	Pune	—	34.9...	20.3
Goa	—	32.8...	24.2	Raipur	—	35.7...	21.8
Guwahati	—	35.5...	18.9	Ranchi	4...	34.0...	18.7
Hubballi	—	34.0...	21.0	Shillong	—	26.1...	14.0
Hyderabad	—	35.0...	22.2	Shimla	—	23.2...	13.0
Imphal	—	32.2...	16.6	Srinagar	0.2...	19.9...	6.2
Jaipur	—	36.2...	20.6	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.0...	25.0
Kochi	—	32.4...	25.0	Tiruchi	—	37.2...	25.0
Kohima	—	24.8...	12.0	Vijayawada	—	37.2...	23.4
Kolkata	—	36.8...	25.3	Visakhapatnam	—	34.0...	26.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE	
Ahmedabad	85	112	46	243	322	■■■	In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Siliguri, West Bengal recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 340 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In
Bengaluru	10	15	29	112	—	■■■	340, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 38
Chennai	.8	18	56	.77	.82	■■■	
Delhi	47	77	55	302	352	■■■	
Hyderabad	.4	102	41	—	134	■■■	
Kolkata	27	22	43	286	199	■■■	
Lucknow	25	61	43	267	200	■■■	
Mumbai	21	68	50	305	246	■■■	
Pune	.6	85	63	191	.129	■■■	
Visakhapatnam	10	58	37	122	.126	■■■	

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

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

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

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

Assam BJP candidate tests COVID-19 positive

She got infected for the second time

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT GUWAHATI

BJP candidate Ajanta Neog has tested positive for COVID-19 a week ahead of the first phase of polling in Assam on March 27. She has been infected for the second time in seven months.

A former Minister, Ms. Neog is seeking to retain eastern Assam's Golaghat Assembly seat that she had won four times since 2001 as a Congress candidate. She switched over to the BJP in December.

Ms. Neog, home quarantined, had been campaigning extensively for the past few days. Local party lead-

ers did not rule out the possibility of some of her supporters carrying the virus.

The former Minister had tested positive in August and underwent treatment at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).

She is the second BJP leader after MP Topon Kumar Gogoi to test positive for the second time.

Mr. Gogoi got himself tested at a screening centre at Sonari in eastern Assam during the thick of campaigning. His report came out positive. He had tested positive almost a year ago and was administered plasma at the GMCH.

NORTH

Centre punishing Delhi govt. for supporting farmers' stir: Kejriwal

AAP national convener accuses Punjab Chief Minister of not fulfilling poll promises

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Addressing a kisan mahapanchayat in Moga in Punjab on Sunday, Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal said the Central government was punishing the Delhi government for supporting the farmers in their agitation against the three new agricultural laws but AAP was strongly against the laws.

"I have been a part of this movement since the beginning and refused to sign the documents to convert the stadiums into jails where the agitating farmers would be held. Due to this, the Narendra Modi government is causing us great inconvenience," said Mr. Kejriwal.

He added that the Centre had brought a Bill last week



AAP convener and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal during a rally at Baghupura in Moga district on Sunday. • PTI

in the Parliament which takes away the powers from the elected government and puts it in the hands of the Lieutenant-Governor.

He assured the farmers that as long as he was the Chief Minister, he would not let the Central Government take any unruly action against those protesting in Delhi and that his government, along with the farm-

ers, would overcome all obstacles that are being created for them.

Making an electoral pitch for the Punjab Assembly election scheduled to be held next year, Mr. Kejriwal said four years ago Chief Minister Amrinder Singh also made many promises to the people and farmers of the State but all his promises have remained unfulfilled.

Mr. Kejriwal also promised to provide employment to all 20 lakh youths in Punjab who were issued unemployment cards by the State government in the name of votes. He also said that AAP will give unemployment allowances to the people till the time they get jobs and requested them not to throw the card away since it will make them realise how they have been deceived by a party in the name of votes.

Dushyant assures farmers on mandis, MSP Mandis are the backbone of State procurement system, says Haryana Deputy CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT FARIDABAD

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Sunday said neither would the mandis be closed in Haryana nor the procurement system on Minimum Support Price be scrapped. He added that mandis were the backbone of the crop procurement system.

Mr. Chautala was addressing a gathering during "Holi Milan" programme at Nariala here.

In view of the ongoing farmers' agitation and the boycott of ruling coalition leaders in many parts of the State, the district administration had appointed six duty magistrates to maintain law and order during the programme.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister claimed that during the wheat season last year, every single grain was procured in

the State. Earlier, the farmers' payment was deposited in the account of the *arthiyas* (commission agents), but direct payment was made to 23% farmers in the wheat season and 67% farmers in the paddy season last year. This time 78% farmers have uploaded their account details.

He said this time the payment will be deposited directly to the accounts of the farmers within 48 hours after they submit Form-J.

Procurement centres

Mr. Chautala said some people were spreading rumours that mandis would be shut down, but mandis were the backbone of the State government's procurement process. He said that there were 450 procurement centres in Haryana and in view of COVID-19 last year, the number was increased to 1,800. Considering the con-

venience of the farmers, procurement centres were set up close to their homes.

He said the State government was fully committed to providing all kinds of facilities to the farmers and if required, the crop can be directly procured from the farmers' fields as well.

Talking about the development of roads in the State, Mr. Chautala said that under the Gramin Sadak Yojana, ₹2,000 crore was spent and roads connecting most of the mandis were built. He said that

Focus on the teachers

Developing educators' skills is more important now than ever before as modes of teaching continue to undergo a massive transformation in the wake of the pandemic

■ DEEPA LI DHARMARAJ & AMY LIGHTFOOT

The effectiveness of learning and teaching has long been measured by focusing primarily on the results of standardised tests. In this light, new methodologies, curriculum and delivery mechanisms are all tailored to improve learner outcomes. This has been further exacerbated by the pandemic as online learning has become the preferred mode of teaching. Focusing on learner outcomes is important but can education systems be truly successful unless those delivering the education are fully equipped themselves? Developing teachers' skills is arguably of more importance now than ever before as modes of teaching continue to undergo a massive transformation in the post-COVID 19 era.

Developing technological skills

A well-known adage in the education world is that technology cannot replace a teacher but a teacher who uses technology will replace one who does not. Nevertheless, the pandemic has shown us that teachers, with or without

technology, cannot be replaced. In an online research study titled "Survey of teacher and teacher educator needs during the COVID-19 pandemic", where more than 9,600 teachers and teacher educators from over 150 countries responded, 59% said they were teaching remotely, using online tools to teach in real time. However, the assumption that digital skills and the use of technology are common among teachers is wrong. Technology is by no means standardised and integration of gadgets and technology into the delivery mechanism varies enormously. Social media is rife with images of teachers using household equipment like clothes hangers to hold up phones and record videos

Teachers must adapt teaching materials to enable issues to be investigated from a wide variety of perspectives: locally, nationally and internationally.

while others share the latest and most slick online tools to keep their students motivated and engaged. This shows that teachers need significant support, development and standardisation in order to deliver remote teaching and learning effectively.

Building collaborative classrooms

In the survey, 83% of teachers agreed they needed some or a lot of help with aspects such as

how to use the available tools to be more inclusive, deliver live training sessions and give feedback sensitively. However, technological skills are not the only skills that teachers want to develop. Building a collaborative classroom dynamic with creativity, motivation and engagement is equally important. For this to happen, teachers require training in empathy, emotional intelligence, and leadership. Continuing professional development is necessary to innovate and engage creatively with their students. Power structures impacting teachers need to be disassembled and a participatory approach established where teachers are given more agency. This will allow them to be creative and have the freedom to interpret

the syllabus and take more ownership of their professional development, according to their specific needs.

A global perspective

Currently, schools carry various tags – local, regional, national, international, government, private etc. – each with its own learning remit. While local contextualisation is important, issues discussed in the classroom must also have a global perspective. Teachers must adapt teaching materials to enable issues to be investigated from a wide variety of perspectives: locally, nationally and internationally. Their expertise must be developed to present a bigger picture to their students,

preparing them to be part of a global workforce in an ever-shrinking digital world.

Presently, the Indian school education tends to narrow down to subjects relevant to central and state board education where results determine college admissions. Further, the school curriculum fails to align closely with policy on higher education in relation to internationalisation. Teachers play a crucial role in this alignment through curriculum building.

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights institution-led internationalisation. Teachers in India's higher education institutes are already deliberating the scope in this regard, but are not fully equipped to realise the full potential of internationalisation of Indian education. In the coming years, the overhaul of Indian education largely depends on the support provided to teachers and the initiatives they take. Optimum technological and non-technological teacher training on subject expertise, student assessment and curriculum development will ensure that the vision laid down under the NEP 2020 is met. However, at the start of this lies the monumental task of training teachers as leaders and thinkers who can transform this sector from within.

To borrow a simple fact from engineering: the better the conductor, the greater the flow. Therefore, a focus on the development of teachers will eventually benefit the ecosystem: institutions, learners and the nation at large.

Deepali Dharmaraj is the Assistant Director Academic – English, British Council India, and Amy Lightfoot is the Regional Education and English Academic Lead – South Asia, British Council



GETTY IMAGES/STOCK PHOTO

PERSPECTIVE

Made for the masses

Technology has made it possible for higher education to be made accessible to a larger and diverse population

■ R.W. ALEXANDER JESUDASAN

While higher education of the masses has been in vogue since the early 18th century, it was formally implemented in the mid-19th century by the University of London. From the 1960s, the trend began to be adopted in India (Kundu, 2014). Today, this venture has been taken over by two modes: the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online Learning (OL). What do these modes entail?

Suitability: ODL and OL target learners like homemakers who would like to continue their studies, students who do not have access to Higher Education Institutes (HIEs) and those in the workforce who want to upskill or update themselves.

Paperless mode: Both ODL and OL currently require being plugged in to Learning Management Systems (LMS), which depend on the institution's needs. For example, accessing video lectures either synchronously or asynchronously, sharing lecture notes, assignment submission, webinars, evaluation and assessment and maintenance of records can all be done digitally.

Adaptability: With no restrictions on age, location, qualification or other parameters,

eters, these modes are flexible, allowing the students to attend the counselling/contact programmes, according to their comfort. Not only are these methods cost-effective but also allow multiple access to content and enable students to immerse themselves in the lessons without external disturbances.

Challenges
However a few things need to be fixed. Some students may lack exposure to such technological tools and will require training. Second, appropriate infrastructure to enable access to the right tools needs to be developed. Third, it may not be possible to offer subjects that involve practical training through these modes.

With the pandemic yet to abate, there is uncertainty around the reopening of educational institutions. Perhaps, this is a time to look at allocating a part of the syllabus for online delivery, given that the NEP 2020 also encourages institutions to offer UG and PG programmes through both ODL and OL modes.

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Engineering sans Maths and Physics

What bearing will AICTE's latest relaxation on technical education?

■ P.V.NAVANEETHAKRISHNAN

Some time ago, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) made Chemistry non-mandatory in the higher secondary course (HSC) for engineering aspirants. Now, in its Approval Process Handbook 2021, Maths and Physics have also been declared non-essential for BE/BTech candidates and candidates can have studied any three of the 14 subjects: Physics, Maths, Chemistry, Computer Science, Electronics, IT, Biology, Informatics Practices, Biotechnology, Technical Vocational Subject, Agriculture, Engineering Graphics, Business Studies and Entrepreneurship.

Universities are expected to offer suitable bridge courses such as Maths, Physics and Engineering Graphics. Subsequently, in a press conference, the AICTE chairman clarified that the change was only a relaxation, and that institutions and universities decide what they wanted to do.

The proponents of this change seem to have taken refuge in the 'flexibility' that the National Education Policy 2020 advocates. However, experts believe flexibility should also have limits.

Can this change be extended to say that Biology need not be studied in HSC to do health science

programmes such as Medicine and Dentistry and that 'suitable bridge courses' can be offered for them too?

Additional requirements

There are students who have gone through HSC with a full dose of MPC but failed in one or more of these subjects in college. Then, how will a bridge course serve the purpose? Further, will colleges be able to take up this burden, which will require with more man power, expenses, and infrastructure in addition to their normal work?

If Maths, Physics and Chemistry are no more required for admission in engineering, why are competitive exams like the JEE (Main) and JEE(Advanced) conducted with these subjects?

Perhaps, no changes will be done in the exam pattern. Then, a large chunk of engineering aspirants will be denied admission in nationally important institutions such as the IITs and NITs.

When Anna University introduced biology-based courses such as Industrial Biotechnology, Bio-medical Engineering and Bioinfor-

matics, it allowed candidates who had done Biology and not Maths in HSC to join. However, after observing that they could not cope, it had to include Maths for all branches of engineering.

Interestingly, for the B.Arch programme, for which AICTE's approval is not required, Maths, Physics and Chemistry are mandatory at the HSC level, as per the gazette notification dated August 11, 2020, issued on behalf of the Council of Architecture.

Technical subjects are analytical in nature, and Maths is the best tool to master them. Emerging technologies such as AI, Machine Learning, Data Science and Deep Learning involve much statistical knowledge. Most research in Engineering utilises advanced mathematical techniques. Subjects such as forecasting, reliability, solid/fluid dynamics and the like integrate Maths with seemingly unrelated subjects such as Economics, Management and Medicine.

Thus the relaxation proposed by AICTE is viewed by many academicians and technologists as a retrograde step that may result in further deterioration of the standard of technical education.

The writer is Former Professor and Director, Entrance Exams and Admission, Anna University, Chennai

SAVE THE DATE

Fashion and Design Admissions

JD Institute of Fashion Technology has commenced registration for the academic year 2021-22 for its Undergraduate, Post-graduate and Diploma programmes.

ELIGIBILITY: For Undergraduate and Diploma programmes, students can seek admissions on the basis of their Class 12 results from a recognised board. For Master's programmes, students should have completed their graduation from a recognised university. There are no entrance exams and admission is based on merit.

DEADLINE: May 31
<https://bit.ly/30URKro>

B.Tech Admissions

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham has opened admissions for its B.Tech. programmes in Robotics and Automation, Internet of Things (IoT), Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence, Aerospace Technology and more.

ELIGIBILITY: Students have to take the Amrita Engineering Entrance Examination (AEEE), or Remote Proctored Examination (CBT or RPE) or JEE Mains 2021 or SAT or Pearson UG Entrance Examination Score (PUEE). The eligibility is Class 12 or equivalent from a recognised board with not less than 55% in Physics, Chemistry & Mathematics separately, and an aggregate minimum of 60% in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics.
<https://bit.ly/3vAMwyF>

PhD Admissions

Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi (IIIT-Delhi) invites applications for Ph.D. programmes in Computational Biology (CB), Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), Electronics and Communications Engineering

(ECE), Human-Centred Design (HCD), Mathematics (Maths), and Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

DEADLINE: April 4
<https://bit.ly/30URKro>

Sanskriti University Admission Open

Sanskriti University, Mathura, invites online applications for its diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate programmes in Engineering, Management & Commerce, Education, Special Education, Humanities & Social Sciences, Pharmacy, Agriculture, Fashion Designing, Law and Legal Studies, Yoga and Naturopathy, Tourism & Hotel Management, Medical & Allied Sciences, Basic & Applied Sciences, Ayurveda, Unani, and Nursing courses.

ELIGIBILITY: Applicants who have passed or will appear for the higher secondary (10+2) from any recognised Board. For diploma programmes, students are required to have passed the Class X examination from any state or central board.

DEADLINE: June 30
<https://bit.ly/3bWiWfa>

International Summer Programme

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU), Israel, invites applications for the second online edition of its one-month Global Health International Summer Programme, about various aspects of global health decision making, such as globalisation, ethics, migration, and case studies.

ELIGIBILITY: Students in their third year (or higher) of Bachelor's degree, or pursuing their Master's degree or Ph.D. in the fields of Health Sciences or Social Sciences and health professionals with interest in Public Policy and Health Economics. English proficiency required.

DEADLINE: April 20
<https://bit.ly/3tALLEe>



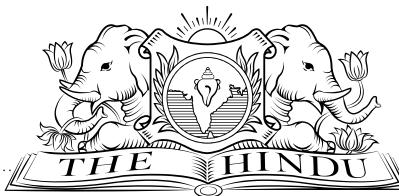
A.M. FAROUQI

Technical subjects are analytical in nature, and Math is the best tool to master them

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROPAR
 Rupnagar, Punjab – 140001 (INDIA)

PhD Admissions – August 2021 | Times Ranking 2020: 2nd in India

Online applications are invited for the admission to PhD programmes in various disciplines for the 1st semester of academic year 2021-22. The details of the programmes are available on the institute website <http://www.iitrpr.ac.in/admissions>. Last date for receiving the online application form is 12.04.2021. Registrars



Junk inefficiency

Scrapage policy can work if incentives are confined to fuel-efficient vehicle replacements

The much-awaited vehicle scrappage policy announced by the Transport Ministry, coming after the move for a green tax on ageing and polluting automobiles, promises economic benefits, a cleaner environment and thousands of jobs. Although it will take until April 1, 2022 for vehicles belonging to the government and the public sector to be scrapped, another year thereafter to identify junk heavy commercial vehicles through mandatory fitness checks, and finally other vehicles by 2024, it is a constructive road map. It will be no easy task, however, to put in place a credible system of automated fitness checking centres with help from States to assess whether commercial and private vehicles are roadworthy after 15 and 20 years, respectively, as the policy envisages. Equally important, enforcement will be key to get them scrapped once they are found unfit for use and to stop them from moving to smaller towns. States must also come on board to provide road tax and registration concessions, while the automobile industry is expected to sweeten the deal with genuine discounts on new vehicles. Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, who has had limited success with enforcement of the amended Motor Vehicles Act of 2019 because States are not entirely on board, has the difficult task of ensuring that the scrappage plan gets their support, and the backing of manufacturers who stand to benefit from a spurt in demand. Heavy commercial vehicles, which contribute disproportionately to pollution – 1.7 million lack fitness certificates – pose the biggest challenge. Many of these cannot be replaced quickly in the absence of financial arrangements for small operators, who have opposed the new measures.

Vehicle scrappage and replacement is seen internationally as a route to rejuvenate COVID-19-affected economies by privileging green technologies, notably electric vehicles (EVs), and also as an initiative to achieve net zero emissions by mid-century under Paris Agreement commitments. India's automobile ecosystem is complex, with dominant, legacy motors spanning fossil-fuel driven vehicles and a nascent EV segment. The industry's share pre-COVID-19 was about 7.5% of GDP with significant downstream employment, but it also imposes a fuel import burden. The Centre has to arrive at a balance and have incentives that reward manufacturers of vehicles that are the most fuel-efficient. Failure to prioritise fuel efficiency and mandate even higher standards and enhance taxes on fuel guzzlers will only repeat the mistakes of vehicle exchange programmes abroad, where full environmental benefits could not be realised, and taxpayers ended up subsidising inefficiency. Ecological scrapping, as a concept, must lead to high rates of materials recovery, reduce air pollution, mining and pressure on the environment.

Rising poverty

With the spurt in COVID-19 cases, the nascent economic recovery is under threat

A new study by the Pew Research Center estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately deleterious impact on living standards in India and China in 2020, with the sharp economic contraction in the former pushing as many as 7.5 crore people into the ranks of the poor (those who earn \$2 or less a day). In contrast, the figure is about 10 lakh in China, whose economy slowed but continued to post growth. In absolute terms, the number of poor in India is poised to have swelled to 13.4 crore, reversing the gains made in the preceding nine years when the country cut the number of poor by more than three-fourths to an estimated 7.8 crore in 2019. In China, the population of the poor likely inched up to 40 lakh, matching the 2019 level. Similarly, the numbers of India's middle class – those with a daily income of \$10.01-\$20 – are projected to have shrunk by 3.2 crore to about 6.6 crore, compared with the number this income cohort would have reached absent the pandemic. Here again, China likely experienced just one-third the level of contraction, with the population of those deemed as middle income set to have narrowed to 49.3 crore compared with the pre-pandemic projection of 50.4 crore.

The Pew assessment, which is based on an analysis of the World Bank's PovcalNet database, does, however, acknowledge the multiple assumptions that inform the study. These include varying base years for income/consumption figures – with India's from 2011 and 2016 for China. Still, the study serves as a stark reminder of the economic disparities, both within India and at a comparative level with its northern neighbour. The latest report once again spotlights the widening inequality in India, exacerbated by the pandemic, as the lower income populations have disproportionately borne the brunt of job and income losses in the wake of the multiple lockdowns. The fiscal policy response to redress this massive increase in precarity has also been overwhelming, especially when viewed from the perspective of the pre-pandemic tax cuts that the government handed to corporates in an attempt to revive private investment and rekindle growth. That the National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme has been seeing record levels of demand is testimony to the struggles those in the rural hinterland have been facing in finding gainful employment since the onset of the pandemic. With the number of COVID-19 cases once again rising disconcertingly across the country, there is a clear and present danger that not only could any nascent economic recovery be stymied even before it gains traction but that the number of those sliding into poverty could jump dramatically. The policy responses to the rising wave of infections could well test the government's 'lives versus livelihoods' playbook to the hilt.

The ground report in the Assam duel

The Congress-led alliance faces the ruling BJP and allies and an idea of nationalism subsuming distinctive identities



SUSHANTA TALUKDAR

In the 2016 Assam Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s promise to implement the Assam Accord in letter and spirit helped it win the overwhelming support of a vast section of Assamese voters and enabled it to capture power at Dispur. In this election, (in three phases on March 27, April 1, April 6), the saffron party is looking at Assam as the springboard to further its political machinations of making sub-national aspirations for distinctive linguistic and cultural identities submissive to the idea of nationalism based on its core Hindutva agenda.

A multi-point narrative

The election planks of unemployment, price rise of essential commodities and wages of tea garden workers laid by the Congress-led Mahajot (Grand Alliance) have prevented the dominant electoral discourse from being centred around a single polarising narrative. This is notwithstanding opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 being the cementing factor behind the formation of the grand Opposition alliance and also one of the common major election planks. The ruling alliance has also made development an election plank to counter the Opposition campaign.

The Congress-led Mahajot, of 10 parties, has the three Left parties – the CPI(M), the CPI and the CPI-ML – the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), the Anchalik Gana Morcha (AGM), the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), and now the Jimochayan (Deori) People's Party (JDPP) and the Adivasi National Party (ANP).

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) have projected Maulana Badruddin Ajmal and the AIUDF led by him as "protectors of Bangla-

deshi infiltrators" in a bid to polarise the electoral narrative. The ruling alliance has also been trying to project the Opposition Grand Alliance as the mere 'Congress-AIUDF alliance' to suit its narrative. The BPF won 12 seats in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and was, till recently, a constituent of the BJP-led coalition government headed by Sarbananda Sonowal. The BTR – being an autonomous region under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule – is excluded from the purview of the CAA. The BJP has dropped the BPF and chosen the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) as its new ally in the BTR. The BJP and the UPPL share power in the Bodoland Territorial Council which governs the BTR.

In its quest to return to power in this election, the Congress hopes that its guarantee to pay daily wages of ₹365 to tea garden workers will help it regain some of its lost support base among garden workers and also turn the tide against the BJP which made a poll promise in 2016 (in its Vision Document) of increasing this amount to ₹351. Tea garden workers play a crucial role in about 25 of the total 126 seats; the BJP has made inroads in this region and consolidating itself here which has eroded the Congress's base.

Issue of migrants

The BJP does not hide its ideological intentions in the language it is using in the run-up to the election. When it says "infiltrator", it is referring to Muslim migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and present Bangladesh; when it says "refugee", it is referring to Hindu and other non-Muslim migrants from the same geographical landmass without any cut-off date.

The core clause of the Assam Accord does not distinguish "illegal migrants" on basis of religion and stipulates March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date for detection, deletion of names from the voters' list and expulsion of all migrants from Bangladesh who entered the State without valid travel documents after this date.

This secular fundamental of the Assam Accord incorporated in the citizenship laws poses a stumbling



block to the Hindutva dream of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar. Assamese and other language speakers are apprehensive of Bengali-speaking "illegal migrants" from Bangladesh posing an existential threat to them. This explains the resistance to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 in the State and why the BJP is wary of seeking votes on the CAA in Assam, especially in districts with an overwhelming population of Assamese and other ethnic communities.

The AGP (which was formed at the culmination of the Assam Movement after the signing of the accord) choosing to ignore the manipulation of the cut-off date to determine Indian citizenship through the enactment of the CAA in the accord and continuing the electoral alliance with the BJP, is reflective of a core constituency of Assamese voters at the crossroads of the two binaries of the Hindu-Muslim and the Assamese-Bengali when it comes to distinguishing an infiltrator from a refugee.

Path of subnationalism

The formation of two new regional parties, the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Rajor Dal, born out of the vigorous anti-CAA movement, has put Assamese sub-nationalism on a new trajectory which may not remain limited to electoral ambitions alone.

The AJP has been formed under the aegis of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) which strongly defend the secular character of the Assam Accord and oppose the CAA. Both the AASU and the AJYCP backed the BJP, the AGP, and their allies in 2016 to bring an end to 15 years of

Congress rule but are subsequently mobilising people against the CAA. The AJP is led by former AA-SU General Secretary Lurinjyoti Gogoi.

The Rajor Dal, led by jailed peasants' leader Akhil Gogoi, has been floated by the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) and allied organisations, which have been at the forefront of a parallel stream of anti-CAA movement. Mr. Gogoi was arrested in December 2019 during the anti-CAA movement, jailed and later handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in an old case of 2009 of an alleged Maoist link.

The two parties forged an electoral alliance and rejected an appeal by the Congress and other Mahajot constituents to join the grand alliance alleging that it has a "communal" AIUDF. The AJP and the Rajor Dal have also failed to reach a consensus on the proposal of Mr. Gogoi to push for all Opposition parties (it includes them) to field a common candidate to defeat the BJP and its allies. The AJP is firm on its position of opposing the national parties as well as defeating and resisting a "communal" BJP and AIUDF.

This has resulted in the possibilities of the anti-CAA votes being split to the advantage of the ruling alliance. However, its election prospects could be affected in some constituencies if there are three cornered contests and rebel candidates of the ruling alliance.

The BJP has refrained from making the CAA an issue in the first phase of polling for 47 seats in the Brahmaputra valley. The BJP-AGP combine won 35 of these seats that catapulted the saffron party to power and helped install the first BJP-led government in the State in 2016. The Congress won nine and the AIUDF won two seats. For the ruling coalition, increasing or retaining its tally in the first phase is key to its retaining power. The split in votes among the constituents of the Mahajot has helped the ruling alliance win many seats in the 2016 Assembly elections and increase its tally in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Setting the narrative around Maulana Badruddin Ajmal and the

AIUDF is easier for the BJP and the AGP as it was floated to protest the scrapping of the erstwhile Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act, 1983 by the Supreme Court in 2005. The spectacular success of the AIUDF in electoral politics and the expansion of its support base among a section of Muslim voters of erstwhile East Bengal origin did not spell an opportunity for it in getting a share of the power pie as former Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi resisted it in his three consecutive tenures. Gogoi's "who is Badruddin?" poll rhetoric was targeted to woo Assamese and indigenous voters.

The BJP harps on the narrative that it is population growth among Muslim migrants of erstwhile East Bengal and East Pakistan origin and Muslim Bangladeshi migrants within the State – and not post-Partition Hindu-refugees who came to the State till December 2014 – that poses the greater demographic threat to Assamese Hindus and other indigenous communities.

The BJP has dubbed this election as "a conflict of two civilisations" – civilisation represented by 35% population and the civilisation represented by the rest 65% population to strengthen the religion binary. (According to Census 2011, Muslims account for 34.22%, while Hindus and other religions account for the rest of the population in Assam.)

The BJP has reiterated its promise to protect *jati* (nationality), *mati* (land), *bheti* (foundation) of the Assamese and other ethnic communities. The electoral narrative around the AIUDF and Maulana Badruddin Ajmal has been pushed to shape the perception that instead of language, religion should be the basis of identities of the majority Assamese and other ethnic nationalities.

Sushanta Talukdar is the Editor, nezine.com, a bilingual online magazine on the Northeast

Doubling down on a resilient India

For leading companies with global ambitions, the rewards of investing in this complex country are worth pursuing



NIRAV PATEL &
ANAND RAGHURAMAN

Asia watchers observing China are, above all, missing the real economic shift at play – that this is India's economic decade. Despite CEOs and investors alike having faced years, if not decades, of false starts in the sub-continent, it is undeniable that almost every major global company is either contemplating or operating on the assumption that India is a key part of their growth story.

FDI inflows

Google, Facebook, Walmart, Samsung, Foxconn, and Silver Lake have been just a handful of the firms that made big ticket bets on India in 2020. As a result, even as India experienced one of the world's sharpest economic contractions, it also saw the fastest growth in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows among all the major economies last year. India's ₹60 billion-plus tally for new annual FDI equity inflows was its largest-ever haul and a milestone in the agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in its second term.

Four core dynamics drive this calculus and explain why multina-

tional companies such as a leading destination for FDI might strike some observers as an unexpected outcome. It is certainly one that deserves parsing.

Indeed, a significant share of India's FDI inflows arose from foreign investments directed solely at Reliance Jio. Meanwhile, India's latest FDI totals still lags behind the highest tallies in other markets such as China and Brazil.

Adapting to the Indian market

Three decades after its economy was liberalised, India remains a complex and challenging place to do business. Frequent shifts in the policy landscape and persistent market access barriers are standard complaints levied against India by the business community. Meanwhile, the Modi government's push to build a "self-reliant" India has also rattled skittish investors and smaller companies that lack the resources to navigate on-the-ground hurdles.

Still, leading corporate investors see the Indian market differently. They recognise that doing business in India – or any emerging market for that matter – comes with inherent risks but that adaptation in approach is critical to success. Most importantly, they have the vision to understand that these are risks worth taking given the scale of the India Opportunity.

Four core dynamics drive this calculus and explain why multina-



tional companies are making India an essential part of their growth story.

First, sheer demographics. What India offers through its nearly 1.4 billion people and their growing purchasing power is uniquely valuable for multinationals with global ambitions. No other country outside of China has a market that houses nearly one in six people on the planet and a rising middle class of 600 million. Failure to compete for a share of Indians' wallets is not just a missed strategic opportunity; it's borderline malpractice at the boardroom level.

Second, shifting geopolitics. Rising U.S.-China competition is redefining the global landscape for investment and manufacturing, forcing multinationals to rethink their footprints and production hubs. Savvy countries such as Vietnam have capitalised on this opportunity to great effect, but India is finally getting serious about attracting large-scale production and exports. Major multinational

companies such as Samsung have invested billions in the Indian market, and manufacturers such as Cisco, Nokia, Ericsson, and Flex are reportedly weighing new investments that take advantage of fresh incentive programs.

Third, rising digital connectivity. Cheap mobile data have powered a revolution across India's digital economy and connected an estimated 700 million Indians to the Internet. As Mr. Modi has said, more than 500 million Indians still remain offline, and the rise of these 'next gen netizens' is a key reason why leading global tech companies are investing in India and weathering acute policy pressure. Domestic Indian companies have also demonstrated their ability to innovate and deliver high quality services at scale. The partnerships and FDI flows linking multinationals and Indian tech firms will continue to unlock shared market opportunities for years to come.

Fourth, national resilience. Despite facing the scourge of the novel coronavirus head on, India has managed the pandemic better than many of its western peers and restored economic activity even before implementing a mass vaccination programme. These are remarkable developments, and yet they speak to India's underlying resilience even in the face of historic challenges. This ethos will serve India well as it navigates

the complex challenges of the 21st century, and global investors are clearly taking note.

Value creation

Of course, unlocking opportunities in the Indian market cannot take the form of a one-way wealth transfer, and companies should not expect a warm welcome without continuously demonstrating their commitment to India. Successful companies do this by placing shared value creation at the heart of their business strategy. They tie corporate success to India's growth and development. They forge enduring partnerships and lasting relationships, elevate and invest in Indian talent, align products with Indian tastes, and ultimately tackle the hardest problems facing India today.

Charting a path forward in this dynamic growing market will require corporate executives to make new commitments and navigate choppy waters. But for leading companies with global ambitions and a willingness to make big bets, the rewards of investing in the Indian market are substantial and well worth pursuing.

Nirav Patel is CEO and Co-Founder of The Asia Group, a leading firm specialising in providing comprehensive market entry strategies for global businesses in the Indo-Pacific region. Anand Raghuraman is Vice President of the India Practice at The Asia Group

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no pre-existing conditions) are being vaccinated in hospitals in and around Chennai. Social media has such people posting their vaccination photos with messages such as "We got it through our influence" or "This hospital belongs to a family friend. So got it as a favour from them", and so on. Of course, this means more numbers of people are getting vaccinated. But why are the government's orders being flouted?

**MADHAV G.,
Chennai**

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.

Islands in peril
The NITI Aayog vision for 'development' in the Greater Nicobar Islands is against all norms that govern the protection of one of the best tropical rainforest regions in the world ('Special', Page 1, "NITI Aayog vision for Great Nicobar ignores tribal, ecological concerns", March 21). A case in point is Brazil's Amazon rainforests and its tribes which are taken care of by a task force set up by the Brazilian government to protect the indigenous Guajajara tribe and the rainforests from

illegal loggers. The Centre can take a cue from Brazil to address the ecological concerns of the fragile Andamans and stop tinkering with bio-diversity there. Have we forgotten the case of the Jarawa tribes of the Andamans who are now an endangered lot notwithstanding their special status? A.V. NARAYANAN, Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

Without addressing ecological concerns and the interests of the tribals first, how could NITI Aayog's 'vision' be called 'holistic'

'and sustainable?' The ugly haste with which the whole process is unfolding, shows the *mala fide* intent to keep the genuine stakeholders in the dark. Knowing fully well that the project would be the death knell for the unique diversity of the Andamans, the NITI Aayog is trying to defend the indefensible. AYYASERI RAVEENDRANATH, Aranmula, Kerala

If all the development plans see the light of day, they are sure to spell the destruction of hundreds of acres of rare forests and various creatures. Tons of

non-recyclable waste materials are bound to be generated too. And in a few years, the unique, pristine and spectacular islands will become like any other Indian city. We need to cry 'halt'. MOHAMMED IQBAL, Udhagamandalam, The Nilgiris

Iran deal could be rescued by the IAEA

A new initiative by IAEA may help to find an alternative to JCPOA in the changed circumstances



T.P. SREENIVASAN

Even as the chicken-and-egg game is being played between the U.S. and Iran on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as to whether Iranian compliance comes first or the lifting of sanctions by the U.S., the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is back on the stage to rescue the JCPOA. The U.S. tried to pressure Iran by proposing a resolution in the IAEA Board of Governors (March 1-5) meeting criticising Iranian non-compliance with the JCPOA and its alleged IAEA safeguards violations amidst rumours that Iran might withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and proceed to develop nuclear weapons. Iranian Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi had hinted at it in an interview with Iranian State television in February. Mr. Alavi's widely reported remark – that a "cornered cat may behave differently from when the cat is free" – was interpreted as a warning that Iran might abandon the JCPOA and proceed with unbridled nuclear activities.

The Indian model

Having sat in the alphabetical order next to Iranian Ambassadors and top nuclear negotiators on the IAEA Board of Governors for about four years, I know they looked at India with admiration for the way India had handled the NPT. They often wished that they had not signed the NPT, developed a capability like India did, and then negotiated a deal. I did not have to remind them that such an option was not available and that the United Nations Security Council would not give them permission to leave the NPT even if they wished to do so.

Even though the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's fatwa against nuclear weapons still stands, *Foreign Policy* recently noted: "Wide swaths of Iranian society, among the public and policymakers alike, seem to increasingly see the weapon not just as an ultimate deterrent but as a panacea for Iran's chronic security



Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, arrives to open the IAEA Board of Governors meeting at the agency's headquarters in Vienna, Austria on March 1, 2021. ■ AFP

problems and challenges to its sovereignty by foreign powers." If the stalemate continues on JCPOA, because of the U.S. pressure, public opinion may shift towards the Indian model of creating a deterrent and then seeking a special dispensation to avoid severe sanctions. But the risks involved in such a policy will be grave, including the possibility of military action by Israel.

The Iranian elections in June make it imperative for the country to have at least an initial breakthrough before the polls. If not, the new government, which might be more radical than the present one, would be tempted to adopt a policy of creating a de facto deterrent as the only option for survival.

IAEA's two service functions

A technical "understanding" reached on February 21 by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi allowing monitoring by the IAEA to continue in Iran for three months augured well for a possible IAEA effort in case the JCPOA talks broke down. Iranians had also agreed to an early April visit to Iran by an IAEA technical team to discuss outstanding safeguard matters. It was against this backdrop that Mr. Grossi persuaded the Americans

not to move a resolution in the IAEA Board, so that the IAEA did not get entangled in the U.S. position on Iran. It was important for the IAEA to pursue its non-proliferation efforts with Iran outside the JCPOA.

Perhaps, Mr. Grossi expects that in the event of the present efforts to renew the JCPOA failing altogether, it should be possible to consider a fresh initiative by the IAEA to deal with the issue. The IAEA is neither the Secretariat of the NPT nor is it empowered to request States to adhere to it. It does, however, have formal responsibility in the context of implementing Article III of the Treaty. The IAEA's mandate, expertise, and experience also equip it well to assist in the implementation of other Articles. At the broadest level, the IAEA provides two service functions under the NPT. It facilitates and provides a channel for endeavours aimed at the "further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the territories of non-nuclear-weapon States Party to the Treaty, with due consideration for the needs of the developing areas of the world."

Its other major function is to administer international nuclear safeguards, in accordance with Article III

of the Treaty, to verify fulfilment of the non-proliferation commitment assumed by non-nuclear-weapon States party to the Treaty.

The NPT assigns to the IAEA the responsibility for verifying, at the global level, through its safeguards system, that non-nuclear weapon States fulfil their obligations not to use their peaceful nuclear activities to develop any nuclear explosive devices of any kind. Accordingly, the Iranian file could go back to the IAEA to start fresh negotiations to restrain Iran to remain within the permissible level of enrichment of uranium. In effect, this may mean going back to the pre-six nation initiative, when the IAEA could not certify that Iran was not engaged in weapon activities. With the experience of the JCPOA, any new arrangement has to ensure that Iran must have sanctions relief, the stockpile of enriched uranium should not exceed the limits established, and there should be iron-clad guarantees that Iran will not violate the safeguards agreement. The test is whether these can be accomplished within the framework of the IAEA.

Discussions at a technical level

Since the IAEA is a technical body, its deliberations may be kept at the technical level. At the same time, since it is open for the IAEA to report to the Security Council for necessary action, the IAEA will have the necessary clout to insist on the implementation of the NPT and its additional protocol. A new avenue may open for Iran to continue its peaceful nuclear activities as permitted in the NPT. Iran may have a certain comfort level in the IAEA as some members of the Board will be supportive of Iran's aspirations to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes without unnecessary restraints.

If the beginning of the new negotiations on the JCPOA drag on in the new circumstances in West Asia, particularly the interest of Saudi Arabia and the UAE to be part of any arrangement with Iran, which the U.S. supports, the IAEA may provide an alternative venue to open discussions on Iran's obligations under the NPT, which do not have a time limit.

T.P.Sreenivasan is a former Ambassador and the Governor for India of the IAEA from 2001 to 2004

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

No self-censorship

A close reading of the coverage of two recent developments reveals the gap between perception and reality



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

There were questions regarding the report, "State govt. suspends former Special DGP" (March 19, 2021). The senior IPS officer is facing sexual harassment charges made by a serving woman IPS officer. While the Tamil Nadu government did not issue a formal notification, the newspaper's reporter gathered information from reliable sources that the officer has been suspended pending inquiry.

Earlier, the government had suspended the Chengalpattu Superintendent of Police in the same case for acting in favour of the Special Director General of Police and trying to prevent the survivor from making a formal complaint. Rightly drawing from earlier court directives that prohibit the media from revealing only the names of the victims in sexual assault cases and not the offenders, readers asked why the newspaper did not publish the names of the two IPS officers involved in the case.

Abiding by the court's order

There are several rules and codes that govern reporting on sexual violence, including Section 228A of the Indian Penal Code, which was brought in through an amendment in 1983 to Section 6(ii) of the Press Council of India's "Norms of Journalistic Conduct". It is true that there is neither a legal bar nor an ethical bar in naming offenders. In this particular case, the court had intervened and issued a binding order restraining the media from publishing not only the names of the survivor but also of the accused and witnesses. I would like to draw the attention of the readers to a report, "Madras HC to monitor probe against former Special DGP" (March 2), which read: "Passing an elaborate interim order, he [judge] restrained the media from publishing the names of the complainant, the accused and witnesses in the case as there was an express bar on such publications under Section 16 of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013." While one can argue that the single judge's order contradicts earlier judicial pronouncements, the fact remains that a newspaper

has to abide by the present binding order. In another case, K. Balakesari, a contributor to this newspaper, asked: "Why has *The Hindu* not carried a single item of news these past few days about the resignation of Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta from Ashoka University, apparently because of him being considered a political liability by the University's Trustees? I thought in such matters, *The Hindu* would be in the forefront of publishing the facts about the case."

A detailed report

On March 19, in the national news section on Page II (Chennai edition), the report "Arvind resigns from Ashoka University" dealt with all the developments in Ashoka University. The strapline for the report read: "Devastated by circumstances behind P.B. Mehta's resignation, says former CEA". Further, the opening paragraphs of the report dealt with Mr. Mehta's case exclusively. They read: "Political scientist and commentator Pratap Bhanu Mehta resigned from Ashoka University after a meeting with the university's founders made it clear his association with the institution could be considered a 'political liability'. In his resignation letter dated March 15 to Vice-Chancellor Malabika Sarkar sent on Tuesday, which *The Hindu* has seen, he said his writing was 'perceived to carry risks for the university.' The report also carried the operative portion of Mr. Mehta's resignation letter: "After a meeting with Founders it has become abundantly clear to me that my association with the University may be considered a political liability. My public writing in support of a politics that tries to honour constitutional values of freedom and equal respect for all citizens, is perceived to carry risks for the university".

The perception among some readers is that the newspaper had resorted to one form of self-censorship or the other in the two cases – one in not naming a senior police officer in a sexual harassment case and the other in not reporting about shrinking academic freedom. But a closer reading reveals the gap between this perception and the reality. In the sexual harassment case, *The Hindu* had reported as much information as possible in the light of a binding High Court order. Regarding the developments in Ashoka University, the newspaper looked at all issues arising from Mr. Mehta's resignation.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

How to treat unpaid work

There are many ways in which women's burden at home can be reduced by the government

INDIRA HIRWAY

Women everywhere carry a disproportionately higher burden of unpaid work, namely, unpaid domestic services as well as unpaid care of children, the old and the disabled for their respective households. Though this work contributes to overall well-being at the household level and collectively at the national level, it is invisible in the national database and particularly in national policies.

This work is repetitive, boring and frequently drudgery – a 24-hour job without remuneration, promotions or retirement benefits. It restricts opportunities for women in the economy and in life. Women do this job not necessarily because they like it or are efficient in it, but because it is imposed on them by patriarchal norms, which are the roots of all pervasive gender inequalities. This unequal division of unpaid work between women and men is unfair and unjust and it deprives women of equal opportunities as men.

For political parties to recognise this work is a positive development, and the demand for wages for housewives has emerged from this concern. However, its implementation may create problems such as affordability of the government and calculation of the amounts. Women may not be eager to enter the labour market. More important, these wages may confirm unpaid work as women's work only, which would deny opportunities to women in the wider world. Payment of pension to old women (60+ years) may be a better idea to compensate them for their unpaid work.

What the government could do
What governments could do is recognise this unpaid work in the national database by a sound time-use survey and use the data in national policies. Also, they could relieve women's burden of unpaid work by improving technology (e.g. better fuel for cooking), better infrastructure (e.g. water at the doorstep), shifting some unpaid work to the mainstream economy (e.g. childcare, care of the disabled, and care of the chronically sick), and by making basic services (e.g. health and transportation) ac-

cessible to women. Also, they could redistribute the work between men and women by providing different incentives and disincentives to men (e.g. mandatory training of men in housework, childcare, etc.) and financial incentives for sharing housework. These measures will give free time to women and open up new opportunities to them.

Unpaid work and the economy
What is critical is to understand the linkages between unpaid work and the economy. The household produces goods and services for its members, and if GDP is a measure of the total production and consumption of the economy, it has to incorporate this work by accepting the household as a sector of the economy.

At the macro level, unpaid work subsidises the private sector by providing it a generation of workers (human capital) and takes care of wear and tear of labour who are family members. The private sector would have paid much higher wages and earned lower profits in the absence of unpaid work. Unpaid work also subsidises the government by taking care of the old, sick and the disabled. The state would have spent huge amounts in the absence of unpaid work. Unpaid work is a privately produced public good which is critical for the sustenance of the mainstream economy. This work, therefore, needs to be integrated with the mainstream economy and policies. It will be up to public policies then to improve the productivity of unpaid workers, reduce their burden, and tap their potential in development, as the household could also be an important economic sector.

By excluding this work from the economy, macroeconomics shows a clear male bias. It is not surprising that many economists call economics "a wrongly conceived discipline" that is narrow, partial and truncated. There is an urgent need to expand the purview of economics not only for gender justice but mainly for moving towards a realistic economics.

Indira Hirway is Professor of Economics, Centre for Development Alternatives

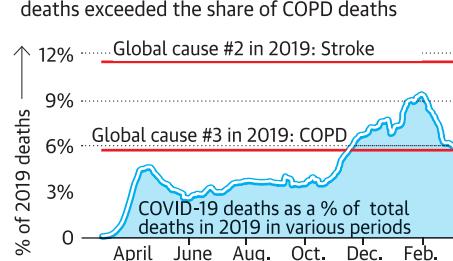


DATA POINT

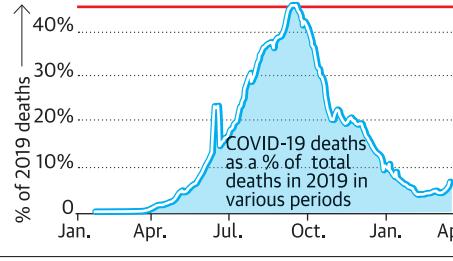
Calculating COVID's relative severity

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed over 27 lakh lives globally and nearly 1.6 lakh in India. A comparison of the proportion of deaths due to COVID-19 with that of leading causes of deaths before the outbreak, over various periods – say weekly – would enable us to gauge its impact on the health system of a country. For instance, globally, deaths due to COVID-19 in the 4th week of January 2021 (the peak period) claimed over 9% of the total deaths in the corresponding period in 2019. This proportion was higher than the share of deaths due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which claimed 5.8% of all deaths in 2019 and slightly lower than that of stroke (the second leading cause), which claimed 11.6%. The share of COVID-19 deaths was lower in low-income countries over various periods. In India, deaths in the 3rd week of September (the peak period) claimed 4.5% of the total deaths in the corresponding period in 2019, a share that was just higher than that of TB in 2019.

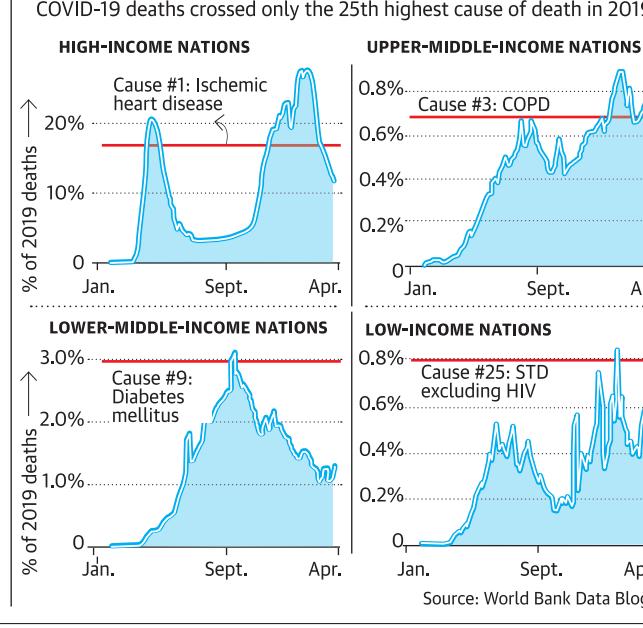
SEVERITY COMPARISON | The chart depicts the 7-day average of global COVID-19 deaths as a % of the total deaths in the corresponding periods in 2019. At its peak, the share of global COVID-19 deaths exceeded the share of COPD deaths.



The second chart depicts the same for India. At its peak, the share of India's COVID-19 deaths exceeded the share of TB deaths by a small margin.



INCOME COMPARISON | The relative severity of COVID-19 deaths was higher in high-income countries and reduced as the income level decreased. While COVID-19 deaths exceeded the leading cause of death in higher-income countries at its peak, in low-income countries, COVID-19 deaths crossed only the 25th highest cause of death in 2019.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 22, 1971

Thant's message on earth day

The U.N. Secretary-General, U Thant, hailed Earth Day to-day as the start of a "new chapter of United world history". He spoke – and rang a Japanese-contributed Peace Bell, at what the U.N. Office of Publication has called as a ceremony "proclaiming March 21 as 'Earth Day'. It is the first day of spring. He said that in view of the arms race, over population, poverty, materialism, violence and the deterioration of the natural environment, an "Earth Day" has become suddenly necessary to remind us of the fact that our planet is perishable. "All of us, especially the leaders of the world," he said, "must have the vision, the courage, and a new broadly based sense of human solidarity to join our thoughts, our hearts and our forces to change the present course of detrimental man-made events and divisions..."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 22, 1921

A Sedition Trial.

The sensational sedition trial of Hpoongyi U Ottama, the first of its kind in Burma, came on for hearing on the 21st before Mr. Upohla, District Magistrate, Pyapon. The compound, corridors, balconies, and the court house were thronged by enormous crowds, numbering not less than fifteen thousand, consisting of Burmese ladies and men, Indians and an admixture of Chinese. Crowds of Buddhist worshippers gathered together at the jail gates with golden umbrellas to shelter Hpoongyi Ottama from the burning sun as the Hpoongyi surrounded by a police cordon stepped out of the jail. Burman ladies and men and Indians "shiteei" (Burman word for salute) the great priest and spread silk paws and turbans four and five deep for him to walk up over to the Court house. It was a sight for the gods to see. All, especially ladies, bent down on the knees with floods of tears. A dozen lawyers with U Pu, Barrister, led the defence. U May Oung, Government advocate, appeared for the Crown. After the preliminary application for transfer was refused, U Pu asked for an adjournment and the case was adjourned for the 31st March to enable the defence to apply to the Chief Court for transfer. Hpoongyi We Fullah harangued crowds from the different centres to keep peace of mind and peace even against provocation. The accused U Ottama was requested by the District Magistrate to advise the crowds in the balconies not to make noise and a few words from him silenced the crowds.

FROM PAGE ONE

CM will decide on Anil Deshmukh, says Pawar

"The allegations against the Maharashtra Home Minister are serious. Chief Minister has the full authority to take a decision regarding an inquiry on these allegations against the Home Minister," Mr. Pawar said, adding, "I would suggest to Uddhav Thackeray to seek former IPS officer Julio Ribeiro's help for looking into the claims made by Param Bir Singh."

The NCP chief told reporters at his official residence in Delhi that Mr. Param Bir Singh did meet him but it was only "when his transfer orders were about to be issued by the Maharashtra government".

Asked if there was an attempt to destabilise the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the NCP chief said, "I don't know whether efforts are being made or not to topple the [MVA] government. All I can say is they will have no impact on the government."

The episode has led to tensions in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as the Shiv Sena leadership is reported to be against Mr. Deshmukh's continuance as a Minister.

Mr. Pawar is learnt to have convened a meeting of party leaders including De-

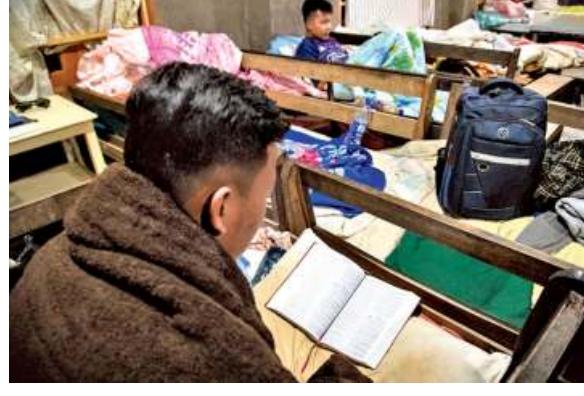
Unavailable for probe: Ribeiro

Former IPS officer Julio Ribeiro has turned down NCP chief Sharad Pawar's suggestion that he probe ex-Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh's claim. "Nobody [in the State government] has contacted me. Even if they do, I'm unavailable," he said. "I am 92 years old. Nobody goes around doing this work at the age of 92... Why should a retired police officer be asked to do this?" the former Mumbai Police Commissioner asked. PTI

puty Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and State NCP chief Jayant Patil to discuss the issue. The NCP supremo also said the party must hear out Mr. Deshmukh, who has categorically denied all the allegations, before taking a final decision.

The central leadership of the Congress, the third partner in the MVA alliance, decided to adopt a 'wait and watch approach'. Party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) Maharashtra in-charge, H.K. Patil, will speak on the issue soon.

Amid refugee crisis, Myanmar border sealed



Seeking asylum: A police officer who fled Myanmar seen at an undisclosed location in Mizoram last week. ■ AP

Thousands of Myanmarese nationals visit regularly for work and to meet relatives. In March 2020, FMR was suspended due to COVID-19 and no one has been allowed since. The fallout of this, officials said, was that there has been an increase smuggling across the border as the livelihood of people has been disrupted due to the pandemic.

On February 26, the State government issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to Deputy Commissioners detailing how the refugees are to be handled. This was subsequently revoked after directions from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

After the MHA directive, no one is being allowed to enter India from Myanmar and the Assam Rifles, which is the border guarding force there, is keeping a close watch, said a second local official. However, the border is porous and unlike the

Bangladesh border, over 60% of which is fenced, the Myanmar border is unfenced and completely blocking it is not possible given the tough terrain. Mizoram shares a 510-km-long border with Myanmar.

All the refugees who have come in earlier have been housed in camps along the border by the local administration and security forces have no direct access.

For Central agencies and Assam Rifles on the ground, it is a tricky situation in maintaining a delicate balance in executing the MHA orders and maintaining the cordial relations with the States agencies and the locals, the official added.

In a letter to the four States bordering Myanmar dated March 10, the MHA said State governments have no powers to grant refugee status to any foreigner and India is not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol.

Kumbh: Centre warns of COVID-19 'upsurge'

"We have increased the buses to transport people and seers to the various pilgrimage spots. This event happens once in 12 years and it would be wrong to discourage people from taking a holy dip," he had said.

The Health Ministry team, led by Sujeet Kumar Singh, Director, National Centre of Disease Control in Delhi, had visited Uttarakhand on March 16 and 17 to review the preparedness measures undertaken by the State for the Kumbh.

Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, wrote to Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Upal Kumar Singh on Sunday, highlighting the con-

cerns raised by the NCDC team.

The government has been advised to "scrupulously follow" the Health Ministry's guidelines including display signages, increasing awareness of self-reporting symptoms of cases suggestive of COVID-19, to increase testing, particularly in potential high transmission areas and after key auspicious days of the 30-day festival.

The majority of those engaged in exchanging the forest produce are Muria tribal women from Banda and Muriagudem areas in the Naxal-hit Sukma region in Chhattisgarh. They travel nearly 40 km to reach the

Mela-linked ceremonies are expected to last for most of next month. A formal order specifying new guidelines that pilgrims are expected to adhere to is expected to be made public by the month end.

Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, wrote to Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Upal Kumar Singh on Sunday, highlighting the con-

tions, reporting 79 in one day.

In Telangana, 394 coronavirus cases were recorded on Saturday. While 64,898 samples were tested, results of 698 were awaited.

Three more COVID-19 patients died. The 394 new cases included 81 from Greater Hyderabad region and 64 from Rangareddy.

Rise in rural areas

Compared to February and first week of March this year, a large chunk of infections was in rural districts. On March 16 and 17, cases from districts exceeded those in Greater Hyderabad because of school and hostel clusters.

Tamil Nadu reported 1,289 fresh cases with five districts - Chennai, Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Thanjavur and Tiruvallur - accounting for 66% of them.

Nine more persons succumbed to the infection, taking the toll to 12,599.

(With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram, Vijayawada, Hyderabad & Chennai)

10 NEWS

FROM PAGE ONE

Vaccinate, be restrained to curb rise: Karnataka

Kerala adds 13 deaths to COVID-19 toll; Tamil Nadu sees 1,289 new cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

New cases of COVID-19 maintained an high trajectory on Sunday in most southern States. Kerala reported 1,875 new cases, Karnataka 1,715, Tamil Nadu 1,289 and Andhra Pradesh 368. In Telangana there were 394 cases on Saturday.

Karnataka's Health Minister K. Sudhakar said the State was "at the beginning of the second wave" and sought people's cooperation. "Let us join hands to control it because the next two or three months are crucial," he told reporters. The Minister said the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on the pandemic had given clear guidelines and warned of serious consequences if certain activities were not controlled.

Avoid gatherings'
"We have crossed 1,000 cases a day just in Bengaluru. We cannot be in denial any

more. My fervent request is to adopt COVID-19-appropriate behaviour," he said, appealing to youth to ensure that the elderly in their households were vaccinated. People should also keep away from unnecessary gatherings. The government had not banned any activity so

The TAC had suggested closing religious institutions and all schools and educational institutions where there were no exams going on, for at least two weeks.

Across Karnataka, 1,715 new cases were detected. Bengaluru Urban district accounted for 1,039. Two patients - one each in Bengaluru Urban and Bidar - succumbed to the virus.

Among the 13,493 active cases, 137 patients were in

ICUs. The positivity rate for the day stood at 1.68%. From 94,043 tests done on Saturday the testing figure rose to 1,01,840 on Sunday, including 95,959 RT-PCR tests. On Sunday 11,948 people were vaccinated including 7,933 aged above 60.

Kerala reported 1,875 new cases from 44,675 samples.



No lessons learnt: People thronging the Marina beach in Chennai on Sunday. ■ R. RAGU

368 new infections on Sunday but no death. The number of active cases increased to 2,188.

The daily test positivity rate was 1.18%, with 31,138 samples tested. Meanwhile, the weekly tally was the highest so far this year.

After Chittoor, Guntur was witnessing a surge in infec-

tions, reporting 79 in one day.

The episode has led to tensions in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as the Shiv Sena leadership is reported to be against Mr. Deshmukh's continuance as a Minister.

Mr. Pawar is learnt to have convened a meeting of party leaders including De-

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Asked if there was an attempt to destabilise the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the NCP chief said, "I don't know whether efforts are being made or not to topple the [MVA] government. All I can say is they will have no impact on the government."

The central leadership of the Congress, the third partner in the MVA alliance, decided to adopt a 'wait and watch approach'. Party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) Maharashtra in-charge, H.K. Patil, will speak on the issue soon.

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Rahul, Priyanka criss-cross Assam, but skip West Bengal

They may campaign with the Left only after polling in Kerala

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

With Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi making a strong pitch on behalf of Debabrata Saikia, Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly, at Nazira on Sunday, she and her brother, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, have focused on the State for the third day in a row.

Assam campaign

Mr. Gandhi wound up his two-day trip on Saturday with the release of the manifesto in Guwahati, while Ms. Vadra will spend another day in Assam and visit the birthplace of 15th century Vaishnavite saint Srimanta Sankardev, as the Congress tries to wrest back the State that was once its bastion.

But the top party campaigners have carefully avoided campaigning in neighbouring West Bengal.

Party insiders say Mr. Gandhi, a Lok Sabha member from Kerala, is likely to campaign for the Left Front-Congress alliance in Bengal only after Kerala voting is over on April 6 as the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) is the Congress's main rival in Kerala.

A source said that if the Gandhis campaign alongside Left party leaders in Bengal ahead of the Kerala voting, it will send "confusing signals" to workers and voters.

In Kerala, where the Congress's own assessment is of



Big pitch: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi during campaigning in Sivasagar district of Assam on Sunday. ■ PTI

a close fight, it does not want to be seen as having any "soft spot" for the Left and will welcome some extra aggression from the Gandhi siblings. On Monday, Mr. Gandhi has a series of programmes in Kochi and Alapuzha districts.

In Bengal, where the high-pitched battle seems focused on the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP, the Left Front-Congress alliance is fighting for its political relevance.

Best scenario in Bengal

A senior Congress leader told *The Hindu* that a hung Assembly in Bengal would be the best possible scenario for the alliance as it could

play the kingmaker's role.

In Assam, where the party's internal surveys have shown a gap between the ruling BJP and the Congress, the party is pushing Ms. Vadra and Mr. Gandhi besides banking on the strength of its alliance with the All India United Democratic Front, led by Badruddin Ajmal, and the Bodo People's Front.

Though the emergence of regional parties such as the Asom Jatiya Parishad and the Rajtor Dal out of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) movement had threatened to make it a three-cornered fight, the Congress has stepped up the campaign to make it a bipolar contest in most seats.

'Centre silent on Chinese dam projects'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday slammed the BJP government for not objecting to China building a dam on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra in Tibet, which would affect the life and economy of the people in Assam.

She said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attack on the Congress based on a conspiracy theory triggered by the tweet of a 22-year-old (green activist Disha Ravi) did not behove of his position.

At election rallies in Jorhat, Nazira and Khumta in eastern Assam, Ms. Vadra said the dam being built by China would damage the ecology associated with the Brahmaputra.

"The Prime Minister has campaigned in Assam several times but said not a word on this vital issue," she said.

She said Mr. Modi was delivering poll speeches that a Prime Minister of a country was not expected to make. She said this in reference to Mr. Modi raking up the toolkit issue to claim that the Congress was colluding with foreign forces to finish off Assam's tea industry.

She said the BJP had "two CMs" in the State, an indirect reference to Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma who, rivals say, wields more power than Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

India and its shades of grey

With an increasing elderly population, it's time for India to rethink its strategies to provide them a safer environment.



Praveen Kishore
Top Unacademy Educator

Three important demographic factors are propelling the elderly population. Firstly, declining fertility rates due to improved access to contraceptives; increasing age at marriage particularly among women; declining infant mortality due to universal immunisation; and nutritional support programmes. Secondly, increasing life expectancy due to advances in medicine, public health, institutional access to health services, nutrition, and sanitation. And finally, large cohorts advancing to older ages.

Here are few of the challenges:

The growing burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs): At the dawn of the 20th century, major health threats were in the form of parasitic diseases and infections that claimed the lives of infants and children.

Today the burden of NCDs is increasing which mainly affects adults, particularly the elderly. These include cardiovascular illness, chronic respiratory illness, the prevalence of substance abuse disorders, and mental health issues.

Feminisation of aging: In conformity with the trend in other parts of the world, the life expectancy of women is higher in India too. As per the 2014-18 sample registration system, the average life expectancy of women is 70.7 years in comparison to



68.2 for men. One fallout of widowhood is that these women suffer economic insecurity and violence.

Migration of youth and growing mental illness:

Rapid industrialisation has created much better opportunities for youth in urban cities. This has induced rural-urban migration of youth at a large scale leaving the elderly without a support system. As per recent data (2021), around 5.7% of senior citizens in India live alone. Experts have linked negligence and loneliness with cognitive deterioration like Alzheimer's and depression.

Violence against the elderly:

The rising materialism, individualism, and breakdown in the traditional system of the community has exposed the elderly to violence by strangers as well as family.

According to an NCRB Report 41,942 elderly have been murdered, hurt, and robbed in

India from 2015 to 2016.

The government needs to initiate a multi-pronged strategy to tackle the problems of aging. First, strong legal enactments to safeguard the interest of the elderly. Second, better implementation of social security schemes meant for them. Thirdly, sensitising youth to take care of the elderly. Fourthly, the creation of state departments that care exclusively for the elderly. And finally, institutional arrangement for their community living as there is an urgent need to de-stigmatise old age homes to protect the elderly.

This weekly column for civil services aspirants is brought to you by Unacademy. Send your subject specific queries to upsccsepreparation@unacademy.com

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Scan to watch the free live class on 'Problem of Greying India and Institutional Mechanism' on March 23, 2021 at 8 PM. Use code UPSCCSE.

'Pay revised wages to tea workers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Assam Finance Minister and BJP's chief poll strategist Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday warned tea estate owners to pay daily wages to their workers at the revised rate or face the music.

Addressing an election rally in eastern Assam's Mahmora, Dr. Sarma said, "Your daily wage was ₹96 before Narendra Modi became Prime Minister. We revised it to ₹217 but a few tea garden owners went to the High Court against the revision in connivance with the Congress."

"I am warning tea garden owners that they should straightaway pay the workers at a rate of ₹217. They will otherwise be made to pay ₹350 if they keep stalling the revised wage with support from the Congress," he said.

Planning strategy: Amit Shah arriving for a meeting with office-bearers of Purba Medinipur at Mecheda on Sunday. ■ PTI



Planning strategy: Amit Shah arriving for a meeting with office-bearers of Purba Medinipur at Mecheda on Sunday. ■ PTI

At Mr. Shah's rally, the senior leader raised the slogan *Bharat Mata ki Jai* (Long live Mother India), and said that he had joined the BJP the very day Mr. Suvendu Adhikari joined the party. Another MP from the district, Dibyendu Adhikari, who belongs to the same family and repre-

sents the Tamluk Lok Sabha constituency, has not ruled out the possibility of joining the BJP.

Addressing the rally at Egra in Purba Medinipur, Mr. Shah emphasised on the party's slogan of making *Sonar Bangla* (golden Bengal) in the next five years, propelled by the double-engine go-

ernment at the Centre and the State.

The Home Minister also

promised to implement the Seventh Pay Commission for employees of the government of West Bengal if the BJP was voted to power.

CM's charge

Addressing a public meeting Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said that 'Mir Jafars' had brought the BJP to West Bengal.

"I used to respect them a lot, shower lot of love. Today there are saying that they were in touch with BJP since 2014. It is these Mir Jafars who have brought BJP to West Bengal," she said referring to the members of the Adhikari family.

The Chief Minister said that even the Trinamool Congress candidates which the "landlords" of Purba Medinipur did not like were made to lose in the district.

Ahom warrior a symbol of *atmanirbhar* military: PM

Modi addresses election rally in eastern Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called 17th century Ahom General Lachit Borphukan a symbol of India's "atmanirbhar" military might.

He waxed eloquent on the legendary military strategist days after referring to him as a freedom fighter who "contributed to the independence of the country" at a programme to launch the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' on March 12.

Addressing a rally for the Asom Gana Parishad, BJP's ally at Bokakhat in eastern Assam, Mr. Modi said, "This land belongs to Lachit Borphukan, one of India's greatest sons who saved Assam from outside forces with his swadeshi (indigenous) strategy."

He said Borphukan used the Brahmaputra's water-power to defeat forces impenetrable to India. "The great General taught us to be *atmanirbhar* (self-sufficient) in military warfare and our armed forces are heading in that direction," he added.

In 1671, Borphukan led the Ahoms in the Battle of Saraighat, considered the greatest naval battle on a river, to victory over the Mughals. The Prime Minister said Borphukan was the inspiration behind strengthening India's naval force and revitalising inland water transport and creating infrastructure.

The Congress termed Mr. Modi's new take on the legendary Ahom General as "damage control" after a gaffe almost a fortnight ago.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waving at the crowd during an election rally at Bokakhat, Golaghat district, on Sunday. ■ PTI

BJP's Bengal manifesto offers CAA, job quota for women

Document is a vision for realising *Sonar Bangla*: Shah

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

The BJP on Sunday promised reservation of 33% for women in government jobs, implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and allocation of ₹18,000 pending to 75 lakh farmers under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi in its manifesto for West Bengal. Releasing the "Sonar Bangla Sonkoito Porotro 2021", Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the manifesto is a vision of realising the party's slogan of *Sonar Bangla* (Golden Bengal).

The BJP also promised free education for girls from KG to PG, free rides for women in public transport and conditional cash transfer to schoolgirls in Class 6, 9, 11 and 12. It promised nine woman-only police battalions and three battalions under the State Reserve Police force. The Trinamool Congress has a conditional cash transfer scheme for schoolgirls called *Kanyaashree* Scheme, which has

received international acclaim.

Mr. Shah promised the implementation of the CAA in the first Cabinet meeting of the BJP government in West Bengal. The BJP had promised its implementation in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls too after the Bill was passed in Parliament. During the run up to the campaign, the BJP leadership including Mr. Shah have maintained that the rules for the CAA are being framed and the Act will be implemented after the vaccination for COVID-19 is completed. The CAA is an emotive issue for the Matuas, Hindu refugees who migrated from Bangladesh. They can influence electoral results in 40 of the 294 seats.

The Trinamool Congress said the manifesto was released in Hindi and not Bengali. "For the first time ever, a non-Bengali has released a manifesto meant for Bengal because @BJP4Bengal did not have a single 'son of the soil' to do the same. Bengal will never forget this insult. #BengalRejectsGujaratiManifesto," it tweeted.

Mr. Shah also promised the implementation of Ayan Bharat in the first Cabinet meet. He said the BJP government will ensure that there is zero infiltration and promised fencing of the border. He blamed the

Fadnavis demands Deshmukh's ouster

BJP seeks court-monitored inquiry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

highlighted the racket of transfers within the Police Department and the exchange of money. He had submitted this report along with transcripts," the BJP leader said in Nagpur on Sunday.

Remarking that the series of incidents after the arrest of Assistant Police Inspector (API) Sachin Vaze in connection with the security scare outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence had cast aspersions on the functioning of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, Mr. Fadnavis demanded that Mr. Deshmukh resign immediately.

Mr. Fadnavis further alleged that former Maharashtra Director-General of Police (DGP) Subodh Jaiswal, too, had submitted an extensive report on this to the Chief Minister in which he allegedly pointed to rampant corruption within the State Home Department.

"Param Bir Singh's letter is not the first one to expose irregularities within the State Home Department. Subodh Jaiswal, too, had submitted an extensive report on this to the Chief Minister raising issues regarding functioning of the Home Department in which he

CPWD to lay three roads near China border in Ladakh

It has floated tenders worth ₹212.99 crore for the purpose

DAMINI NATH

NEW DELHI

The Central Public Works Department (CPWD) has floated tenders worth a total of ₹212.99 crore this month for laying and maintenance of three high-altitude roads near the India-China border in Ladakh.

While the projects are titled as roads "to Indo-China Border" from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police bases at Shilung La, Nyakmikle and Hena, the three tender documents said: "The work is situated in Leh District of U.T. of Ladakh near International Border." All the three roads would be single lane projects as per the relevant specifications of National Highways, according to the documents.

He said the matter could not be satisfactorily investigated if Mr. Deshmukh stayed on in his post and that the latter would first have to resign.

"Param Bir Singh's letter contains irrefutable evidence," he said.

Shilung La base was estimated to take 42 months and cost ₹93.8 crore, according to the tender document.

The CPWD floated one tender on March 12 and two on March 19 and set the date for opening of bids as April 8 and April 15 respectively. The single-lane road project of 10.22 km length till the

Following protocol: All three roads will be single-lane projects built to specifications of the National Highways. ■ FILE PHOTO



tee on Home Affairs report presented on March 15, the Centre had informed the panel that a "standalone project" of constructing a critical road along the border in Ladakh was ongoing. The Ministry of Home Affairs told the panel, chaired by Congress MP Anand Sharma, that 57 roads along the India-China border were being constructed, as well as 47 outposts, 32 helipads and 18 foot tracks in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to the Parliamentary Standing Committee

on Home Affairs report presented on March 15, the Centre had

IN BRIEF



Om Birla tests positive for COVID-19

NEW DELHI
Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla tested positive for COVID-19 on March 19, confirmed a statement by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi on Sunday. The hospital said his condition is stable and that he was admitted for observation on March 20.

Lay out a comprehensive vaccination plan: Cong.

NEW DELHI
The Congress on Sunday said the Centre should spell out a "comprehensive vaccination plan" to cover India's population against COVID-19. Addressing a press conference, Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said the second wave was at India's doorstep. He said the Central government should come out with a plan to say that in 12 months, all would be vaccinated, but "we have asked for a plan for months as otherwise, it would take decades and years at this rate".

Declare March 23 as Inquilab Diwas: CPI

NEW DELHI
The Communist Party of India (CPI) urged the Centre to declare March 23, the martyrdom day of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, as 'Inquilab Diwas' to be marked with a national public holiday. This year is the 90th anniversary of the martyrdom of freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. In an appeal, CPI general secretary D. Raja asked all party units and student bodies to observe the day as 'Inquilab Diwas' to honour the freedom fighters' memory and to take their ideas to the people of the country.

Naxals kill constable after abducting him

BIJAPUR
Naxals allegedly killed a policeman, constable Sannu Punem, after abducting him in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, an official said on Sunday. Punem was abducted on Saturday from Pondum village under Bhairmagar police station limits and his body was found on Sunday near a rivulet. "Punem, who was posted at Gangalor police station, was on leave and had gone to Pondum, located around 450 km away from capital Raipur," police said. A search operation has been launched to trace the Naxals. PTI

COVID-19 cases see a new high

India records 43,846 new infections; six States account for over 80% of fresh cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a 'janta curfew' that ended up being a prelude to the national lockdown on March 25 last year, new daily cases skyrocketed to 43,846 – a new high for this year – on Sunday. This took the number of confirmed infections in India to nearly 11.6 million.

Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 77.7% of the new cases in the 24 hours to 8 a.m. on Sunday.

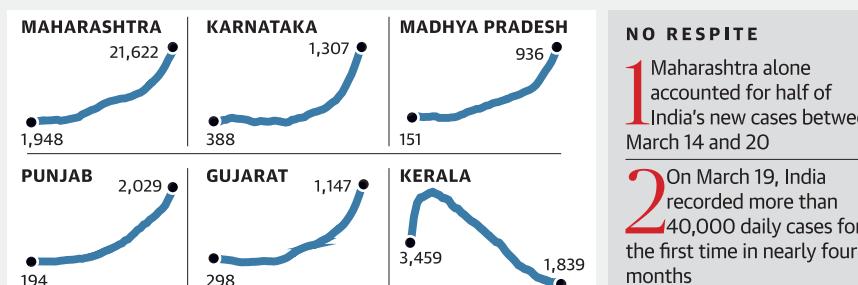
Maharashtra reported 27,126 cases followed by Punjab with 2,578 and Kerala with 2,078.

A little over 80% of the new cases reported were from six States.

In Maharashtra, Pune, Nagpur, Mumbai, Thane and

Sharp spike

The States listed accounted for nearly 78% of the new cases on Saturday, according to the Health Ministry. Except Kerala, all have seen a steadily rising trend since February, with Maharashtra recording its highest ever single-day spike on Saturday. The chart shows the seven-day average of new cases in the States between February 1 and March 20



Nashik were the districts reporting the highest number of cases.

Over 4 crore doses

Almost 4.4 crore vaccine doses had been administered till 7 a.m. on Sunday.

The beneficiaries include 7.7 million healthcare workers who have received at

least one dose and 4.8 million who have got both. About 8 million frontline workers have got the first dose, and 2.6 million have got both doses.

About 17 million senior citizens have been inoculated with at least one dose, and 3.6 million people above 45 with specific comorbidities

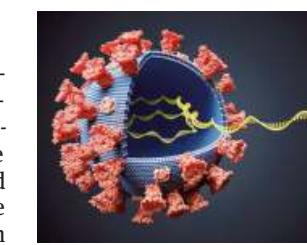
NO RESPITE

Maharashtra alone accounted for half of India's new cases between March 14 and 20

On March 19, India recorded more than 40,000 daily cases for the first time in nearly four months

have received the jabs.

India's total active case-load stood at three lakh, an increase of 20,639 cases over the last 24 hours. There were 197 deaths in the last 24 hours. Six States accounted for 86% of the new deaths, with Maharashtra reporting 92, followed by Punjab with 38 and Kerala with 15 deaths.



tein-based VLP (Virus Like Particle) vaccine candidate" that generates "triple protection" against the SARS CoV-2 virus, i.e., it is able to target the spike, membrane, and envelope proteins of the coronavirus.

Oravax, the company developing the vaccine, is a joint venture between Prema and Oramed.

"The vaccine candidate is also safe, efficacious and well-tolerated at normal to high doses, and generated high titres of neutralising antibodies. The VLP is manufactured using Prema's proprietary D-Crypt platform, which is highly scalable and can be manufactured on large scales," Oravax said in a statement.

Indian-Israeli collaboration testing oral COVID vaccine

But findings on formulation have not been published yet

JACOB KOSHY

NEW DELHI

An Indian-Israeli collaboration has reportedly developed an oral vaccine for COVID-19, one that can be swallowed like a pill instead of being injected, as is the norm. A preliminary test in animals showed that the vaccine produced the expected antibodies that confer protection. However, the findings have not been reported in a scientific publication yet and cannot be independently verified.

The product is also far from being tested in human trials, though company promoters say depending on how tests pan out, the vaccine could be ready for human trials in the next three

months. Prema Biotech, a Gurugram-based biotechnology firm, and Oramed Pharmaceuticals, Jerusalem headquartered company, have a long-standing collaboration on developing new drug delivery techniques.

The nascent COVID-19 vaccine candidate is a "pro-

Corrective voice from top court against stereotyping women

It forbids judges from making such comments

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

A judgment by the Supreme Court forbidding judges from making gender stereotypical comments came as a corrective voice from within the highest level of judiciary in India.

The judgment, pronounced on March 18, came days after the court ran into a maelstrom of criticism after the Chief Justice of India (CJI), during a virtual hearing on March 1, reportedly asked an alleged rapist's lawyer to enquire whether his client would marry the survivor.

'Completely misquoted' On March 8, Chief Justice S.A. Bobde said he was "completely misquoted". The CJI said the court had the highest respect for womanhood. The top judge's statement coincided with International Women's Day.

Ten days later, a Bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and S. Ravindra Bhat, in its judgment, urged courts to avoid using reasoning or language which diminished a sexual offence and tended to trivialise the survivor.

"Even a solitary instance of such order or utterance in



The judgment comes days after CJI Bobde's remark.

court, reflects adversely on the entire judicial system of the country, undermining the guarantee to fair justice to all, and especially to victims of sexual violence (of any kind from the most aggravated to the so-called minor offences)," the judgment, authored by Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, said.

Series of orders

The judgment stopped courts from trying to mandate marriage or compromise between a sex offender and his victim. It was based on an appeal against a Madhya Pradesh High Court order directing an alleged molester to "allow" his victim to tie a *rakhi* on him.

This judgment is one among a series of interventions with which the top court has clamped down on

abuse and sex stereotyping of women.

Some notable judgments which have lashed out at sex stereotyping include the framing of the Vishaka Guidelines on sexual harassment of women at workplaces, and Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's historic judgment giving women Armed Forces officers equal access to Permanent Commission while debunking the establishment's claim that women were physiologically weaker than men.

Justice Chandrachud, in the Permanent Commission for women officers case, said, "women officers of the Indian Army have brought laurels to the force ... Their track record of service to the nation is beyond reproach. To cast aspersions on their abilities on the ground of gender is an affront not only to their dignity as women but to the dignity of the members of the Indian Army – men and women – who serve as equal citizens in a common mission."

In the Anuj Garg case, the Supreme Court had rebuked "the notion of romantic paternalism", which, "in practical effect, put women, not on a pedestal, but in a cage".

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium is striving to reach a consensus on recommendations to fill the five vacancies in the top court.

With barely a month left for Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde to retire, the Collegium is discussing diverse opinions from within on issues like proportionate representation from various High Courts and seniority among High Court judges before finalising the names to recommend to the government for appointment.

Proportionate representation from High Courts and seniority, though only conventions and not constitutional or legal mandates, carry weight during the appointment process.

Fading strength

The last appointments to the Supreme Court were of Justices Krishna Murari, S. Ravindra Bhat, V. Ramasubramanian and Hrishikesh Roy in September 2019.

The past several months have seen the Supreme Court function under a series of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, even as its judicial strength faded to 29 with the recent retirement of Justice Indu Malhotra.

Of them, Chief Justices Mathur and Radhakrishnan will retire during the course of 2021. Others retiring this



year include Telangana Chief Justice Kumari Hima Kohli, Chhattisgarh Chief Justice P.R. Ramachandra Menon, Himachal Chief Justice L.N. Swamy and Uttarakhand Chief Justice R.S. Chauhan.

Crowded space

Of the remaining, however, most Chief Justices belong to parent High Courts which already have multiple representations in the Supreme Court judiciary.

For instance, Justice Oka's parent High Court is Bombay, which now has the largest representation in the Supreme Court with Chief Justice Bobde, followed by Justices A.M. Khanwilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and B.R. Gavai. Justices Chandrachud and Gavai are in line to be CJs as per the seniority norm.

Justice Vikram Nath's parent High Court is Allahabad. But this High Court already has three representations – Justices Bhushan, Vineet Saran and Murari. Justice Kohli's parent High Court is Delhi, which has three representations in Justices S.K. Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna and S. Ravindra Bhat in the top court.

Then again, Justice Swamy is from Karnataka. But this HC has three representations in the Supreme Court

with Justices M.M. Shantanandgoudar, S. Abdul Nazeer and A.S. Bopanna. However, the name of Justice B.V. Nagarathna from Karnataka High Court is under consideration in the Collegium to replace Justice Indu Malhotra's vacancy.

While Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Govind Mathur is from Rajasthan, the Supreme Court already has Justices Ajay Rastogi and Dinesh Maheshwari from that State.

Lone representations

There are in the Supreme Court, nevertheless, some State HCs which have lone representations. These include Justice N.V. Ramana, the next CJ as per the seniority norm, whose parent HC is Andhra; Justice Ramasubramanian whose parent HC is Madras; Justice K.M. Joseph whose parent HC is Kerala; Justice R.S. Reddy is the sole representation from Telangana HC; Justice Roy whose parent HC is Gauhati; Justices M.R. Shah and Sinha from Gujarat and Patna HCs, respectively.

In fact, the number of direct appointees from the Supreme Court Bar to the Bench – Justices Nariman, U.U. Lalit and L. Nageswara Rao – exceeds representation from some State HCs.

Three held as woman, baby die in U.P.

Webinar to discuss eradication of TB

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

A webinar on "Eradicating Tuberculosis – The Clock is Ticking" will be conducted at 5 p.m. on March 23 as part of *The Hindu* Wellness Series presented by Macleods.

S.K. Katiyar, former president, Indian College of Chest Physicians and Indian Chest Society; Ashok Mahasur, senior chest consultant, P.D. Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai; Vijay Agarwal, business development director, Macleods Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and Shilpa Joshi, vice-president, Indian Dietetic Association, are the panelists.

Topics such as the status of tuberculosis in India today, pulmonary and extra-pulmonary TB, is TB eradication possible and whether the country is on track, the role of private practitioners, management of patients who approach a



chest physician due to social stigma or reasons such as non-availability of drugs at DOTS centres, interim management of patients waiting for culture sensitivity data and role of nutrition in the management of TB will be discussed.

The session will be moderated by Shubhashree Desikan, senior assistant editor, *The Hindu*. To register for the session, visit: <http://bit.ly/TBTHWS> or scan the QR code.

2 PDP leaders quit party

PEERZADA ASHIQ

SRINAGAR
Two more Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leaders quit the party on Sunday without citing any reasons.

Khursheed Aalam, PDP's Srinagar face, and Yasir Reshi, a former legislator from Bandipora resigned

from the basic membership of the party. Mr. Reshi announced his 'dissociation' from the PDP during a meeting in Sonawari.

The fresh resignations come just days after Arif Amin, the party's young face from Pulwama, joined the Peoples Conference.

Varsity regrets events surrounding resignations'

Top functionaries of Ashoka University say there were some 'lapses' in institutional processes

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The top functionaries of Ashoka University said in a joint statement with Professors Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Arvind Subramanian on Sunday that they regretted the events surrounding the resignations of the two.

The statement, by Chancellor Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor Malabika Sarkar, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Ashish Dhawan, Professor Mehta and Professor Subramanian, said: "We acknowledge that there have been some lapses in institutional processes which we

will work to rectify in consultation with all stakeholders. This will reaffirm our commitment to academic autonomy and freedom which have always been at the core of the Ashoka University ideals

ASHOKA UNIVERSITY



in consultation with all stakeholders. This will reaffirm our commitment to academic autonomy and freedom which have always been at the core of the Ashoka University ideals.

The statement said Profes-

sor Mehta and Professor Subramanian were "sad to be leaving Ashoka" and that they continued to believe that the university "embodies a liberal vision and commitment to academic freedom and autonomy".

The joint statement comes after Professor Mehta told Ashoka University students that he will not withdraw his resignation as "the underlying circumstances that led to [it] will not change for the foreseeable future".

Closed chapter

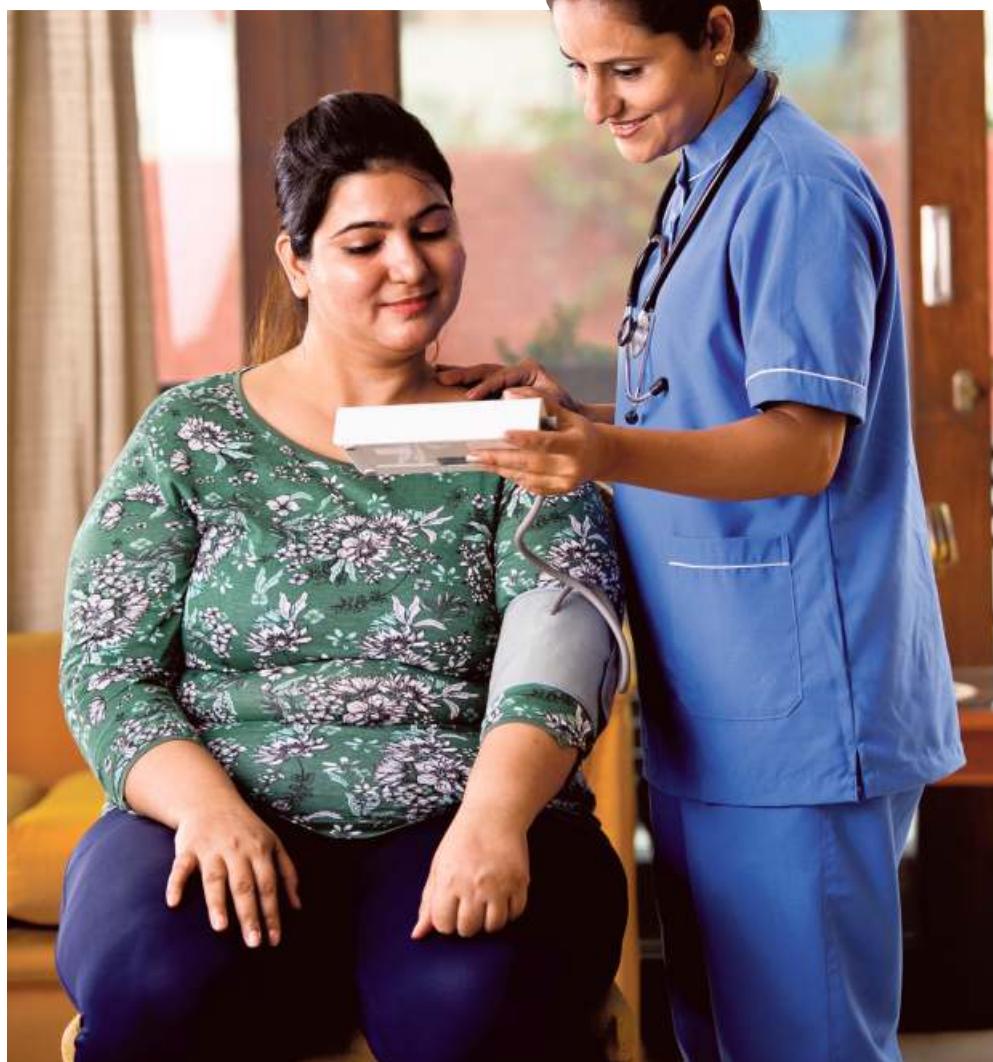
In a letter to his students on Sunday, he insisted that his time with Ashoka was a closed chapter.

"[It] is not an easy decision. But it is, for me, the only honourable thing to do, consistent with my values, values I think you share. I also believe it is in the best in-

terests of the university," he wrote. "The underlying circumstances that led to the resignation will not change for the foreseeable future, in my case, at any rate," he said in the letter.

Professor Mehta resigned earlier this week after a meeting with

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK



Should doctors be role models for the healthy lifestyles they advocate? Would you take dieting advice from an overweight physician? Actually, it depends on the patient

■ DAMON CENTOLA

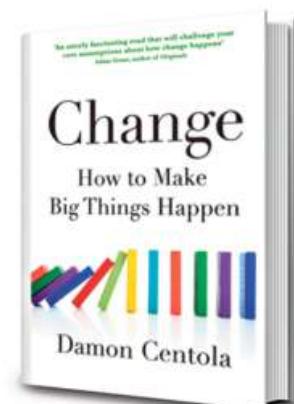
In 2017, two social scientists from Stanford University, Lauren Howe and Benoit Monin, wanted to find out how to make health messages from physicians more effective. For decades, marketing firms have relied on the popular idea that medical experts are the most influential people for spreading health-and-lifestyle changes. If a physician wants you to try a new diet, they would be most convincing if they were to model that behaviour themselves.

But for an obese patient, a healthy physician who advertises the merits of exercise by discussing their personal routine is not in fact likely to be an effective source of influence. In fact, this role-model strategy can backfire: Howe and Monin found that less healthy patients feel judged – even devalued – by physicians who advertise their own healthy lifestyles. The unintended effect is to make patients less receptive to medical advice regarding changes to their diets and exercise habits.

When people need to be convinced that a new behaviour or technology will be useful for them, the most influential contacts are typically people who resemble them. In the diet-diary study, for example, obese participants were far more likely to adopt the innovation when they learned about it from similarly overweight peers. For them, less healthy people were more relevant sources of influence than highly fit ones.

I once attended a lecture by a world expert on the topic of obesity. He presented a chart of height-to-weight ratios and asked the audience to find themselves on that chart. He then proceeded to lecture them on the problem of obesity in the

An influential matter



young, athletic, and fit. In fact, my colleague who spoke up was a runner who had been a competitive athlete all through college and graduate school.

It didn't matter. Nor did it matter that we were all working on health-policy research at the time; somehow the lecturer had made us all feel self-consciously different from him. None of us could even remember the main points of the lecture. All we could think

United States, and the changes that most Americans needed to make to their diets.

Afterward, my colleagues and I stood silently in the lobby. Finally, someone spoke. "I have never felt so defensive in my entire life," he said. "All I could think about was how skinny that lecturer was." We burst into a chorus of agreement.

My colleagues and I were all recent PhDs. All of us were



Doctors' ability to persuade their patients to try something new may come not from their medical authority but from their perceived similarities with the patients

Excerpted with permission from Change: How To Make Big Things Happen by Damon Centola, published by John Murray/ Hachette India

CONVERSATIONS WITH SELF

The importance of being clear



■ TT SRINATH

I have just negotiated sale of a personal asset and while I assumed all was clear when we spoke, several unspoken issues seemed to have remained dormant and not talked through.

Consequently after the deal was done, both the purchaser and I have been left with a feeling of being short-changed.

Our inability to confront what we believe or imagine is 'ugly and uncomfortable' and not address it when it must, results in, as I have just experienced, souring of what may have been a fruitful association and leads to immense trust deficit.

In the process I have been told that I tend to get personal, impatient, and unavailable to reason.

My submission to those like I who have suffered owing to our inability or unwillingness to dialogue, results in such messy situations.

In human interaction 'conflict' or disagreement may arise, yet as was said to me by an eminent businessman, "We can disagree yet we need not become disagreeable." The former may leave both, the other and I perhaps only misunderstood, but the latter will surely reveal us to be intolerant and even obnoxious.

The writer is an organisational and behavioural consultant. He can be contacted at ttsrinath@gmail.com



SWIM season is here

■ SUNALINI MATHEW

Pools are opening up across the country, and while many doctors say they are best avoided because of crowds and the looming second wave of infections, it is not the water itself that is the problem.

The US' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that it "is not aware of any scientific reports of the virus that causes COVID-19 spreading to people

through the water in pools..."

However, it is best to be cautious, check pool protocol, and always maintain physical distance in the water, on the deck, and in changing rooms. Swimming facilities and trainers are putting some precautions in place. Check for these at your local pool.

Know that you may experience reduced use of changing facilities, more physical health checks, and depleted access with advance



Safety first (Top) Aqua aerobics by Pooja Zeuch; (above) One of the pools run by Nisha Millet

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

HOW TO...

Clean Teeth



SREETH KUMAR

1,500ppm," explains Dr Abhirami.

Brush for two minutes with a pea-size amount of toothpaste. The angle of the bristles should be such that it reaches the gum line.

"Brush in a small circular massage-like motion and cover the entire surface of your teeth. Do not be too harsh. Also, avoid a horizontal motion as that can be abrasive," explains Dr Mathew.

Air-dry the brush after each use and store each one's separately, or, "It can cause bacterial transfer," says Dr Abhirami. She also recommends using dental floss and mouthwash once every day. "Floss helps to clean in between the teeth. Do not use anything else like toothpicks or pins to clean these areas. Also, most of the commercially available mouth washes tend to be strong and cause a mild burning sensation. To avoid this, dilute it with water in a 1:1 ratio before using," she adds.

For children

Cleaning of teeth should begin as soon as the first teeth appear, usually when a child is around six months old. One can begin by wiping the teeth with a wet washcloth or a soft silicone brush. As your child is around one, introduce a small-sized, soft-bristled brush. Dr Gopika Sharma, consultant paediatric and preventive dentist, Phoenix Hospital, New Delhi, explains, "Initially just wet it to make it soft before using it. Later, introduce a grain size amount of fluoride toothpaste. After brushing, keep rinsing to a minimum to benefit from the fluoride in the paste. After three years of age, toothpaste can be a pea-size amount."

In this column, we introduce you to or remind you of basic wellness hacks

Pools and trainers are putting protocols in place to make sure people stay safe, but doctors say it is best to avoid a crowd

booking of time slots, restricted numbers, and fewer pools reopening.

Overall ill-health

Manisha Khungar, a swim coach in Gurugram is waiting until April, when summer is fully here, to begin coaching. She wants to wait out the change-of-weather period of "cough-cold" symptoms that overlap with COVID-19 ones".

In order to make sure people do not show up at the pool sick, even if it is a regular flu, pools are now offering add-on periods, so people can sign up to their sickness and not forgo using the facility. "Earlier we would say no to make-up classes; now we would rather people stay away for those two or three weeks and take the classes at a later date," says Nisha Millet, who runs training in 11 centres across Bengaluru. Fitos centres in Delhi-NCR offer this extension too.

Nisha's academy has two-week training classes in addition to month-long ones, because of the overall uncertainty. Most pools will ask for a health declaration.

In the water

Pick a pool that does not allow walk-ins and restricts entry to only a few, so you will need to book a time slot that is fixed. Now, lanes are designated, with one person per lane only, for a metre long physical distancing to be maintained. If there is no lane divide, avoid crowding or standing in groups.

With events having begun, amateur athletes are often in a hurry to get back to training. "Take it slow, and don't judge yourself," says

Manisha, of the loss of pace and form. "A well-conditioned swimmer won't take more than four swims to get back to pre-pandemic levels." She says others may take up to eight weeks. "Stick with the drills, look at stroke and technique correction. Be regular and consistent."

Pooja Zeuch, an aqua aerobics teacher at the Conrad in Bengaluru says her batches have just six people, where earlier there were 15. She now does three sessions rather than one. "I have created stations so that there is social distancing," she says, adding that people would earlier exchange equipment in a circuit, which is not done any longer. "Earlier, if the next batch came in early, I would tell them to get in the pool to wait; now that is not done."

Manisha says many people are opting to get trainers to condominium pools so they are aware of medical history. For tweaks to technique, she has found that she can coach from outside of the water. Nisha says her instructors have been taught to hold the kickboard at one end while the child holds the other, to be as distant as possible.

Before and after a swim
Masks, temperature checks, sanitisation are all a part of on-ground protocol. In addition, make sure you are not touching other people's towels or clothes.

If possible, shower in an outdoor area before you plunge into the pool. You could opt not to enter the changing room after, dry off in the sun, and head home to bathe and change.

AN-ND-E



SANGEETHA DEVI DUNDOO

Haathi Mere Saathi (*Aranya* in Telugu and *Kaadan* in Tamil), the trilingual that is scheduled to release on March 26, narrates the story of a 'jungle man' fighting to save elephants. The film, headlined by Rana Daggubati, stars Shriya Pilgaonkar as a reporter who decides to walk the path of truth and do her bit in the fight for justice.

The film required her and Rana to shoot in all three languages, learning their lines so that the lip-sync would not be off. So far, Shriya has worked in a French movie, Hindi and Marathi films, but this was her first brush with Tamil and Telugu. "I was particular that I won't speak gibberish," she says, referring to a shortcut that some film units and actors tend to take. "Dialogues are an important part of your performance and I wanted to learn the lines from the Tamil, Telugu and Hindi writers," she says, adding that she found the challenge exciting, rather than daunting.

The dense forests are familiar terrain

for director Prabhu Solomon. One of his earlier films, *Kumki*, was the story of a pet elephant being made to masquerade as a fighter/kumki elephant. *Haathi Mere Saathi*, Shriya explains, required the actors to surrender themselves to the director's vision of narrating a story that talks about the need for humans to respect forest boundaries.

Off the grid
She joined the team when they had completed filming in Thailand and moved to Kerala.

"The hotel was a good hour and a half away from the location. We travelled by road to reach the forest zone, where there was no mobile network. Being one with Nature helped me get into character. I liked Arundhati's [her character in the film] arc in the film, she decides to stand her ground and not bow to pressure."

Letting go of urban comforts and roughing it out in the forest, she says, was rewarding. "Prabhu sir was clear how he wanted to tell this story; he want-

'I don't CHOOSE PROJECTS out of fear'

Shriya Pilgaonkar, who will soon be seen in *Haathi Mere Saathi*, asserts that she has a long-term approach to her career in cinema

ed actors who could take that leap of faith and do what was necessary. Stepping into this film after *Baahubali*, Rana went through a transformation."

Haathi Mere Saathi was scheduled to release in April 2020 but was postponed owing to the pandemic. Shriya says the wait will be worth it since this will be an "audio-visual sensory experience where the audience will feel like they are in a forest, watching things unfold." Shriya was noticed in mainstream cinema when she acted in the Shah Rukh Khan starrer *Fan*. She then worked in both films and web series, including *Mirzapur*.

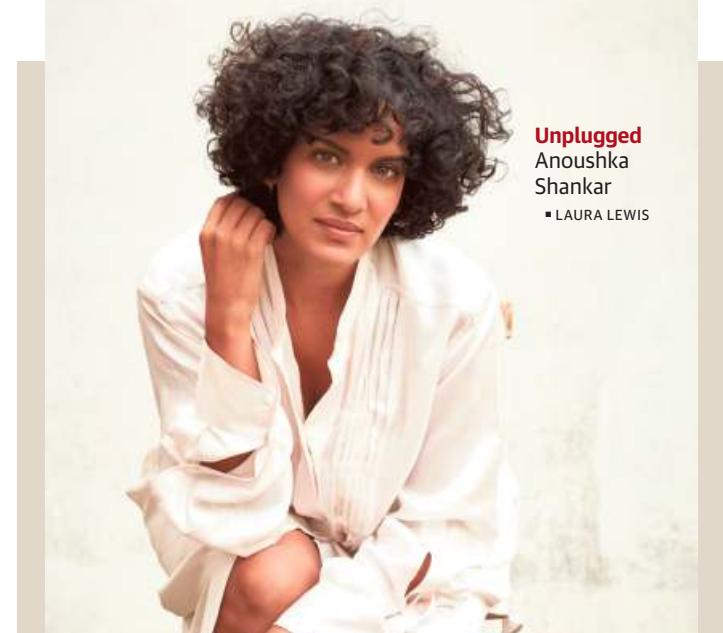
Shriya was noticed in mainstream cinema when she acted in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer *Fan*. She has also been part of *Mirzapur*

50-year career plan

In her growing years, she had observed her parents Sachin and Supriya Pilgaonkar straddling the worlds of television, theatre and cinema. However, she asserts that she never took it for granted that she would be a performer. A competitive swimmer, she also began learning Kathak. "Performing in front of people came naturally to me. Then I took to theatre, documentaries and cinema."

A look shows diversity, not dictated by the need to be in a rat race. "Young actors are often told that their careers might last 10 years. I look at it long-term, say a 50-year career. I don't choose projects out of fear. I am open to working in films and series in different languages within India and internationally. The language-region divisions are blurring."

Jungle tales Shriya Pilgaonkar
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Unplugged
Anoushka Shankar
■ LAURA LEWIS

'De-exotify' the sitar

Ahead of the release of her latest single, 'Sister Susannah', sitar exponent Anoushka Shankar talks about the evolution of the instrument

SWETA AKUNDI

Anoushka Shankar has never shied away from talking about abuse. Four years before the MeToo movement took hold globally, in 2013, the sitar exponent revealed in a video that she had been sexually abused as a child. In the following years, she was candid about her father, Pandit Ravi Shankar, undergoing a similar experience.

So in a way, her latest song, *Sister Susannah* has been years in the making.

Written by poet Nikita Gill, and recited in spoken word by Anoushka over loops of the sitar, the track is a satirical take from the point of view of a controlling man.

"It creates this tension in the song, which I hope will broaden the conversation around abuse and violence," says Anoushka, over a call from her London home, where she is waiting out the pandemic with her two sons.

"*Sister Susannah*" is a song I have toyed with for some time, and the current situation, alongside people's visceral reactions to our rare live performances of the song, prompted me to revisit and release it," she says. The "current situation" is what she calls a shadow pandemic of domestic abuse.

Incidentally, her father taught the instrument to George Harrison of The Beatles, and its staccato form of playing later featured in 'Norwegian Wood'. In India too, there are ongoing experiments with the sitar with an Indian classical metal band, Sitar Metal making the instrument its star.

"Anyone who has a love of a different genre might find use of the sitar within it," says Anoushka, "As long as it is a good musician, who understands the instrument, and also other forms of music. So that they are not just sticking Indian classical on top of that genre, but actually presenting a unique sound. It brings the sitar to a different audience."

uu', and there we are. Someone gets high and 'treeaiuu', flying carpets and 'treeaiuu,' – the sitar, to the world, is a cultural marker of India. The imagery is part of its journey but to limit it to one particular picture does it a disservice," she says.

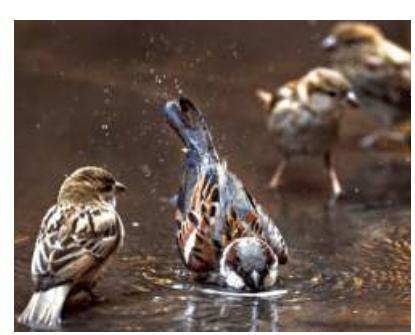
Having been surrounded by Indian classical music all her life – Anoushka had been performing with her father since she was 10, – she says, "I grew up with it, so of course I have all the love and respect for it, but I also think the sitar is a beautiful and fascinating instrument, independent of that musical style," she says.

"Traditionally, the sitar would be recorded with one microphone. It is a phenomenal acoustic with a bright sound, but it also would not translate into other situations very well. If you play with a band, a loud drum kit, or a plugged in guitar for example, the sitar just won't be heard," she says.

She wants to challenge the idea of what a sitar is, by finding different ways of playing it. "What happens if you play just the rhythm strings, or just the resonances? Maybe you don't bend the notes at all but play in a staccato way," she says.

In 'Sister Susannah', Anoushka is creating the same space that we found in her previous album, *Love Letters*, with collaborations with many of the same women musicians and producers, including Alev Lenz. The track, with a few other unreleased singles and remixes, will be included in an extension of the album, called, *Love Letters PS*, to be released this June.

For many years now, Anoushka has been trying to 'de-exotify' the sitar. Her calm and measured voice breaks into peals of laughter as she explains the word she made up. "In any movie there is an opening shot of India, the sitar goes 'treeai-



Hello, neighbour Sparrows cooling off in a pool of water ■ KR DEEPAK

tions and become a citizen-based movement across cities," he adds over call from Nashik.

NFS has city coordinators in New Delhi, Hyderabad and Bengaluru who work at local levels to empower the citizens. Coordinators work towards spreading awareness to create an ecosystem of bird feeders, nests and sources of food for house sparrows in residential localities as well as schools.

Nin Taneja, the Delhi coordinator of NFS, shares, "A couple of years ago, when I was teaching schoolchildren about birds found in our neighbourhood, I saw how a majority of them struggled to identify the house sparrow which used to be an integral part of our lives."

The movement to save house sparrows has spread its wings in semi-urban regions as well. In Odisha, the Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee has been spearheading a campaign. "The

campaign started in 2007 when we began by distributing earthen pot bird nests to homes in Purnabandha village (Ganjam district). Over the years, we have made nests out of coconut husk and plywood, and distributed them across 10 districts in Odisha. Now the sparrow population has increased significantly," says Magatha Behera, who with Rabindranath Sahu is heading the sparrow project in the region.

In Visakhapatnam, documentary filmmaker V Arjun Kumar in association with city-based NGO Green Climate has made a film on sparrow conservation, charting the need to save the species as well as ways to create an ecosystem to make the bird thrive.

While sustaining the citizen movement is important, creating an environment where birds thrive naturally is the only way to secure the future of many such neighbourhood birds.

World Sparrow Day was on March 20.

+ Return of the sociable house sparrow

The friendly bird, whose population has been declining in cities for decades, has found an ally in citizen-led movements across various states

NIVEDITA GANGULY

Over the years, the sparrow has vanished from cityscapes due to a lack of nesting sites and food. The birds are now getting a helping hand from citizen groups across the country. According to conservationist Mohammed Dilawar, the decline in the population of sparrows began much earlier, but it was not until the early 2000s that the need for its conservation was stressed upon.

"About 15 years ago, we realised we

had to start a life-saving project for sparrows if we wanted to hear the chirp again. So we started reaching out to people and authorities to campaign for the bird," says Dilawar, founder and president of Nature Forever Society (NFS). "In the past decade the campaign to save the sparrow has grown beyond organisa-

tions and become a citizen-based move-

ment across cities," he adds over call from Nashik.

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POOCHE CAFE



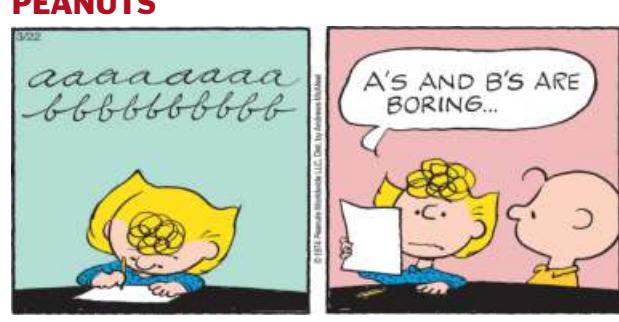
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



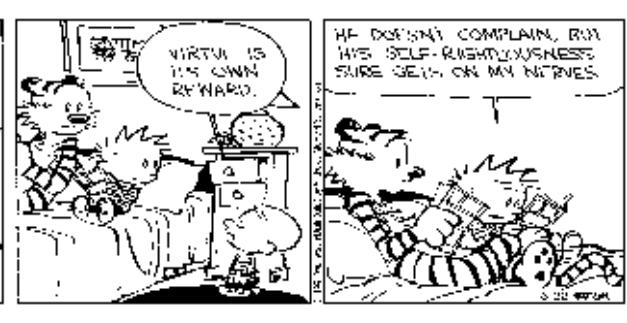
PEANUTS



TIGER



CALVIN AND HOBBES



Protester shot dead in Myanmar, 2 Australians under house arrest

Amid continued bloodshed, hundreds of doctors, nurses march through Mandalay

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

YANGON

Security forces in Myanmar shot dead an anti-coup protester on Sunday, as the Australian government confirmed it is assisting two nationals who were detained after trying to leave Yangon.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since soldiers ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi last month, triggering nationwide protests demanding a return to democracy.

One man was killed on Sunday in the central city of Monywa and at least two people were injured in a clash with security forces at barricades, two witnesses said.

"I saw people carrying a man who was shot and killed," a local resident told AFP, adding the body was taken to a local hospital.

"They used stun grenades and tear gas... later they started shooting. I don't



Sustained protest: Healthcare workers taking part in a rally in Mandalay on Sunday against the military coup. ■ AFP

know if the man, who died on the spot after he was hit on his head, was killed from rubber bullets or live rounds."

Australia's Foreign Ministry confirmed on Sunday it was providing consular assistance to two of its nationals in Myanmar.

"Due to our privacy obligations we will not provide further detail," a spokesman said.

It is understood business consultants Matthew O'Kane and Christa Avery, a dual Canadian-Australian citizen, are under house arrest after trying to leave the country on a relief flight on Friday.

The couple run a bespoke consultancy business in Yangon.

A third Australian, economist Sean Turnell, an advisor to Ms. Suu Kyi, who was arrested a week after the

putsch also remains in custody.

Spate of violence

Weekend violence failed to deter hundreds of doctors and nurses donning hard hats and brandishing posters of Suu Kyi as they marched at dawn through Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city and cultural capital.

Later, other demonstrators placed protest signs in pot plants along a street.

By afternoon there were barricades set on fire, gunfire in the streets and at least four people injured, a doctor in Mandalay said.

Mandalay has been the scene of some of the worst violence from police and soldiers since the coup. The protests came a day after a monitoring group confirmed the killing of four protesters at the hands of security forces around the country.

Philippines accuses China of 'incursion' in disputed sea

Defence Secretary asks Beijing to immediately recall vessels

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MANILA

The Philippines on Sunday accused China of "incursion" after more than 200 militia boats were spotted near a disputed reef in the South China Sea, in a rare rebuke of its superpower neighbour.

The Philippine coast guard detected the boats "in line formation" at the boomerang-shaped Whitsun Reef, around 320 km (175 nautical miles) west of Palawan Island on March 7.

"We call on the Chinese to stop this incursion and immediately recall these boats violating our maritime rights and encroaching into our sovereign territory," Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said in a statement.

"This is a clear provocative action of militarizing the area. These are territories well within Philippine Exclusive Economic Zone."



Troubled waters: Some of the over 200 Chinese boats moored at Whitsun Reef, South China Sea, in this file photo. ■ AP

contested waters announced Saturday the detection of around 220 "Chinese Maritime Militia Vessels" earlier this month. "Despite clear weather at the time, the vessels massed at the reef showed no fishing activities," the agency said.

Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin said on Twitter he had lodged a diplomatic protest over the ships.

The Chinese Embassy in Manila did not respond to a request for comment.

A government task force charged with monitoring the

U.K. warns EU against vaccine export ban

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LONDON

Britain on Sunday warned the European Union against halting exports of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccines if the bloc did not receive promised deliveries first, saying the move would be "counter-productive".

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said "the world is watching" how the EU responds to a shortfall in deliveries of the inoculation from the Anglo-Swedish pharma giant, and that Brussels' reputation was at stake.

His comments follow EU chief Ursula von der Leyen again threatening on Saturday to impose an export ban on the AstraZeneca vaccine unless the company delivers more of the 90 million doses it agreed to supply in the first quarter of 2021.

Appearing on several political talk shows, Mr. Wallace said trying to "balance or build walls" around vaccine production would damage both British and European citizens.

"If contracts get broken, and undertakings, that is a very damaging thing to happen for a trading block that prides itself on the rule of law," he told Sky News.

"It is counterproductive because the one thing we know about vaccine production and manufacture is that it is collaborative."

"They would undermine not only their own citizens' chances of having a proper vaccine programme, but also many other countries around the world with the reputational damage for the EU which they would find very hard to change over the short-term."

Pentagon chief makes surprise visit to Kabul

Biden is reviewing Afghan peace process

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan on Sunday just weeks before Washington is due to withdraw the last of its troops under a deal struck with the Taliban last year.

The visit comes at a crucial time when U.S. President Joe Biden's administration is reviewing the Afghan peace process. Mr. Biden said last week the May 1 deadline agreed by predecessor Donald Trump would be "tough" to meet – prompting outrage from the insurgents, who warned that Washington would be "responsible for the consequences".

The Afghan government is also keen to keep U.S. forces in the country for as long as possible for the vital air cover they provide. After talks with President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday, Mr. Austin would not be drawn for comment on the deadline.

"That's the domain of my boss," he told reporters. "That's the... decision that the President (Biden) will make at some point in time, in terms of how he wants to approach this going forward."

Under the deal thrashed out between the Taliban and Washington, the insurgents pledged also to engage in peace talks with Afghan government negotiators, but they have made almost no progress and fighting has only worsened – particularly



Lloyd Austin

ly in rural areas.

Major urban centres are also in the grip of a bloody terror campaign in the form of attacks targeting politicians, civil servants, academics, rights activists and journalists.

Kabul was the last stop on a whirlwind tour of Asia for the new Pentagon chief, a former career soldier who served in Afghanistan as a division commander from September 2003 until August 2005.

Mr. Austin and his entourage flew into Afghanistan on a U.S.-levered aircraft instead of a military plane that usually carries U.S. officials to the war-torn country.

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Malaysia expels N. Korean diplomats

Pyongyang had snapped ties over extradition of a criminal suspect to the U.S.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KUALA LUMPUR

North Korean diplomats vacated their Embassy in Malaysia and were expelled on Sunday, after the two nations cut diplomatic relations in a spat over the extradition of a North Korean criminal suspect to the United States.

The North Korean flag and Embassy signage were removed from the premise in a Kuala Lumpur suburb. Two buses ferried the diplomats and their families to the airport, where they boarded a flight to Shanghai.

Ties between both countries have been virtually fro-

zenian man to the U.S. to face money laundering charges, a furious North Korea on Friday announced it was terminating ties with Malaysia. In a tit-for-tat response, Malaysia gave North Korean diplomats 48 hours to leave.



Kym Yu Song

zen since the 2017 assassination of the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Two days after Kuala Lumpur extradited a North Ko-

Syria regime's attack kills six civilians in hospital

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIRUT

Syrian regime artillery fire killed six civilians, including a child, when it hit a hospital in the last major rebel bastion of Idlib on Sunday, a war monitor said.

The attack on the northwestern town of Atareb came despite a Russian-Turkish ceasefire since March 2020 supposed to protect the wider jihadist-held stronghold.

It "hit the courtyard and main entrance of the hospital inside a cave," killing six civilians, including a child and a hospital employee, the Syrian Observatory for

Human Rights said.

Eleven others were wounded, including health-care staff, said the Britain-based monitoring group's head Rami Abdel Rahman.

Also on Sunday, artillery fire killed one civilian and wounded three others in the regime-held city of Aleppo, outside the rebel bastion, state news agency SANA said.

The Idlib region, on the border with Turkey, is controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which is led by members of Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, but several rebel groups are also present.

Bolsonaro critics face 'intimidation'

Surge in legal and extra-legal moves to stifle dissent against President: activists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

RIO DE JANEIRO

When the police knocked on Brazilian influencer Felipe Neto's door to tell him he was being investigated for threatening national security, he says his heart skipped a beat.

His crime, it turned out, was accusing far-right President Jair Bolsonaro of "genocide" for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which has left over 290,000 people dead in Brazil.

Brazilian police are also investigating former Cabinet Minister Ciro Gomes for calling Mr. Bolsonaro a "thief" over corruption allegations, sociologist Tiago Costa Rodrigues for calling him a "liar," and even, according to news site Brasil 247, an otherwise unknown citizen named Roger Orsi who shared an anti-Bolsonaro meme on Facebook.

Other critics of the President complain of less-official



Dissent note: Demonstrators taking part in a protest against Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro in Brasilia last week. ■ REUTERS

ly nostalgic.

"The President, his family, his administration and his followers... are blatantly promoting an intimidation campaign against his political opponents, as if free thought and free speech did not exist in this country," newspaper *Estado de São Paulo* said in an editorial on Saturday.

Support for the influencer soon poured in on social media and beyond, making the phrase "Bolsonaro genocida" a top trending topic in Brazil. A judge blocked the investigation, ruling it was legally baseless.

Facing backlash

New York Times, in which he called Mr. Bolsonaro the world's worst President.

In his latest jab, he called Mr. Bolsonaro "genocidal," in reference to the President's attacks on lockdowns, face masks, vaccines and other expert advice for containing COVID-19 deaths.

That led Mr. Bolsonaro's son Carlos, a Rio de Janeiro city councilman, to ask police to open an investigation against Mr. Neto.

"How would he like me to refer to the President, who called the biggest pandemic we've seen in years a 'little flu,' who encourages crowds and tells people to go out like there's nothing happening?" said Mr. Neto.

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GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT CUM MEMBER SECRETARY, RAJASTHAN

MEDICINE RELIEF SOCIETY, SAWAI MAN SINGH HOSPITAL, JAIPUR

(Sawai Man Singh Road, Tank Road, Jaipur, Rajasthan-302004)

(Phone: 0141-2518308, Email: mms.smshospital@gmail.com)

No.(4)Store/SMS/MH/2021/850

Jaipur dated, the 16/3/21

Notice Inviting Bid

Bids for the procurement of Gastro Implant, Accessories, Consumable & Disposable Items are invited from interested bidders up to 5.00 PM on 5-4-21. other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://proc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <http://sprraj.proc.rajasthan.gov.in>) of the state.

UBN No. MCJ2021GLRC00193

DIPR/C/3261

Medical Superintendent cum,

Member Secretary, RMRS,

Sawai Man Singh Hospital, Jaipur

Government of Karnataka
**KARNATAKA SECONDARY EDUCATION
EXAMINATION BOARD**

6th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru - 560 003

Ph: 080- 23349434 Fax:23347670

No: B1/I/L.D.T.21/2020-21

Date:16.03.2021

e-TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Director, Exams, Karnataka Secondary Education Examination Board, hereby invites e-tenders from eligible tenderers for "SUPPLY OF LAPTOP COMPUTERS TO JUNE-JULY-2021 S.S.L.C. EXAM TOPPERS AND MAY/JUNE-2021 2ND PUC EXAM SC & ST TOPPERS" through e-procurement portal only. Tender documents may be downloaded from www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in and www.sslc.karnataka.gov.in. Tender commencement date is 22.03.2021. Pre-bid meeting is on 05.04.2021 at 11.30 a.m. and the last date for submission 22.04.2021 at 11.30 a.m. Approximate value of tender is Rs. 536.90 Lakhs. Further details can be obtained during office hours.

Sd/- (V.Sumangala) Director (Exams)

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

Wear Mask

Follow Physical Distancing

Maintain Hand Hygiene

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

Office of the Chief Engineer(Kaveri),</p

ASK US

N. SREE KANTH

Q. I am working in an NBFC drawing a gross salary of ₹20 lakh p.a. and also getting a pension of ₹5 lakh p.a. from my previous employer. Besides, I get interest income from bank deposits and debentures. I-T returns is filed by including all these incomes. The Form No.16 issued by my employer as well as by my previous employer is supported by the relevant TDS entries in my 26 AS. Whenever income tax is deducted from my salary/pension/ interest etc., the gross amount and the TDS deducted are correctly shown in the 26 AS. But, when TDS is not deducted, my 26 AS does not give the details of such incomes, say interest from banks, etc. My pension income was not disclosed in the 26AS statement in FY 2018-2019, since there was no TDS in FY 2018-2019. Regarding interest received from banks, some banks are correctly showing this interest in the 26AS, whether TDS is deducted or not. When the employees approach the bankers for a housing loan, the bankers insist that the Form 16 issued by the employer be taken from the Income Tax website. But many employers are giving the salary certificates physically prepared, since those employers, not having included these employees in their TDS returns filed due to non-deduction of TDS, are not able to take the Form No. 16 from the site. Kindly enlighten on the statutory provisions when TDS is not deducted from such salary/ interest paid etc.

M.V. BABU

A. TDS with respect to deductions by banks is covered under Section 194A wherein it is the responsibility of the respective banker to deduct TDS at a rate of 10% (when deductee's PAN is available) if the interest that is paid or likely to be paid is more than ₹40,000 for non-senior citizens and ₹50,000 for senior citizens. The bank will file TDS returns in Form 26Q mentioning the amount credited and the TDS deducted on the same each quarter. At the year end, they shall provide the deductee with Form 16A, which serves as a certificate for deduction of TDS. Further, if the interest is not exceeding the amounts aforementioned, the TDS is not required to be deducted on the same by the respective banks.

TDS with respect to deductions by employers is covered under Section 192, wherein it is the responsibility of the employer to deduct TDS on the salary/pension disbursed by them to their employees and also taking into consideration income from house property and income from other sources based on the declarations submitted by their employers. Deductions under Chapter VIA and exemptions are also taken into consideration while arriving at the TDS that is to be deducted. The employer will then file Form 24Q mentioning the amount credited and the TDS deducted on the same each quarter. At the year end, they shall provide the employee with Form 16, which serves as a certificate for deduction of TDS. Further, if the total income as per the declarations do not exceed the taxable limits and after considering rebate under Section 87A the TDS is not required to be deducted on the same by the respective employers.

The furnishing of TDS returns are covered under Section 206 of the I-T Act. In either case, if the deductions are within the limits prescribed under the respective TDS provisions, the deductors are not required to deduct TDS and hence will not provide with the deduction certificates.

Q. I am a 54-year-old with a significant corpus in my EPF. I worked continuously for more than 10 years and resigned in May 2016. I applied for withdrawing my PF as a full and final settlement and applied for Form 19 with the EPFO. However, the EPFO has deducted about 10% tax on the corpus amount and transferred the balance amount to my bank. Why did EPFO deduct this tax?

VENKATRAMAN

A. No TDS deduction is applicable at the time of withdrawal if you were in continuous employment for more than 5 years. Further, no tax is attracted on the same in your hands for the same reason.

You may contact the EPFO and your previous employer on this matter to know the reason why tax was deducted and accordingly follow up on this.

(N. Sree Kanth is Partner, GSS Associates, Chartered Accountants, Chennai)

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to moneywise@thehindu.co.in. Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

A 'foreign' investing t(r)ip!

You need to choose markets that are less correlated

VIDYA BALA

When a stock rises 17 times in 15 days, what happens? You jump in after the 15th day, of course! That is the story of GME (the stock ticker for American electronics games retailer Gamestop) and that of hordes of Indian investors entering the U.S. market - kickstarting their equity journey with a 'foreign stock'. And how? After reading about it in Reddit groups!

No doubt investing in a foreign country can help diversify your portfolio. And specifically, when it comes to investing in the U.S., in stocks of companies you find value in everyday life (Google or Apple or Netflix). The question is, which route to investing in the U.S. is prudent and how much can you expose yourself to a market you know little about. So, here are things you need to know before investing internationally.

First, choosing a foreign stock is no different from choosing an equity share local-

ly. The company's business and financial fundamentals, moat, quality of balance sheet and governance, all matter. If not, foreign stocks too can go down to being penny stocks and destroy your wealth.

Next, you should know which markets to choose. A market that behaves like India may not offer any diversification. So, you need to choose markets that are less correlated or those that offer different opportunities.

Your gains from international investing come from the local market returns plus the currency movement.

For example: The annualised five-year return of the Nasdaq 100 index (as of March 12, 2021) was 25%, as opposed to the 26.5% return of an Indian fund that invests in the same index. Clearly, the additional returns came from the rupee depreciation. But the reverse can also be true in that you may have lower returns if the rupee appreciates. So, currency movements can benefit or

harm you.

Costs involved

You need to be aware of the upfront costs, recurring costs, and taxation when it comes to investing internationally.

First, the exchange rate spread when you buy foreign currency may not work in your favour as the currency exchange fee you are charged for this by your bank/broker may not be competitive at all. This is the upfront cost you incur - somewhat like an entry load as one fund manager put it.

Second, know your tax laws. 2020 saw a new rule of tax collection at source for foreign remittances above ₹7 lakh, at 5%. While this can be claimed in your tax returns, you should be

aware that it is a cash outflow for you if you are investing large sums.

Third, you should be aware of the tax treatment including dividends or capital gains and inheritance tax in the country in which you are investing. In India, the gains from listed foreign stocks are taxed differently from local equity shares. If held for more than two years, it is considered long-

term and taxed at 20%. Otherwise, it is called a short-term gain and taxed at your slab rate. In the fund route, they are treated like debt funds for tax purposes. Dividends too are taxed.

You might need an auditor to help you with all these complexities and her/his fees is an additional charge too!

Fourth, brokerage expenses on purchase or sale of foreign stocks is not as low as it is locally. This is because your local broker is typically associated with a foreign broker and that brings the cost of intermediary into your total cost.

Apart from the cost, you also need to be aware of the pedigree of the international brokers, their registration with the foreign country's regulator, apart from the local firm's history (as there are many new start-ups in this field).

How to?

The above points notwithstanding, there is no denying that your portfolio will stand enriched if you add some international flavour to it. Instead of

going the stock route, taking the ETF/passive fund route, especially in the U.S., can fulfil multiple needs.

One, you need not burn your fingers choosing stocks that may go bust. Two, passive investing is known to beat active funds most of the time in the U.S., and the country has an enviable range of ETFs.

Three, you can do this through the direct investing route (buy ETFs through brokers) or easier still, use Indian funds that invest in such indices in the U.S.

The latter is hassle-free as you invest in rupees (there is no remittance involving you) and yet gain from any currency depreciation. The expense is quite low (less than 0.5%), and you don't even need a broker account if you use the fund route.

Instead of complying with FEMA, RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) and the taxman's law, isn't this a simpler route?

But some caveats apply. As with everything, excess of anything is bad. So, keep your exposure at 10-20% of your portfolio. Second, as is the rule with equities, don't make a beeline seeing high returns. That's poor timing. Third, you should invest only to diversify; not with the intent of earning higher returns than India. The GME rocket can come crashing down in flames too!

(The writer is Co-founder, PrimeInvestor.in)

THINK INVESTOR: RISK APPETITE VS ALLOCATION

The multiple 'risk' personalities in you

Your asset allocation should align with the risk attitude you have towards a goal

VENKATESH BANGARUSWAMY



Common ground: You and your spouse may have different risk attitudes needing reconciliation. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Your spouse could be afraid of socialising because of the fear of contracting the COVID-19. But, you may be adventurous, arguing that wearing a mask and building herd immunity is a better way to counter the virus.

Does your risk attitude towards socialising reflect your behaviour towards personal finance decisions?

Here, we show that you have multiple risk attitudes and how that impacts your personal finance decisions.

Stable traits?

You may socialise with your friends despite the risk of contracting COVID-19, but you may be risk averse while taking investment decisions.

Your spouse could be risk seeking while taking investment decisions, but may not engage in adventurous sports such as bungee jumping. Why?

Risk is the possibility of an adverse outcome in the future. Your risk attitude is a function of perceived benefits and associated risks. So, if you prefer risky investments but not adventurous sports, it could be that you perceive less risk of a market crash and more benefit of higher returns, whereas you attach a high probability of an adverse outcome from

bungee jumping. So, you can be risk-seeking while taking certain decisions and risk averse for others. This means your risk behaviour is not a stable personality trait.

We can extend this argument further. Does your risk behaviour change for each investment decision you take? That is, is it possible that you prefer conservative investments for one life goal, but choose risky investments for another?

Suppose you are pursuing two life goals – saving for your child's college education in 10 years, and planning down payment for a house you want to buy in 8 years. Clearly, your child's education fund is more important than the house. Why? On a philosophical note, you are responsible for

accumulating money to fund your child's education. From a personal finance perspective, the answer is simple – you cannot postpone this goal. So, it takes priority.

Setting priorities for life goals is important because you have to use your income to fund your present lifestyle and also save for the future.

So, investing only in stable income products such as bank deposits will not be possible for all life goals because the amount required will be large. You also have to invest in equity.

But you will be unwilling to take high risk for a high-priority goal such as your child's education, whereas you may accept high risk for the portfolio earmarked to fund the down payment for a house. This indicates that

you have multiple risk personalities associated with your investment decisions.

Your asset allocation is a function of your risk attitude. So, a conservative risk behaviour towards your child's education goal means you should have more bonds and less equity in the portfolio earmarked for this goal.

Whereas, your housing goal can have more equity and less bonds as you have higher risk tolerance for this goal. Note that your asset allocation is driven by your goal priority and not necessarily by the goal you want to achieve first. For instance, investments you make for a 15-year, high-priority goal could have more bonds and less equity than those for a 10-year, low-priority goal.

Setting priorities for life goals is important because you have to use your income to fund your present lifestyle and also save for the future.

So, investing only in stable income products such as bank deposits will not be possible for all life goals because the amount required will be large. You also have to invest in equity.

Remind your investment adviser that you have multiple risk personalities so that the asset allocation is aligned with your risk attitude for every goal.

(The writer offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

BLACKBOARD: MWPA INSURANCE

Rest in peace after taking this life cover

Are you looking to purchase a life insurance policy to financially secure your wife and children in case you are no more? But what if your wife and children don't get even a rupee out of the proceeds when they need it the most? This can happen if you have an ongoing home loan or a business that has incurred debts. In such a situation, the sum assured can be claimed by your creditors or attached by the court for repayment of your debts. But there's good news: you can avoid this by simply buying your life insurance policy under the Married Women's Property Act, 1874.

What is the MWPA Act (Married Women's Property Act, 1874)?

■ Section 6 of this Act highlights its importance: "a policy of insurance effected by any married man on his own life and expressed on the face of it to be for the benefit of his wife, or of his wife and children, or any of them, shall ensure and be deemed to be a trust for the benefit of his wife, or of his wife and children, or any of them according to the interests so expressed, and shall not, so long as any object of the trust remains, be subject to the control of the husband, or to his creditors, or to form part of his estate."

Who can opt for insurance under the MWPA?

■ If you are a resident of India and a married man, you can take an insurance policy under the MWPA. You can also purchase the policy if you are a widower or a divorcee – in such a scenario, you may name your

children as beneficiaries. However, the benefit can only be availed of while taking the policy, and that too if you buy the policy in your own name.

Whom can you name as beneficiaries?

■ The beneficiaries defined in a policy that is covered under the MWPA can be your wife alone, just your child or children, or your wife and children together. As a policyholder, you can assign specific percentages of the sum assured to each beneficiary or divide it in equal amounts. However, once the policy has been issued, you cannot change the beneficiaries. So, when you appoint your wife as the beneficiary and in case you go through a divorce later, your beneficiary (wife) will remain the same.

What else does the MWPA do?

■ As a policyholder, you cannot take a loan against the policies that are endorsed under MWPA. In case you're surrendering a cash-value policy, the proceeds due upon surrendering will go to the beneficiaries. Also, if you survive the policy term, the maturity proceeds would still be paid to your beneficiaries.

How to take an insurance policy under the MWPA?

■ The process of getting an insurance plan endorsed under the MWPA is very simple. All you need to do is fill up an addendum along with your insurance application at the time of taking the policy.

(Source: www.hdfclife.com)

LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Testing... No, I don't want a credit card; No, I don't need a pre-approved loan; No, I don't..."

Bank fixed deposit rates

Bank Name	Highest Slab	1-year tenure	3-year tenure	5-year tenure
SMALL FINANCE BANKS				
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	7.25	6.75	7.00	7.25
Jana Small Finance Bank	7.25	6.75	7.00	7.00
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	7.00	6.75	6.75	6.75
Equitas Small Finance Bank	6.80	6.50	6.65	6.40
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	6.75	6.50	6.75	6.75
AU Small Finance Bank	6.50	5.25	6.50	6.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	6.50	6.50	6.00	5.50
Fincare Small Finance Bank	6.50	6.00	6.30	6.00
Capital Small Finance Bank	6.40	6.00	6.00	6.00
PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS				
DCB Bank	6.75	6.05	6.75	6.75
RBL Bank	6.60	6.50	6.60	6.25
State Bank of Mauritius	6.50	6.50	6.00	6.00

South Africa clinches a thriller

Lee, Wolvaardt mastermind the chase; Shafali, Richa knocks in vain for India



Grit and determination: The spirited South Africans overcame India's challenge to take an unbeatable 2-0 lead. • BCCI

SA IN INDIA

P.K. AJITH KUMAR
LUCKNOW
It was not just a challenging target set by India that the South African women were chasing on Sunday night. They were chasing history too.

And they did it - off the last ball. They won the second T20I by six wickets to claim their first ever series against India in the format.

While poor fielding and catching made things easier for them, chasing 159 was indeed a creditable effort. Opener Lizelle Lee (70, 45b, 11x4, 1x6) and Laura Wolvaardt (53 not out, 39b, 7x4) were the architects.

When the hard-hitting Lee, who was dropped twice, was dismissed by left-arm spinner Radha Yadav in the 16th over, India was back in it. But, Wolvaardt showed nerves of steel to take her side home. Nine was needed off the 20th over, and one off the final delivery. The 21-year-old scampered home

for a single to trigger celebrations in the South Africa dugout.

Earlier, two 17-year-olds - opener Shafali Verma and No. 5 Richa Ghosh - produced quality batting at either end of the Indian innings to ensure that the goodly, vocal crowd had something to cheer about.

India had a poor start once again as skipper Smriti Mandhana edged a wide delivery from seamer Shabnim Ismail to the wicketkeeper.

Harleen Deol, who had made her maiden International half-century just a day ago, was content to play second fiddle to the aggressive Shafali.

On the attack
The teenaged opener hit the experienced Shabnim for three fours in her second over. Shafali then smashed seamer Nadine de Clerk straight over her head for a four before hitting her for a six.

Shafali (47, 31b, 6x4, 2x6) added 79 for the second

wicket with Harleen (31, 31b, 6x4, 2x6), Smriti Mandhana c Jatta b Shabnim 7 (9b, 1x4), Harleen Deol c Shabnim b Bosch 31 (31b, 4x4), Jemimah Rodrigues c Jatta b de Clerk 16 (15b, 2x4), Richa Ghosh (not out) 44 (26b, 8x4), Deepthi Sharma (not out) 7 (8b, 1x4); Extras (w-6): 6; Total (for four wkts. in 20 overs): 159.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Smriti, 1.4 overs), 2-87 (Shafali, 10.6), 3-94 (Harleen, 12.6), 4-129 (Jemimah, 16.4).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Mlaba 4-0-27, Shabnim 4-0-31-1, Khaka 4-0-24-0, de Clerk 3-0-28-1, Bosch 3-0-26-1, Luus 2-0-22-0.

SOUTH AFRICA

Lizelle Lee c & b Radha 70 (45b, 11x4, 1x6), Anneke Bosch b

fifth match, the Siliguri teenager's superb timing and powerful shots saw her compile an unbeaten 26-ball 44 (8x4).

Shafali and Richa's knocks were, however, not enough for India on this night.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Shafali Verma b Mlaba 47 (31b, 6x4, 2x6), Smriti Mandhana c Jatta b Shabnim 7 (9b, 1x4), Harleen Deol c Shabnim b Bosch 31 (31b, 4x4), Jemimah Rodrigues c Jatta b de Clerk 16 (15b, 2x4), Richa Ghosh (not out) 44 (26b, 8x4), Deepthi Sharma (not out) 7 (8b, 1x4); Extras (w-6): 6; Total (for four wkts. in 20 overs): 159.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Bosch, 1.3), 2-66 (Luus, 9.2), 3-116 (Lee, 15.1), 4-140 (du Preez, 18.2).

INDIA BOWLING

Arundhati 4-0-35-0, Rajeshwari 4-0-20-1, Deepthi 3-0-31-0, Radha 4-0-25-1, Simran 2-0-16-0, Harleen 3-0-32-1.

Toss: South Africa.

South Africa won by six wickets off the final delivery and took an unassailable 2-0 lead in three-match series.

Third and final T20I: March 23, 7 p.m.

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INDIA BOWLING

Arundhati 4-0-35-0, Rajeshwari 4-0-20-1, Deepthi 3-0-31-0, Radha 4-0-25-1, Simran 2-0-16-0, Harleen 3-0-32-1.

Toss: South Africa.

South Africa won by six wickets off the final delivery and took an unassailable 2-0 lead in three-match series.

Third and final T20I: March 23, 7 p.m.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-8 (Smriti, 1.4 overs), 2-87 (Shafali, 10.6), 3-94 (Harleen, 12.6), 4-129 (Jemimah, 16.4).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Mlaba 4-0-27, Shabnim 4-0-31-1, Khaka 4-0-24-0, de Clerk 3-0-28-1, Bosch 3-0-26-1, Luus 2-0-22-0.

SOUTH AFRICA

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SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING

Mlaba 4-0-2

IN BRIEF



Zverev beats Tsitsipas, wins Acapulco title

ACAPULCO Second-seeded Alexander Zverev beat top-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 7-6(3) on Saturday to win the ATP Acapulco tournament. World No. 7 German Zverev had lost his last five matches to the World No. 5 from Greece. AFP

Daria Kasatkina clinches second title of year

SAINT PETERSBURG Daria Kasatkina captured her second WTA title of the season as Margarita Gasparian retired with a back injury during the second set of Sunday's final. Kasatkina was leaving 6-3, 2-1. AFP

Karatsev claims maiden ATP title in Dubai

DUBAI Russian Aslan Karatsev won his first ATP Tour title, beating Lloyd Harris 6-3, 6-2 in the Dubai Open final on Saturday. The 27-year-old, who became the first man to reach the semifinals on Grand Slam debut at this year's Australian Open, had won a first Tour title in last week's doubles tournament in Doha alongside Andrey Rublev. AFP

GM Iniyen bags silver

CHENNAI Indian Grandmaster P. Iniyen bagged the silver in the first World University online blitz chess championships recently. Representing Bharathiar, he finished second scoring 5.5 points. He ended up on top in the group phase with 8.5 points from 10 games.

Saurav Ghosal advances

CAIRO India's top-ranked player Saurav Ghosal defeated Tom Richards of England 11-3, 11-8, 11-5 in the second round of the men's PSA Black Ball Squash Open here on Sunday.

ISWAI recognised as a NSF by Sports Ministry

NEW DELHI The Indian Style Wrestling Association of India (ISWAI), formed in 1958, has officially been recognised as a National Sports Federation (NSF) by the Sports Ministry, making it eligible to receive fund and support from the government. Indian style wrestling is an indigenous sport played on mud, unlike professional wrestling, which is contested on the mat. PTI

Chelsea and Manchester City in FA Cup semifinals

LONDON Chelsea moved into the FA Cup semifinals as Oliver Norwood's own goal and Hakim Ziyech's late strike sealed a 2-0 win against Sheffield United on Sunday. Manchester City and Southampton had made the last four on Saturday.

Quarterfinal results: Chelsea 2 (Norwood 24-09, Ziyech 90+2) bt Sheffield United 0; Bournemouth 0 lost to Southampton 3 (Djenepo 37, Redmond 45+2, 59).

Everton 0 lost to Manchester City 2 (Gundogan 84, De Bruyne 90). REUTERS



Scaling new heights: Ganemath overcame a nervous start to shoot in the final with confidence. ■ KAMESH SRINIVASAN

A day to remember for Ganemath

Wins a bronze in skeet, the first-ever World Cup medal for India in women's event

SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN
NEW DELHI

It was a bronze, but a significant one for Indian women as Ganemath Sekhon won a skeet medal in the shooting World Cup at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Sunday.

It was the first ever World Cup medal for India in women's skeet.

Ganemath, who was placed second in qualification with 117, behind eventual gold medallist Amber Hill of Great Britain, overcame a nervous start to deal with the final with confidence.

"I am very excited and happy. I was hoping to enter the final and I am thrilled to

come up with a medal," said Ganemath.

National coach Mansher Singh said it was a good sign that both Ganemath and Kartiki Singh Shaktawat did exceptionally well, both in qualification and the final.

India on top

There were many other medals for India that helped the team climb to the top with three gold, three silver and two bronze medals. USA was in second with three gold and two silver, followed by Denmark with two gold and Iran with one gold.

Both the air pistol teams won the yellow metal for India with authority. Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma and Shahzar Rizvi took time to settle

down as Vietnam enjoyed the lead in the final, but were dominant thereafter to triumph 17-11.

MQS: Amrinder Singh Sekhon 117; Kram Sukhbir Singh 115.

Women: Team air pistol: 1. India (Yashaswini Deswal, Shri Ni- vetha Paramaranthanam, Manu Bhaker) 16 (576) 1731; 2. Poland 8 (567) 1701.

Team air rifle: 1. Denmark 16 (625.9) 1880.7; 2. USA 8 (627.3) 1883.5; 3. Poland 17 (624.1) 1884.3; 4. India (Shriyanka Sadangi, Nisha Kanwar, Apurvi Chandela) 7 (623.7) 1880.8; 2. India (Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Deepak Kumar, Pankaj Kumar) 14 (623.4) 1885.9; 3. Korea 17 (621.2) 1880.3; 4. Iran 15 (620.1) 1869.7.

Skeet: 1. Jesper Hansen (Den) 58 (121); 2. Saif Bin Futaas (UAE)

MQS: Darshna Rathore 117; Zohra Deesawala 106.

Disha helps Vidarbha qualify

SPORTS REPORTER
CHENNAI

Skipper Disha Kasat's unbroken 126 (149, 15x4, 2x6) helped Vidarbha down Karnataka by four runs in the BCCI senior women's one-dayer (Elite Group E) here on Sunday.

The victory ensured Vidarbha qualified for the knockouts by prevailing over Karnataka on head-to-head basis despite both teams being tied on 16 points.

The scores: Vidarbha 216/5 in 50 overs (Disha Kasat 126 n.o., Bharti Fulmal 41) bt Karnataka 212/9 in 50 overs (S. Shubha 85, G. Divya 57, Nurpur Kohale 3/34). **Points:** Vidarbha 4/16; Karnataka 0/16.

Tamil Nadu 132 in 49.4 overs (S. Anusha 77, Babita Negi 3/34) lost to Delhi 133/4 in 41.2 overs (Shweta Sehrawat 35, N. Niranjana 4/23). Delhi 4/12; TN 0/8.

Meghalaya 28 in 20.1 overs (Tanuja Kanwer 6/10) lost to Himachal Pradesh 30/0 in four overs.

Shakib slams BCB

ANI
DHAKA



Shakib Al Hasan. ■ FILE PHOTO

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has hit out at the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) for suggesting that he does not want to play the longest format of the game.

Shakib has clarified that he just doesn't want to play for the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka as he wants to play the Indian Premier League (IPL) for preparing himself for this year's T20 World Cup which will be played in India.

"These two Tests are our last matches in the World Test Championship so it is not as if we are going to play the final. We are at the bottom of the points table. I don't think it makes much of a difference. The other major reason is that the World Cup T20 is in India later this year."

"It is a very important tournament where we have much to achieve. There isn't much to achieve in these two Tests. I think it is a better option that I prepare myself for something bigger," Shakib said.

"Those who keep saying that I don't want to play Tests, I am sure they didn't read my letter. I didn't mention anywhere in my letter to the BCB that I don't want to play Tests. I wrote that I want to play the IPL to prepare myself for the World Cup."

Shakib also said that he clarified in his letter why he wants to skip the Test series against Sri Lanka and the reason was to prepare himself for this year's T20 World Cup.

However, Akram Khan, BCB's cricket operations chairman had said that Shakib doesn't want to play the two Tests against Sri Lanka, to be held from April 21 to May 3.

"Akram Bhai, especially, has repeatedly said that I don't want to play Tests. I think he said it again in an interview yesterday. I guess he never read the letter. People should have a clear idea that I wanted to play the IPL even if ODIs were scheduled during this time," said Shakib.

Those who keep saying that I don't want to play Tests, I am sure they didn't read my letter

Maiden National titles for Arjun Kadhe and Shravalli

Former downs Prithvi while the latter defeats top seed Vaidehi

TENNIS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GURUGRAM

Arjun Kadhe prevailed over Prithvi Sekar 6-3, 6-4 to clinch the men's title in the National hard court tennis championship at the Tennis Project, Baliawas, on Sunday.

In the women's final, second seed Shravalli Bhamidipaty downed top seed Vaidehi Chaudhari 6-2, 7-6(2) for her maiden National title.

Long wait ends

It was the completion of a long wait for the National title for the 27-year-old Arjun who had lost three finals over the years to Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan, Mohit Mayur and Siddharth Vishwakarma.

"I have been searching for this title for quite a while. I am very happy to get the tag, which will be with me for ever," said Arjun, on his way to

"I was impressed with



Shravalli Bhamidipaty.
■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shravalli when I saw her in the National junior championship two years ago. She has a big game and one of the best serves among the new lot. She has improved a lot and hopefully this is her first step towards doing well in the international circuit," said Zeeshan.

The results (finals):
Men: Arjun Kadhe bt Prithvi Sekar 6-3, 6-4. **Women:** Shravalli Bhamidipaty bt Vaidehi Chaudhari 6-2, 7-6(2).



Trophy time: The winners and runners-up with National coach Zeeshan Ali, left, and organisers. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Antwi stars in Gokulam's win

Kerala side goes to the top on better head-to-head results

I-LEAGUE

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

Ghanaian forward Dennis Antwi's brilliant brace helped Gokulam Kerala FC record a 2-1 win over Mohammedan Sporting in a Hero I-League championship round match at the Kalyani Stadium on Sunday.

GKFC has now tied with Tidim Road Athletic Union (TRAU) and Churchill Brothers on 26 points, but leapfrogged both on better head-to-head results to take the

top spot.

All three teams will be in contention for the title during the last round on Saturday.

First strike
GKFC played with purpose and Antwi drew first blood when he chested down the ball inside the box and turned to his left to shoot home in the 19th minute.

Antwi again showed his class when he shot from a tight angle to beat goalkeeper Priyant Singh between his legs in the 33rd minute.

Sporting played better in

the second half as substitute custodian Zafar Ali Mondal made some excellent saves and the forward line created chances.

Sujit Sadhu's 85th minute header put GKFC under pressure but the green shirts managed to hang on to their lead.

The results: GKFC 2 (Dennis Antwi 19, 33) bt Mohd. Sporting 1 (Sujit Sadhu 85).

TRAU 1 (Phalguni Singh 43) drew with Churchill Brothers 1 (Luka Majcen 28).

Roundglass Punjab FC 1 (Chenco Gytshen 37) bt Real Kashmir FC 0.

Juventus suffers shock loss to Benevento

Benzema continues scoring spree as Real moves to second

EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS
TURIN

Benevento dented Juventus's Serie A title hopes on Sunday when Adolfo Gaich's second-half strike sealed a shock 1-0 victory here and ended the relegation battler's 11-match winless run.

The Argentine pounced on a careless pass from Juve mid-fielder Arthur Melo to fire in the decisive goal after 69 minutes, and the toothless host failed to find a way past goalkeeper Lorenzo Montipo.

The defeat left champions Juve in third place, 10 points behind leader Inter Milan with 11 games remaining. Benevento's survival hopes were boosted as they moved seven points clear of the relegation zone in 16th position.

Elsewhere, Atalanta drew level with Juve on 55 points and strengthened its grip on fourth place with a 2-0 win at Hellas Verona.

Real found a third deep in stoppage time when Benzema crowned his exceptional display by sending in a cross to Marco Asensio, who walked the ball over the line.

Real moved up to second in the standings and closed

to continue his insatiable scoring run as his side earned a 3-1 win away to Celta Vigo on Saturday to move to second in the LaLiga behind Atletico Madrid.

Benzema curled a shot into the bottom corner to give Real the lead in the 20th minute after being released by a fine piece of play from Kroos, who danced past a defender before taking out three more with a pass into the feet of his team mate.

Kroos was again involved for the second goal arriving on the half-hour mark, winning the ball back on the edge of the box and allowing Benzema to dribble across the box and score his eighth goal in six matches in all competitions.

Santi Mina headed Celta back into the game in the 40th minute following a free kick. It took a strong save from keeper Thibaut Courtois to prevent Iago Aspas levelling in the second period.

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Real moved up to second in the standings and closed



Ecstatic: Gaich, foreground, is thrilled after scoring for Benevento against Juventus. ■ AP

Bhavani wins ninth straight Nat'l sabre title

RUDRAPUR (UTTARAKHAND)

Bhavani Devi, who recently became the first Indian fencer to secure an Olympic berth, won ninth successive individual National sabre title here on Saturday. ANI

National para athletics championship

BENGALURU The 19th National para athletics Championship is scheduled to be held in Bengaluru from March 24 to 27. The competition has been moved from Chennai owing to cancellation of permission by the Govt. of Tamil Nadu, the Paralympic Committee of India stated on Saturday. Events will be held at the Sree Kanteerava and Vidyanagar stadiums.

CM YK



Ouch, that hurt! LeBron James grimaces as he trips and injures himself in Saturday's game against Atlanta Hawks. ■ AP