



A CHAPTER CLOSED



HONG KONG LEADER  
WELCOMES  
ELECTORAL CHANGES



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

MARKLE ALLEGES  
ROYAL RACISM IN  
EXPLOSIVE INTERVIEW

MANAGEMENT  
PUZZLES FOR T20  
TEAM SELECTION



P6

P9

P10

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 32 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 85% Min: 54%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 32.2°C (+ 3) Min: 18.9°C (+ 5)

SUN RISES

06:36 hrs

MOON RISES

04:50 hrs

SUN SETS

18:26 hrs

MOON SETS

14:31 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Women protest on International Women's Day, in solidarity with the ongoing farmers' agitation against Centre's agri-laws, at Bahadurgarh in Haryana on Monday. AGENCIES

NIA takes over bomb-laden SUV case: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken over the case of a vehicle laden with explosives found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in Mumbai, an official spokesperson said on Monday. The NIA took over the case following orders from the Ministry of Home Affairs, he said. The Scorpio, with 20 gelatin sticks inside, was found near Ambani's high-rise south Mumbai home on 25 February.

French aviation billionaire killed in crash: French billionaire aviation industrialist and member of parliament Olivier Dassault, 69, has died in a helicopter crash along with the pilot. He was heir to a powerful family business empire that made Falcon private jets and Rafale fighter planes and owned many other businesses including *Le Figaro* newspaper. A judicial inquiry for eventual manslaughter charges is under way after Sunday's crash in the town of Touques in Normandy.

Anti-love jihad  
Bill ratified in  
MP Assembly

BHOPAL, 8 MARCH

On International Women's Day today, the Madhya Pradesh State Assembly passed by voice vote a Bill that provides up to 10 years rigorous imprisonment and Rs One lakh fine on forced religious conversions even through marriage or any other fraudulent means.

The 'Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Bill 2020' had earlier been promulgated through an ordinance on 9 January. MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra said during the debate that they would not tolerate that a Rafique turning into a Ravi for 'Love Jihad'. He stressed that they were not against love but against jihad.

Oil prices surge after  
attack on Saudi oil site

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BANGKOK, 8 MARCH

Oil prices pressed higher on Monday after strikes on major oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, shook energy markets already rattled by a decision by oil producers last week to not lift output.

Brent crude, the international standard, surpassed \$70 per barrel for the first time in over a year, gaining \$1.14 to \$70.47 a barrel. It surged \$2.62 on Friday.

Benchmark U.S. crude oil added \$1.10 to \$67.19 per barrel, up 1.7%, falling back from bigger gains earlier in the day. It jumped \$2.26 to \$66.09 per barrel on Friday.

Prices have been recover-

ing in the past few months after plunging last year with the onset of the pandemic.

The devastating winter freeze that hit Texas and other parts of the southern United States last month knocked out production of roughly 4 million barrels per day of U.S. oil, pushing prices above \$60 a barrel.

Last week, with oil prices rising, some observers were expecting the OPEC cartel and its allies to lift more restrictions and let the oil flow more freely. But OPEC agreed to leave most restrictions in place. The strikes on Saudi sites have increased in frequency and precision in recent weeks, raising concerns about Saudi Arabia's air defenses.

Court convicts  
Ariz Khan in  
Batla House case

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

A court here on Monday convicted Ariz Khan, allegedly associated with the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen, for the murder of Delhi police inspector Mohan Chand Sharma and other offences in connection with the 2008 Batla House encounter. Additional Sessions Judge Sandeep Yadav said the evidence produced by the prosecution duly proved the case beyond reasonable doubt.

The judge said that it was duly proved that Ariz Khan and his associates caused murder of police official and fired gunshot on the police official.

The court will hear arguments on the quantum of sentence on 15 March.

SEE P5

Over 18K cases in last 24 hrs; 6  
states account for 86.2 pc cases

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Over 86 per cent of the new Coronavirus cases reported in the past 24 hours come from six states, including Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, the Health Ministry said on Monday.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 11,141, followed by Kerala with 2,100 and Punjab with 1,043 new infections, the ministry said. The Centre is regularly holding high-level review meetings with the states and Union territories showing a surge in new daily cases. "These six states cumulatively account for 86.25 per cent of the new cases reported in the past 24 hours,"

the Ministry said. The government said it had already deployed high-level teams to Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, and Jammu and Kashmir to help them in their fight against the recent Covid spike. Meanwhile, 18 states and Union territories have not reported any Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Delhi logs 239 cases, 3 deaths: Delhi today recorded 239 fresh coronavirus infections and 3 Covid-related deaths, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

These cases were detected out of a relatively lesser count of 47,689 tests, with the positivity rate standing at 0.50 per cent, the health bulletin said.



Day not far  
when country  
will be named  
after Modi: CM



West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "spreading lies and canards" against the TMC government, and said voters, this time, would witness 'Didi versus BJP' fight in all 294 constituencies of the poll-bound state. Taking a dig at Modi over inclusion of his picture in Covid-19 vaccination certificates, she said the "day wasn't far when India will be named after him".

Asserting that she will return to power for the third consecutive time in Bengal, the feisty TMC boss said, "The fight is between me and the BJP in all 294 seats."

"They (BJP leaders) will come to Bengal only during elections and spread canards and lies. He is lecturing us on women's safety. What is the situation of women in BJP-ruled states? What is the situation in Modi's favourite Gujarat?"

The Prime Minister has named a stadium after him. He has put his photographs on Covid-19 vaccination certificates. A day will come when the country will be named after him," Banerjee, who led a rally here on the occasion of International Women's Day, stated.

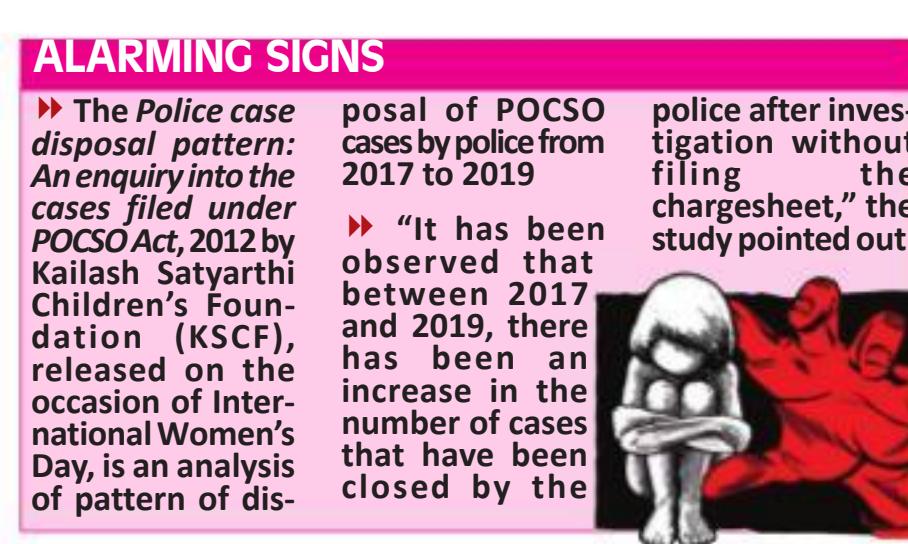
DETAILS ON PAGE 5

4 child abuse survivors denied justice daily

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Everyday four child victims of sexual offences are denied justice due to closure of their cases by police because of insufficient evidence, according to a new study.

The Police case disposal pattern: An enquiry into the cases filed under POCSO Act, 2012 by Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation (KSCF), released on the occasion of International Women's Day, is an analysis of pattern of dis-



has been an increase in the number of cases that have been closed by the police after investigation without filing the chargesheet," the study pointed out.

As the data shows, sexual crimes are increasing in the country over the years.

"While the government recognised the need for a special law and introduced a

child victims of sexual abuse are denied justice every day due to the closure of their cases by police because of insufficient evidence or lack of a clue, the study said.

"It has further been revealed from the NCRB data that in a large number (two-fifths) of POCSO cases which were disposed off/closed by the police without charge sheeting the reason cited was 'cases true but insufficient evidence, or untraced, or no clue,'" it said.

In 2019, 43 per cent of cases were closed by police on this ground as per the final reports filed in court, the study said.

"This is higher than 2017 and 2018. Amongst other reasons, false reporting was the second most prominent reason for closure of POCSO cases, however closure of

cases on this ground has reduced over the years from 40 per cent in 2017 to 33 per cent in 2019," the study said.

Also, another analysis of the POCSO cases for the same period (2017 to 2019) by KSCF reveals that there is an urgent need for courts to expedite the justice delivery mechanism as victims of as many as 89 per cent of the cases of child sexual abuse were awaiting justice at the end of 2019.

"The backlog of cases pending investigation is also increasing from year to year as the number of cases whose investigation is completed in a year is lesser than the number of cases in which chargesheets are filed. This gap demonstrates that police are not devoting adequate resources to deal with these grave crimes," it said.

PM to visit B'desh on 26 Mar;  
first foreign visit since Covid

SNS & AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a visit to Bangladesh on 26 March to participate in the 50th anniversary celebrations of the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. The visit will be his first foreign visit in 15 months amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

According to officials familiar with the visit, Modi and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are likely to flag off a direct passenger train service between Dhaka and New Jalpaiguri in West Bengal.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had visited Dhaka last week to prepare the ground for PM Modi's visit to Dhaka.

upcoming visit and held talks with his counterpart on the progress of bilateral ties.

"This is an important meeting as it is expected to lay the groundwork for the upcoming visit of Indian Prime Minister Modi and his talks with our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina," a Bangladesh Foreign Ministry official said in a statement.

Hasina and Modi had held a virtual summit on December 17 when they jointly flagged off the train service between Haldibari and Chilahati.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen visited India in January during which both sides extensively deliberated on Modi's visit to Dhaka.





The BJP is spreading false propaganda

MAUSAM NOOR, TMC PRESIDENT, MALDA

# Delhi govt performed best in edu, health: Outcome Budget

Manish Sisodia presents Kejriwal govt's fourth consecutive report card of its Budget in the Assembly

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The AAP-led Delhi government's Outcome Budget for 2020-21 — a comprehensive report card of the Delhi government's 2020-21 Budget — was presented by deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in the state Assembly today, which showed education, health, PWD and environment departments as top performers.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal asserted that his government was the only state government in India that gives such an outcome account of its Budget to the people every year.

"The Delhi government presented its Outcome Budget for the consecutive fourth year. This is the only government in the country that itself gives the entire account of its previous Budget to the people," Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi.

The year 2020-21 started in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic and a strict lockdown that led to a shortfall of revenue which affected the progress and achievements of targets set in Delhi's Outcome



Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal attend to attend the Budget Session of the Delhi Assembly on Monday.

SUBRAJ DUTTA

Budget, Sisodia said after presenting it in the Assembly.

The Outcome Budget for 2020-21 has covered 2,113 indicators of 595 schemes of major government departments.

The performance report of the Budget showed that 84 per cent of education indicators were "on track," indicating that over 75 per cent target had been achieved.

Other top performing depart-

ments were health (80 percent), environment (79 per cent), power (75 per cent), PWD (73 per cent) among others.

The Outcome Budget was introduced in 2017-18 by the Kejriwal-led AAP government as a tool linking the Budget with outcomes to capture the progress of various schemes, programmes and projects and final deliverables from the citizens' perspective.

"Presented 4th consecutive Status Report of Outcome Budget of Delhi govt — an exercise that began in 2017-18. Delhi is only state Govt in India that makes suo-moto disclosure across 2500+ indicators of its performance to promote transparency & accountability in public spending," Sisodia tweeted. The pandemic caused great disruption in government routine activities, revenue collection nosedived and resources were targeted to minimise its impact, he said. This coupled with lockdown affected progress and achievements of targets set in Outcome Budget 2020-21, he told the House.

The performance report of Delhi government presented an account of funds used and overall score of a department in terms of percentage of indicators up to December 31, 2020, for a critical set of output and outcome indicators.

In case of the education department, 37 schemes were covered in the Budget. The status of critical indicators highlighted that 35,275 economically weaker section (EWS) students were admitted in private schools

under the RTE Act. The government schools recorded 97.92 pass percentage in Class 12 results in 2019-20.

The Budget covered 56 programmes of the health department consisting of 1,616 output indicators including 499 critical ones. The establishment of 496 Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinics against the target of 750 were among the major indicators.

A total of 1.82 lakh children in 9-11 month age group were fully immunised against target of 2.96 lakh while 1.20 lakh institutional deliveries were assisted through ASHA workers.

The status of critical indicators of the transport department showed fleet utilisation of cluster buses increased while that of DTC buses declined. The bus operation in the city was shut from March 31 to May 18, 2020, during the lockdown.

The percentage of fleet utilisation of cluster buses increased to 98.58 percent against targeted 97 per cent despite halted bus service up to December 2020. The fleet utilisation of DTC decreased to 73.71 per cent against target of 90 per cent.

trade and revenue and financial constraints. Delhi has the second highest per capita income (in real terms) in India. The per capita income of Delhi at current prices during 2020-21 is estimated at Rs 3,54,004 against per capita income of Rs 1,27,768 at national level, the report said.

"Delhi's per capita income during 2020-21 at current prices has been worked out to Rs 3,54,004 as against Rs 3,76,221 during 2019-20 showing a contraction of 5.91 per cent. In real terms, per capita income of Delhi has been estimated at Rs 2,54,001 in 2020-21 as against Rs 2,74,671 in 2019-20 registering a contraction of 7.53 per cent," the Survey said.

It showed predominance of the service sector with its share of contribution to Gross State Value Added (at current prices) at 84.59 per cent during 2020-21 followed by secondary sector (13.56 per cent) and primary sector (1.85 per cent).

The income from trade, hotels and restaurants in Delhi constituted Rs 79,263 crore during 2020-21 (advanced estimate) at current prices, which is nearly 11.18 per cent of Gross State Value Added (GSA) of Delhi (base year 2011-12). More clearly, this sector's contribution to GSA of Delhi during the last ten years was more than 11 per cent.

itsaid.The GSVAofDelhiat2011-12 prices showed a declining trend of agriculture and allied sector. More clearly, the percentage contribution of agriculture sector to GSVA of Delhi at current prices reduced from 0.94 per cent in 2011-12 to 0.38 per cent in 2020-21, it said.

The total gross cropped area in Delhi increased to 43,500 hectares in 2019-20 which was 36,445 hectares during 2011-12, it said.

The report also noted that Delhi's debt problem is "well under control," stating that the government had an outstanding debt of Rs 29,608.31 crore in 2011-12, which was equal to 8.61 percent of its GSDP in 2019-20, with outstanding debt of Rs 34,461.83 crore as on March 31, 2020, the debt-GSDP ratio had declined substantially to 14.15 per cent.

Delhi has maintained its consistent revenue surplus which was Rs 7,499 crore during 2019-20 (provisional) as compared to Rs 6,261 crore in 2018-19. Delhi's revenues surplus was 0.90 percent of GSDP during 2019-20 and 0.91 per cent during 2020-21 (budgetary estimate), the Survey said.

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

**COURT NOTICE**  
In the Court of Sandeep Garg,  
District Judge, Mewat  
CIS No.: CA/02/2018  
CNR No.: HRNU/01/01/16/2018  
Next Date of hearing: 16.04.2021  
at 10.00 a.m.  
**BALDEV Versus VASDEV**  
Civil Action No. 1  
Notice to : 2. Mr. Karan Singh Dev, W/o Ramal Dev and Dio Ram. Doti R/o Mangali Tehsil and District Hissar  
22. Laxman Dass deceased through his LRs(i) Ramesh chand (i) Vinod Kumar (ii) Neeraj Kumar son of Laxman Dass son of Bhawani Dass at R/o 305 Shanti Mahal Gali no. 6, Gough Nagar, Distt. Hissar. 110001. Mrs. Smt. Renu, Wife of Monu Lal and Dio Laxman Dass R/o Kahanpur, District Ajmer Rajasthan viii Babla @ Racha wife of Kavita Kharana and dio Laxman Dass r/o Bahelganj, District Sonipat Haryana. Performers respondents & defendant  
In the above listed petition the respondent(s) could not be served it is ordered that the respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 16.04.2021 at 10.00 A.M.  
For details log on to  
[https://www.hrgovernment.gov.in/?menu\\_id=select\\_notice\\_detail&id=123](http://www.hrgovernment.gov.in/?menu_id=select_notice_detail&id=123)  
(Sandeep Garg)  
District & Sessions Judge, Mewat

**IN THE COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**  
(Testamentary Intestate Jurisdiction)  
Citation U/283, Indian Succession Act, 1925  
In the matter of Test Case No./2021  
Mr. Harinder Singh Chawla  
Versus  
State & Anr.  
— Respondents

To,  
All Concerned  
In the matter of estate of Late Sh. Kartar Singh Chawla S/o Late Sh. Kartar Singh Chawla, r/o A/13, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi.  
Whereas Mr. Harinder Singh Chawla, s/o Late Sh. Kartar Singh Chawla, r/o A/13, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi, 110029 has filed a petition under Section 276/300 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 for grant of Probate in respect of Will dated 13-01-1998 of Sh. Kartar Singh Chawla, deceased.  
And whereas the aforesaid case is fixed for hearing on 10-05-2021 at 10-30 a.m. before the Hon'ble Court. This citation is issued, in terms of Section 283 of the said Act to all persons claiming to have any interest in the properties of the said deceased to come to this Court, file objections, if any and take part in the proceedings on the date specified above for the grant of Probate.

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court, in terms of the order dated 09th day of February, 2021  
Assistant Registrar for Registrar General Seal of the Court

specified above for the grant of Probate.  
Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court, in terms of the order dated 09th day of February, 2021.

Assistant Registrar for Registrar General Seal of the Court

Room No. 11, 2nd Floor  
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi.  
GP - 10/2010  
Tanya Sagar

— Plaintiff  
State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi)  
— Defendant  
Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. VINEET KUMAR  
Addl. District Judge  
Shahdara District  
Room No. 11, 2nd Floor  
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi.  
PC/11/2020  
Ved Prakash Joshi

— Petitioner  
The State  
— Respondents  
To,  
State  
CITATION FOR PUBLICATION  
FOR GRANT OF  
PROBATE/LETTERS OF  
ADMINISTRATION UNDER  
SECTION 276/278 OF THE  
INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT.

Whereas the petition under Section 7 of the Guardian and Wards Act 1890 to the estate of Late Sh. Umesh Sagar, r/o 10159, Gali No. 1, West Gorakhpur, Shahdara, North East Delhi-32, has been made by Tanya Sagar, d/o Late Sh. Umesh Sagar, r/o 10159, Gali No. 1, West Gorakhpur, Shahdara, North East Delhi-32, and the same is hereby given that person having any interest in the administration of the Estate of the said concerned may if he/she desires appear in this Court of the said 08th April, 2021 and she the proceedings before the Court.

Whereas the 08th April, 2021 has been fixed for hearing of the case, Notice is hereby given that any person having interest in the administration of the Estate of the said concerned may if he/she desires appear in this court the said 08th April, 2021 and see the proceedings.

Given under my hand and the Seal of this Court on this 4th day of March, 2021.  
Addl. District Judge  
Shahdara District  
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi.  
Seal of the Court

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING  
ATTENDANCE OF  
DEFENDANT  
(Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code  
of Civil Procedure)

IN THE COURT OF  
SH. AJAY PANDYA  
Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Room No. 317, Third Floor  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.  
SUMMON FOR SETTLEMENT  
OF ISSUES  
(O. V. rr. 1.5)  
In the Court  
Case No. CS DJ/48/2019  
Praveen Garg and Anr.

— Plaintiff  
Versus  
Om Prakash and Ors.  
— Defendant

To,  
Sh. Harvir Singh, s/o Sh.  
Pratap Singh, r/o B-5/26, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi.

Whereas the plaintiff has instituted a suit against you for and you are hereby summoned to file a written statement within 30 days of the service of the present summons and to appear in this Court in person, or by a pleader duly instructed, and able to answer all material questions relating to the suit, or who shall be accompanied by some persons able to answer all such questions, on the 31-03-2021 at 10:00 O'Clock in the forenoon, to

answer the claim and further you are hereby directed to produce on the said day all documents in your possession or power upon which you base your defence or claim for set-off or counter-claim, and where you rely on any other document whether in your possession or power or not, as evidence in support of your defence or claim for set-off or counter-claim, you shall enter such documents in a list to be annexed to the written statement.

Taken notice that, in default of your appearance on the day before the date mentioned the suit will be heard and determined ex parte.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Court, this 10th day of December, 2020.  
Addl. District Judge-II (N/W)  
Rohini Courts, Delhi.  
Place : New Delhi

PUBLIC  
NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE  
Property Bearing No.B-21 (Ground Flr), Westend Commercial Enclave, New Delhi. Be it known to all that my client Mr. SALINA TIMKI SINGH has cancelled/terminated the Memorandum of Understanding dated 28.09.2019 and the Addendum dated 09.08.2020 and also the General Power of Attorney dated 28.09.2019 and 03.09.2019 respectively executed in favour of Ms. Mumtaz Boutique Homes Pvt. Ltd. and Mr. Sarjeet Murjal its managing director and also the Deed of Sale dated 06.09.2019 and Arjan Kohli. It is hereby informed to the public at large that they are not authorized to deal with the said property in any manner and are not dealing and are not dealing with them regarding their sale or purchase or otherwise shall not be binding on my client. A cancellation notice dated 26.02.2021 has been sent to the above said persons on behalf of my client.

I, MONAJIT Biswas, S/o. Mahaprasad Biswas henceforth known as Monojit Biswas, vide an affidavit before me on 17.02.2021. Monojit Biswas & Monajit Biswas same and one identical person.

I, LATIKA Biswas Roy, W/o. Ex Hav 7239920 Gopal Chandra Biswas, R/o. Vill: Sahapur Township, Pin-742723, North 24 Parganas, hereby declare that I 'Latika Biswas Roy' and 'Latika Ray' is same and identical person and my actual D.O.B. is 02.01.1978 and not 15.01.1977 and my daughter's actual D.O.B. is 04.02.1998 and not 04.02.1996 vide affidavit before Ld. Executive Magistrate, Bongaon, North 24 Parganas dated: 23.12.2020.

I, KRISHNA Banduri on 26.02.2021 before the Judicial Magistrate Alipore by me affadavit executed by me all my family members of 59, Kankurgachi 2nd Lane, Kolkata-54, Tax Assessee No. 11-031-07-0666-6 the change of name and title as per affidavit noted below: As per Tax Bill (1) Amarendra Banduri and Amar Banduri (Death Certificate of my husband) (2) Durgaram Banduri (Death Certificate of mother-in-law) (3) Sunil Banduri (Tax Bill) and Suniti Kundu (Death Certificate of sister-in-law), (4) Arati Banduri (Tax Bill) and Arati Patra (Death Certificate of sister-in-law), (5) Minati Banduri (Tax Bill) and Minati Bhadury alias Minati Badury (Death Certificate of sister-in-law) all are same and one identical person.

VIDE affidavit before the 1st Class Judicial Magistrate Alipore dated 3rd Nov., 2016, I Kamal Kishore Sahu residing at Plot No. K-177, Kalina Nagar, Tomondo, Bhubaneswar-751021, P.S.: Chandrasekharpur, Odisha will now be known as Kamal Rizwan. Both Kamal Kishore Sahu and Kamal Rizwan are same and identical person.

The focal point of all the schemes and policies of the Delhi government has been to benefit ordinary women, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday.

He was speaking at an award programme organised by the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

"The focal point of all our schemes has always been to benefit the ordinary woman, and make their life easier.

"In the last five years, all the policies that the Delhi government has made, we have tried to ensure that it benefits the ordinary women," he said.

Among the policies that were made keeping in mind the welfare of women were making power and water free of cost, the chief minister said.

According to Kejriwal, the availability of free electricity and water in the city helped women to run their households efficiently, particularly "when salaries are not increasing but things continue to get expensive".

"Delhi is perhaps the only place in the country that gets free 24X7 power, and you would be surprised to know that the electricity bills of 73 per cent of the people in Delhi is zero. So when that happened, the women were the happiest."

"It helped them run their households more efficiently. They were able to save some Rs 1,000, Rs 1,500, Rs 2,000 every month. Similarly, when we made water free, the ordinary housewife in Delhi was the happiest," he said.

The Delhi government's ini-

tiative to exempt women from paying bus fares, he said, had empowered women students, especially from underprivileged

backgrounds to continue pur-

suing their education.

"When we made buses free

for women, it helped women stu-

dents, especially from the slums,

whose fathers could not afford

to pay the bus fare, to go to col-

leges," he said.

"There are so many women

who take buses to sell fruits

and vegetables. When we made

the buses free, it allowed them



If she is so concerned, she should waive the cess of Rs 37 charged by her government on every litre of petrol.

ON MAMATA BANERJEE'S PROTESTS OVER STEEP HIKE IN FUEL PRICES

BJP MP LOCKET CHATTERJEE

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 09 MARCH 2021

03

# PB Budget '21-22 proposes ₹1,712 cr farm loan waiver

With ₹1,68,015 cr outlay, the Cong-led Punjab govt's last Budget ahead of the state Assembly elections due for early 2022 focuses on agriculture, health, education, and rural & urban infra

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 8 MARCH

**P**unjab finance minister Manpreet Singh Badal today presented the state Budget for the fiscal year 2021-22 in the Assembly, which proposed a farm loan waiver of Rs 1,712 crore for farmers and landless farm workers. This Budget was presented ahead of the Punjab Assembly elections due for early 2022.

Badal said during the past four years, the Capt Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab has provided free power to 14.23 lakh farmers amounting to Rs. 23,851 crore and has resolved

to continue to provide free power to farmers. An amount of Rs 7,180 crore has been provisioned in 2021-22 in this regard for this purpose alone.

The finance minister said under the farm loan waiver scheme, debts amounting to Rs 4,624 crore has already been waived off. He said loans of Rs 1,186 crore of 1.13 lakh farmers and Rs 526 crore of landless farm workers will be waived off in the next phase of this scheme during 2021-22.

From the farm loan waiver, Badal announced that the Punjab government had made provisions for free power for agriculture pump sets in 2021-22 at a cost of Rs



7,180 crore. The announcements come as farmers continue to protest against three farm laws passed by the Centre last year. The Budget also proposed free travels for all women passengers and students in state government buses. For this, an amount of Rs 170 crore will be allocated. This apart, hostels will be built for working women in Jalandhar, Patiala, Ludhiana, Mohali, Mansa, Barnala and Amritsar.

This was the last Budget of the Congress government ahead of the Punjab Assembly polls. With an outlay of Rs 1,68,015 crore, the Budget focused more on agriculture, health, education, and rural

and urban infrastructure.

Badal also announced the launch of a new umbrella scheme—"Kamyab Kisan Khushaal Punjab". Under this scheme, a centre of excellence for vegetables will be set up at Fazilka, a PG institute of horticulture research will be set up in Amritsar, and mobile vending carts will be provided to farmers. A total of Rs 3,780 crore will be spent on this project over the next three years, of which Rs 1,104 crore has been allocated in 2021-22. The Amarinder Singh-led government proposed to raise old-age pension from Rs 750 per month to Rs 1,500 per month. Badal also announced an increase in the amount

under the Shagun scheme from Rs 21,000 to Rs 51,000.

Capt Amarinder Singh described the budget as "pro-farmer and pro-poor". "The growth-oriented budget unveiled today in the Assembly by finance minister Badal was designed to ensure the welfare of all sections of the society," he said.

It was a "people's budget" and "yet another step in the fulfillment of our government's promises" made to the people of Punjab, Capt said, referring to the hike in Shagun and pension amounts and the allocations made for the state's infrastructure development, including the link roads.

## Capt hopes India'll soon see women in defence forces' combat units

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 8 MARCH

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Monday said it was a matter of time India will see women in combat units of the defence forces, as in Israel and some other countries.

While virtually launching several women-centric projects on the International Women's Day, the Punjab CM said women are now occupying positions of eminence across the globe in the new transforming world. He cited the examples of PepsiCo chairperson



tant at the Republic Day Parade 2020.

Capt Amarinder expressed hope that India will also soon see women taking on new challenges in defence forces' combat units. He expressed satisfaction at the fact that girls have been consistently outperforming boys in examinations, supplementing

incomes of poor families through self-help groups, and even serving the nation in the defence forces, while performing their everyday role as a mother, wife, sister and daughter.

The CM called upon the people of Punjab, especially the students, to work towards ensuring equity, justice and

equality for women as without the empowerment of women, no society or household could truly progress. He pointed out that the state government had already provided 33 per cent reservation in government jobs and 50 per cent reservation in elections to Panchayats and Municipal Bodies. Referring to the schemes launched today, the CM said these "out-of-box" initiatives would be instrumental in ensuring women further protection from crimes and in safeguarding their rights in letter and spirit.

The efforts were also continuing to introduce gender sensitisation curriculum in school syllabus and impart skill training to women to improve their employability, capacity building and eliminating anaemia, he said.

## H'yana to take stern steps to curb crimes against women: Khattar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 8 MARCH

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Monday said the state will take stringent measures to curb crimes against women and that strict action will be taken against the guilty.

Launching a campaign to make the state anaemia and malnutrition free at a state-level function organised on International Women's Day, the CM said today women are excelling in every field and the state is sensitive towards decreasing the cases of crimes against women.

Khattar also started a WhatsApp Women Helpline through which women of the state can also complain through WhatsApp at the

number 9478913181 in case of emergency. Earlier, the help line number 181 was available for assistance.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM said numerous schemes ensuring women empowerment are being run in the state.

He said the state provides 50 per cent reservation to women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). He said the state should ensure safety of women and the government has enacted strict laws to curb crimes against women.

Khattar said mere implementation of strict laws will not ensure a safe and secure environment for women. He said that it can be ensured only through imbibing right values among people.



and upgradation of civic amenities.

Union Finance Minister assured the Chief Minister of all possible support to the State Government.

Union Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur, Advisor cum Principal Private Secretary to Chief Minister R N Batta were also present at the meeting.

Jai Ram also called on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at New Delhi today and apprised him about the long pending demand of people residing in Yol Cantonment area in Kangra district and requested for de-notификаion of some area of Yol Cantonment.

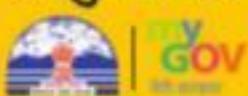
"A notification from the Ministry was awaited since long time," he added.

The Chief Minister also requested the Union Minister for speedy issuance of NOC for construction of road from Banog to Dharkya under PMGSY near Nahar. A 300-metre area of this road falls under defence area and the state government had been requesting for NOC for a long time and the construction work has been stalled, he said.

## स्वप्रिमि हिमाचल शिखर की ओर

### जनमांच से हो रहा जन समस्याओं का मौके पर समाधान

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#### सामाजिक सुरक्षा से बढ़ा सम्मान

विना आय सीमा युद्धावस्था  
फैशन की आयु सीमा को 80 वर्ष से 70 वर्ष  
किया। 5.69 लाख यात्रा व्यक्तियों  
को मिल रही सामाजिक सुरक्षा फैशन

#### सहारा योजना

गम्भीर वीमारी से पीड़ित लोगों के  
लिए संजीवनी बनी सहारा योजना  
प्रतिमाह 2000 रुपये सहायता राशि  
को बढ़ाकर प्रतिमाह 3000 किया

#### युवाओं को स्वरोज़गार व दोज़गार

मुख्यमंत्री स्वावलम्बन योजना  
के अंतर्गत युवाओं को मिल रही  
उद्योग लघानों के लिए 25 प्रतिशत  
और महिलाओं को 30 प्रतिशत  
सहिती

#### हिमाचल गृहिणी सुविधा तथा उज्ज्वला योजना

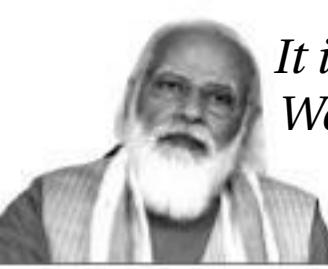
सभी पात्र परिवारों को मुफ़्त गैस  
कणेक्षण देकर प्रदेश ने  
च्चा डिलाइस, हर घर को मिली  
धुएँ से लिजात

#### मुख्यमंत्री सेवा संकल्प हेल्पलाइन 1100

समस्याओं के शीघ्र समाधान  
के लिए मुख्यमंत्री सेवा संकल्प  
हेल्पलाइन 1100 पर कॉल करें

#### नशे के खिलाफ अभियान

आइये एकजुट हो जाएं  
देवभूमि  
को नशे से बचाएं



*It is an opportunity to showcase to the world our achievements since 1947.  
We need to tell people about the sacrifice of freedom movement heroes*

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

SAYING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE BASIS OF CELEBRATIONS FOR INDIA'S 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE



## THUMBNAILS



Actress Lakshmi Manchu plays cricket with women cops as they celebrate International Women's Day at CAR headquarters, in Hyderabad on Monday.

■ AGENCIES

**Counter-terror exercise:** Soldiers from India and Uzbekistan will on Wednesday launch a 10-day joint exercise, named Duslik, at Chaubatia near Ranikhet in Uttarakhand to enhance their capabilities in counter-terrorism operations. J&K-like terror operation situation will be created to enable troops from the two countries to learn from each other and hone up their skills.

SNS

**Polluted rivers:** Assam and Maharashtra have the maximum number of polluted rivers and it accounts for over 27% of the total polluted rivers in the country, revealed the monitoring committee to identify polluted rivers constituted by the Central Pollution Control Board in collaboration with the State Pollution Control Boards/Pollution Control Committees.

SNS

**Rath Yatra on Himachal Day:** Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi at New Delhi on Monday and invited him to the state on 15 April on the occasion of Himachal Day to inaugurate the Rath Yatra showcasing the state's 50 years glorious journey.

SNS

# SC seeks states' response on grant of quota to specific class

Top court will examine question of interpretation of 102nd amendment to the Constitution

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The Supreme Court sought responses from states on Monday on a question of "seminal importance" whether legislatures were competent to declare a particular caste to be socially and educationally backward for grant of quota.

The top court will examine the question of interpretation of the 102nd amendment to the Constitution dealing with reservation to a particular community, named in the list prepared by President.

The 102nd Constitution amendment Act of 2018 inserted Article 338B (deals with structure, duties and powers of National Commission of Backward Class) and 342A

(power of the President to notify a particular caste as Socially and Educationally Backward Class and Parliament's power to change the SEBC list.)

The issue of interpretation of 102nd amendment arose before a five-judge constitution bench while examining a batch of pleas on the validity of the Maratha reservation law and the legal issue of whether a state legislature is competent enough to declare a particular caste to be socially and educationally backward for grant of quota.

The bench, headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan, said it would also hear arguments on the issue of whether the landmark 1992 judgment in the Indra Sawhney case - also known as the Mandal verdict, which caps the quota at 50 per cent



- should be re-looked and referred to a larger bench.

The bench, also comprising justices LNageswara Rao, Abdul Nazeer, Hemant Gupta and S Ravindra Bhat, said it would commence hearing from next Monday and asked states to file a brief note of written submissions on the issue.

"We have considered the submission of different parties and are of the view that the interpretation of 102nd amendment of the Constitution is of seminal importance and, therefore,

notice has to be issued to the states," the bench said.

It noted the submission of senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi, Kapil Sibal and PS Patwalia, appearing for Maharashtra government, the verdict on the question of interpretation of the 102nd amendment might be affecting the federal structure of the states and, therefore, they needed to be heard.

Attorney General KK Venugopal, appearing for the Centre, said the states might be affected with the decision of the court on interpretation of the 102nd amendment and it would be better if notices were issued to all the states.

Some of the parties opposed the issuance of the notice, saying the question of interpretation did not concern them and it might delay the process.

The top court had said on 5 February that it would hear from 8 March in a hybrid manner - a combination of physical and virtual hearings - the pleas pertaining to the 2018 Maharashtra law granting reservation to Marathas in education and jobs.

It had fixed the schedule for hearing of the matter and said it would try to wrap up the hearing on 18 March itself. On 20 January, the Maharashtra government had told the bench that a case of this nature should be heard once physical hearing commences.

Bombay HC, while upholding the law in June 2019, had held that 16 per cent reservation was not justifiable and the quota should not exceed 12 per cent in employment and 13 per cent in admissions.

## Karnataka CM presents tax-free budget

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, 8 MARCH



Chief minister B S Yediyappa today presented a tax-free budget while laying emphasis on women's welfare and development. He highlighted government's plans to update aerospace and defence policies apart from formulating strategies relating to cyber security and data centre.

In 2013 the state government had announced its aerospace policy. Today it accounts for over 65 per cent of the exports from the aerospace and defence sectors. To give a further boost to these sectors, Karnataka is now all set to upgrade the existing policies. Likewise, the policy on cyber security would focus on adopting necessary protection measures.

Presenting his eighth budget today, the CM said it was prepared under the most try-

ing times with the economic activities taking a big hit following natural calamities and Covid-19. The pandemic and lockdown, in turn, had hit revenue collection badly. Yet "it is a people's budget" and "there is neither any increase in tax rates nor any new tax proposals," he said.

The finance minister said he sought to ensure all the committed expenditure, including salary, pension and loan repayment "has been provided for," apart from that on development works.

Efforts had been made to

maintain a balance by giving importance to all classes, sectors and districts, with emphasis on women's welfare, in line with the "International Women's Day." It encouraged self-reliance, protection and entrepreneurship through different programmes, including loan facility at 4 per cent concessional rate up to Rs 2 crore for women entrepreneurs in the service sector.

The total budget size is placed at Rs 2,46,207 crore.

**Punjab proposes farm loan waiver:**

Ahead of early 2022 Assembly polls, Punjab finance minister Manpreet Singh Badal proposed a farm loan waiver worth Rs 1,722 crore for farmers and landless farm workers in the state budget for 2021-22 fiscal year, adds PTI.

The state government resolves to continue to provide

free power to farmers. An amount of Rs 7,180 crore has been provisioned in 2021-22 in this regard.

Another announcement was the free travel for all women passengers and students in state government buses. CM Captain Amarinder Singh described the budget as pro-farmer and pro-poor.

**Maha concession in stamp duty:**

The Maharashtra government's budget for 2021-22, presented on International Women's Day, offered one per cent concession in stamp duty if property is transferred exclusively in women's name.

Deputy CM and finance minister Ajit Pawar on Monday presented a budget with revenue deficit of Rs 10,226 crore in the Assembly. The size of the annual plan is proposed at Rs 1,30,000 crore, he said.

## Miffed, Muslims await TMC word on poll candidate

MANAS R BANNERJEE  
SILIGURI, 8 MARCH

An issue raised by the Trinamul Congress about top BJP leaders being "outsiders" in Bengal seems to have fizzled out after TMC chief Mamata Banerjee on Friday made public the list of 291 party candidates contesting the Assembly elections.

While a section of the people has branded Miss Banerjee an "outsider" after she decided to contest the polls from Nandigram, which is not her home turf, the candidate pick for the high-profile Siliguri constituency in the form of Om Prakash Mishra, who is being considered an "outsider" here, has also not gone down very well with senior TMC leaders

workers.

TMC and religious leaders belonging to the Muslim community in Cooch Behar district have also expressed unhappiness over the decision to field a Hindu candidate from Alipurduar district for the Tufanganj seat. There are nine Assembly constituencies in Cooch Behar, and four of them are general.

Political parties have been usually nominating more than one or two Muslim candidates in Cooch Behar.

Though the TMC had nominated Muslim candidate Fazal Karim Miah and he was elected the MLA from Tufanganj in 2016, this time around, Miss Banerjee has nominated a Hindu, Pranab Kumar Dey (Manik), for the same seat.

Protesting against the decision, several religious organ-

isations recently held a meeting and urged the TMC leadership to reconsider their demand for their candidate for the Tufanganj segment and set up a seven-day deadline.

"If the TMC does not consider their demand, they would be forced to think in another way," a source there said.

Asked to comment, secretary of the Nasheen Sheikh Unnayan Parishad, Aminal Haque, said: "Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is now trying hard to prove herself as a real Hindu just to share the vote bank controlled by the BJP. Committing blunders by appeasing Muslims unethicaly, now she is trying hard to retain power, and she has removed all Muslim leaders from top posts in all block committees."

## BJP, TMC claim majority in Malda ZP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
MALDA, 8 MARCH

With a major switch of Trinamul Congress members of the Malda Zilla Parishad (ZP) to the BJP in Kolkata today, both the parties have claimed that they have a majority on the ZP floor.

## TENDER

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
E-Tender Notice

Dy. CSTE/C/CW/Northern Railway, DRM Office, 2nd floor, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender under Single Packet system from experienced & established contractors having sufficient experience in similar nature of work and satisfying minimum eligibility criteria on the prescribed form for the following work:

Name of work	"S&T work for alteration of PI at Kathua and Madhopur Punjab stations and associated telecom work at adjoining stations in c/w doubling across Ravi Bridge section over Firozpur Division of Northern Railway".
Approximate cost of the work	Rs. 48.03 Lakh
Earnest Money	Nil.
Completion period	03 (Three) months
Date, Time & Place for submission and opening of tender	Tender will be available on www.reps.gov.in website from 10.03.2021 to 11.30 hrs on 01.04.2021 and will be opened on 01.04.2021 after 11.30 hrs. Tender can be uploaded from 18.03.2021 to 11.30 hrs on 01.04.2021 and will be opened on 01.04.2021 after 11.30 hrs.
Address from where tender form can be purchased	E-Tender document cost - Nil. The detailed e-tender notice and document will be available on Northern Railway web site i.e. on www.reps.gov.in from 10.03.2021 11.30 hrs on 01.04.2021, bidders are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which, they would require to obtain class III digital certificate (if already not obtained) issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document.
No: 178-Sig/CW/32/96/Pt-III Dated : 08.03.2021	525/2021
Serving Customers With A Smile	

## Cong, DMK hold second round seat-sharing talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PUDUCHERRY, 8 MARCH

The Congress and DMK on Monday held their second round of seat-sharing talks for the 6 April Puducherry Assembly elections and a pact is likely to be reached soon after top leadership-level parleys.

Emerging from the 45-minute-long deliberations, former chief minister V Narayanasamy told reporters that the DMK delegates informed them about the number of seats the party wanted out of the 30 constituencies in the

union territory.

Declining to make public the quantum demanded by the DMK, he said they would place all the details before the All India Congress Committee.

He said AICC general secretary Dinesh Gundu Rao would have talks with DMK president M K Stalin in Chennai and a final decision on the seat sharing would be taken by Tuesday.

In the 2016 polls, the Congress had contested 21 seats and won 15 while the DMK bagged two of the nine seats it was allotted by the alliance leader.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Name of work with its location 30-Elect-32-T-2020-21-E3 Electrical work in connection with improvement to circulating area development the existing parking, toilets, entry/exit & passenger amenities work etc. at DEE Railway station.

Approx. cost of the works in :- Rs. 38.57 lacs

Address of the office :- Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.

Earnest Money :- Rs. 00.00

Date & time of submission of tender :- 01.04.2021, 12.00 Hrs.

Opening of tender :- 01.04.2021, 12.00 Hrs.

Website & notice board :- www.reps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.

527/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

## ODE TO WOMEN



Paroma, a special train to mark International Women's Day at Burdwan station on Monday. ■ SANJOY KARMAKAR

## Left attacks Modi over poriborton comment

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 8 MARCH

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi announcing "poriborton" (change) in Bengal through a "double-engine" government, the CPI-M has lashed out at the statement and questioned whether such abnormal hike in prices of petrol/diesel and LPG on which the PM refused to talk, can actually bring real development.

The CPI-M politburo member, Md Salim criticised Modi for not even making a single comment on fuel price hike which exacerbated financial crisis.

"Modi talks about double engine government and on the other hand he is selling off the Railways."

He questioned whether the poriborton peddled by BJP in Bengal includes job creation. It was opined that under Modi's regime, unemployment rate in cities have reached almost 10 per cent while in villages it has come down to eight per cent while

lakhs of people lost their jobs.

Taking a dig at "helping the poor" comment by PM, a CPI-M leader questioned, "Why is it that under Modi regime the poor are becoming poorer? 73 per cent of country's assets belong to one per cent of the population."

It was further pointed out that Modi in his previous brigade rallies had promised to bring justice to the people who were cheated in the Sarada, Narada scam but this time it wasn't even raised since the politicians allegedly involved have now switched camps to BJP.

On the occasion of International Women's Day today, the CPI-M criticised the Modi government saying under BJP rule, everyday 85 to 90 women are raped and Uttar Pradesh is leading the statistics in crimes against women with Madhya Pradesh trailing.

"It does not sound good if Modi or Mamata talks about women empowerment," said a CPI-M leader.

## Rift in BJP over Baghmundi seat

DEBAJYOTI CHAKRABORTY  
PURULIA, 8 MARCH

BJP supporters have been agitating against the party's decision to give Baghmundi Assembly seat in Purulia to its alliance partner All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU).

The BJP has fared very well in 2018 three-tier gram panchayat polls and later in the 2019 Lok Sabha votes in Purulia and in Baghmundi Assembly seats also.

This year, the party hoped to do well in the Baghmundi, but the sudden decision by the party's top brass has incensed supporters.

Many of them have expressed their discontentment on social media while others have threatened to quit the party or fight as an independent candidate.

In Jhalda block No. I Jargo More, protesters burnt BJP party flag and the local party leadership have been forced to hold several meetings.

Vidyasagar Chakraborty,

district BJP president, Purulia, said that he wasn't aware of any problem in Baghmundi seat and added that he would enquire about the incident but stressed that everyone has to follow the party's decision.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP candidate has taken a lead of over 52,000 votes in Baghmundi which has been the largest in the district.

The AJSU has supported BJP in the Rajya Sabha and the AJSU chief and former deputy chief minister of Jharkhand, Sudesh Mahato stays in nearby Lagam

Women capable of creating history,  
future with formidable grace...CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI  
ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 09 MARCH 2021

05

## THUMBNAILS



Congress MLA from Barkagaon, Amba Prasad, rides on a horse to mark International Women's Day, as she arrives at Jharkhand Assembly, in Ranchi on Monday. ■ AGENCY

**Wild life disease diagnostic centre:** Gujarat will host National Wildlife Disease Diagnostic Research and Referral Centre. The proposal to set up such a centre is part of a document for Project Lion, drafted by the Gujarat Government and the Wildlife Institute of India. The project also aims to ensure that local communities are the main stakeholders and are benefitted by lion conservation plans, told Minister of State for Environment & Forests Babul Supriyo on Monday. ■ SNS

**Ex-Raj Guv passes away:** Former Rajasthan Governor Anshuman Singh died at a Lucknow hospital on Monday, a month after he was admitted there with coronavirus-related pneumonia. He was 86. Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and several ministers condoled his demise. ■ PTI

**Soldier found dead near LoC:** A soldier was found dead near the LoC in Keran sector of J&K. The official was found dead due to fire from his service weapon, at sentry post on 7 March. "Reasons of his death are being probed," a official said. ■ PTI

# RS adjourned repeatedly after Opp uproar over rising fuel cost

Chairman Venkaiah Naidu mentions Kharje's notice on suspension of session &amp; disapproved talks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

MP Congress president Kamal Nath leads Mahila Congress workers' protest against hike in fuel prices. ■ AGENCY

Meeting for the Budget Session's second phase today, the Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day, after repeated adjournments over the Opposition's demand for an immediate discussion on frequent hikes in fuel prices.

Just after the Zero Hour, chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said he had rejected the notice under Rule 267 for adjournment of business over the fuel price hikes, received from Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, as the subject could be raised during discussions on the Appropriation Bill.

Kharge said the price of petrol had reached Rs 100 per litre and that of diesel about Rs 80. There was a rise of excise duty on diesel by 820 per cent and on petrol by 258 per cent after 2014. The Government had already collected Rs 1.21 lakh crore as revenue from these levies.

The Chairman said that Rule 267 was under the dis-

cretion of the Chair. There would be many opportunities to raise the issue during the forthcoming discussions, he said. As Naidu called for the Question Hour, the Opposition rose to its feet, with many members moving out of their seats. At 10.05am, the chairman adjourned the House till 11 am.

At 11 am, when deputy chairman Harivansh took the Chair, and wanted to proceed with a Bill, the Opposition raised its voice to discuss the fuel price issue. The Deputy Chairman said the Chairman had given his ruling and it was final. Within five minutes, he

adjourned the House till 1 pm. There were two adjournments by vice-chairperson Vandana Chavan from 1 pm, before the House was adjourned for the day at 1.35 pm.

Welcoming the members for the second part of the Budget Session, earlier, the Chairman said the two Houses of Parliament took a three week break for examination of the Demands for Grants of various Ministries and Departments for the financial year 2021-22 by the 24 Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committees.

Naidu complimented

## Will continue to protest against rising inflation: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

The Congress on Monday said it would continue to protest against rising inflation and high prices of petroleum products, and would demand a discussion on the issue in Parliament.

The first day of the second part of the Budget Session of Parliament in Rajya Sabha was virtually washed out due to the uproar created by the Congress.

Congress leader Deepinder Hooda said the entire country, including farmers, are suffering due to the price

Kharge on the assumption of the post of the Leader of the Opposition. A legislator since 1972, Kharge was the Leader of the largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha during 2014-19. He was also the Leader of

rise and inflation. He claimed that price of paddy and wheat have risen only by 30 per cent from 2016 to 2020 but diesel has risen by 89 per cent, and asked when the government will fulfil its promise of doubling farmers' income.

He said the Congress members wanted to raise the issue of 273 farmers who have died during the agitation but not even a word has come from the government.

Congress leader Naseer Hussain said they are being dubbed unparliamentary when they raise the demand for a discussion on the rising prices in Rajya Sabha.

the Opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly twice during 1996-99 and in 2008, the chairman said. Naidu said he was confident the House would benefit from his vast experience.

## Batla House encounter: Court convicts IM man for killing police inspector

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

tember, 2008 in which at least 30 people were killed and over 100 injured.

After the encounter of 19 September, 2008, protest rallies were organised against it by teachers and students of Jamia Millia Islamia University, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which had conducted inquiry in the case on the direction of the Delhi High Court, gave clean chit to Delhi Police.

Two suspected terrorists, Atif Ameen and Mohammad Sajid were killed while two other suspects - Mohammad Saif and Zeeshan were arrested earlier.

Besides murder, the court on Monday also convicted the accused under various other sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC), including 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 333 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt to a public servant in the discharge of his official duty), 353 (assault or use of criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 307 (attempt to murder) and 34 (common intention) and under section 27 (punishment for using arms) of the Arms Act.

## WOMEN IN ACTION



Women officers of Himachal Pradesh Police perform stunts on the occasion of International Women's Day, during an event at Ridge, in Shimla on Monday. ■ AGENCY

## PM buys products from women Self Help Groups

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

On the occasion of International Women's Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday purchased products from women Self Help Groups and entrepreneurs in what is seen as an attempt to give an impetus to women entrepreneurs and Atma-nirbhar Bharat or self-reliant India.

Modi bought embroidered shawl made by the artisans of the Toda Tribe of Tamil Nadu and a traditional shawl from Nagaland.

After buying a Khadi Cotton Madhubani Painted Stole, Modi tweeted: "Khadi is closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and India's rich history. Bought a Khadi Cotton Madhubani Painted Stole. This is a top quality product and is closely associated with the creativity of our citizens. #NariShakti."

After purchasing a hand-made Jute File Folder from West Bengal, Modi tweeted, "I am surely going to use this handmade Jute File Folder from West Bengal. Made by tribal communities of the state, you all must have a jute product from West Bengal in your homes! #NariShakti"

The Prime Minister also purchased a Gamusa made by self-help groups of Kakinada Papung Development Block of Assam and Classic Palm Craft Nilavilakku made by women based in Kerala.

**R&S members demand women reservation:** Several Rajya Sabha members

A traffic police officer honoring a women motorist in Jammu by presenting a flower on the International Women's Day on Monday.

Indian Army on Monday conducted a free medical checkup camp for women on the occasion in the far-flung Sharekhi village in Baderwah of Doda district. About 200 women belonging to various age groups were benefitted from the camp. ■ SNS

on International Women's Day on Tuesday pushed for at least one-third reservation for women in Parliament and state assemblies, saying this will ensure they get adequate representation.

### All women passport seva kendras:

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) today unveiled two of the Passport Seva Kendras, to be transformed as All Women PSK, one at RK Puram, Bhikaji Cama Place in New Delhi and another at Tripunithura, Cochin in Kerala on the occasion of the International Women's Day under its flagship passport seva programme.

## Soon country will be named after Modi: CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 8 MARCH

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today launched her tirade against Prime minister Narendra Modi and said soon India will be named after him.

Miss Banerjee led a massive march from College Square to Dorina Crossing on International Women's Day ahead of Assembly polls which begins on 27 March.

In Siliguri, she had decried rising fuel and LPG prices and today her rally centred around women empowerment. Out of a total of 7.2 crore voters, women comprise almost half or 3.5 crore. In the recently declared candidates' list, she has included 50 women candidates and as her trait has always exhorted the participation of women in politics.

Incidentally, the party has one of the highest numbers of women parliamentarians where 41 per cent of their 22 MPs are women, whereas BJP has only two. In 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the participation rate of women in the state was as high as 81.7 per cent, which is the best among major states in the country.

Taking a dig at Modi, she said he has his photo on vaccine certificates, renames Sardar Vallabhai Patel stadium after him and even ISRO missiles also carry his photo and one day he will change the country's name after him.

She said, "Bengali women are known across the world for their free spirit, for speaking their minds and for leading revolutions". On International Women's Day, celebrated on 8 March, TMC women cell in presence of Miss Banerjee took an oath to reject BJP's fascist regime, a party that has unleashed their agonising reign on women across the country.

She also thanked all those who have participated in the rally. She said, "Girls are our pride. Our prime responsibility is to protect women. We will not let anyone insult women. If mothers didn't run the house there would be no family. Women are everything. All mothers have come together and this is the biggest strength."

Senior party leaders Chandrima Bhattacharya and Mala Roy joined the march.

Among others, actors and now TMC candidates June Maliya, Sayoni Ghosh, Sayantika Banerjee, Koushani Mukherjee were also seen taking part in the rally.

Women not safe in Bengal: Locket BJP MP and party's state general secretary Locket Chatterjee today said chief minister and her government suppressed data on crimes against women in West Bengal and refused to share data with the National Crime Records (NCRB).

Addressing a Press conference at party's election office at Hastings, she said a few days back, Union minister Amit Shah, who was flooded with complaints about series of crimes against women including rape, murder, women trafficking and molestation in West Bengal sought a report from the state which refused to file data on crimes against women. "Miss Banerjee because of election has launched Banglar meye and celebrating International Women's Day. But her police refused to take complaint against rape and molestation," she said.

She said, "Bengali women are known across the world for their free spirit, for speaking their minds and for leading revolutions". On International Women's Day, celebrated on 8 March, TMC women cell in presence of Miss Banerjee took an oath to reject BJP's fascist regime, a party that has unleashed their agonising reign on women across the country.

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## Denied tickets, five irked Trinamul MLAs join BJP

TIRTHANKAR MITRA  
KOLKATA, 8 MARCHSTATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 8 MARCH

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has taken several initiatives funded by the Nirbhaya Fund to enhance the safety and security of women in the country.

In a statement on the International Women's Day today, MHA said a separate Women Safety Division has been set up in the MHA to sensitize States and Union Territories on women safety related issues, including timely completion of investigation of sexual assault cases.

Taking a tough stand against the heinous incidents of sexual assaults, the Government had made the punishment of rape more stringent through the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2018.

To ensure that the amendments in the law effectively translate at ground level, var-

## India among 5 countries account for about half of total child brides in world: UNICEF

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 8 MARCHPRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

needed to mitigate the toll on girls and their families.

By reopening schools, implementing effective laws and policies, ensuring access to health and social services including sexual and reproductive health services and providing comprehensive social protection measures for families, we can significantly reduce a girl's risk of having her childhood stolen through child marriage, said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

With 25 million child marriages averted in the last decade, UNICEF warned on International Women's Day that these gains are now under serious threat. Quoting its previous report, UNICEF said one in three of the world's child brides live in India.

To off-set the impacts of Covid-19 and end the practice by 2030 the target set out in the Sustainable Development Goals progress must be significantly accelerated, it said.

One year into the pandemic, immediate action is

The UN body said persistence of child marriage remains a potential challenge to India achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 by 2030 even as its progress has been one of the strongest among countries in South Asia during the last decade.

The analysis said findings from NFHS surveys between 1992-93 and 2015-16 show the percentage of young women who married in childhood has halved, and the pace of decline has increased in the last decade.

Noting that a girl's risk of getting married before the age of 18 has a direct correlation with their background characteristics, the analysis said, girls in rural areas or from poorer households are at greater risk, and a higher proportion of child brides are found among those with little or no education.

To end child marriage in India, we need to continue to focus on the poorest and most vulnerable girls and their families," said Yasmin Ali Haque, UNICEF India Representative. (representative image)

lor, Nirmal Dutta said. This unique poll campaign will usher in a better standard of election campaigning, he felt.

Dutta is not quite off the mark as posters in earlier elections did not quite make gentle fun of political colossuses ranging

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one female namely Sumitra Thapa W/o Kamal Thapa R/o 2246 Lodhi Road Complex, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi has been missing/ kidnapped from the area of PS: Lodhi Colony, New Delhi since 30.01.2021. In this regard, a case DD No. 26A Dated 30.01.2021 has been registered at P.S. Lodhi Colony, New Delhi. The description of the missing female are as under.

**Age: 30 Years, Complexion: Fair, Height: 5' 1.5", Face: Round, Built: Fatty, Hair: Long & Black, Eyes: Black, Wearing : Suit & Salwar with chunni and sandal in feet. Since efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped female then please inform P.S. Lodhi Colony, New Delhi at following Tel No./e-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in, providing clue about the missing girl.**

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

Fax No. 011-24368639

DP/420/SD/2021

Sd/- SHO  
PS: Lodhi Colony, New Delhi  
Ph.: 011-24611753

paper . thestatesman . com

## Breather for Imran

Pakistan's Prime Minister, Imran Khan, has been afforded a breather. And to summon the terminology of cricket, he will not have to walk back to the pavilion for now. Yet this seemingly reassuring thought ought to be tempered with the fact that Saturday's vote of confidence in the National Assembly, the Lower House of Parliament, was boycotted by the Opposition. Khan had sought the vote following a surprise defeat on a Senate seat ~ the defeat of finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh to the opposition's Yusuf Raza Gilani in a contest last Wednesday. Mr Khan is the leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, the party that helms the ruling coalition, and was elected to power in a general election in 2018. The Prime Minister received 178 votes reposing confidence in his leadership in the 342-member National Assembly; yet the fact remains that the majority mark has barely crossed the half-way mark. It is hard not to wonder whether his government contends with a somewhat brittle foundation. Few will readily buy the Speaker, Asad Qaiser's euphoric statement that "Mr Imran Khan has obtained the vote of confidence from the National Assembly and commands the confidence of the majority of the members of the National Assembly as the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan." Nonetheless, Mr Khan ought to be able to shore up his hold on power, following the defeat of his finance minister.

Historians will record Saturday's vote as one that was cast by a truncated House. On Friday, the opposition's 10-party Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) announced that it would boycott the vote and the opposition benches were virtually deserted throughout the proceedings on Saturday. Addressing the House following the vote, a defiant Mr Khan attacked the opposition for alleged corruption and demanded the Election Commission conduct an inquiry into the Senate race. And this must include "a secret briefing from Pakistan's [intelligence] agencies". Last week, the Supreme Court nullified a government ordinance requiring the vote to be conducted by open and public ballot. In an address to the nation, Mr Khan alleged the opposition had "bought" the votes of members of his ruling party or his allies in order to win Gilani's Senate seat. And this was to show that somehow Imran Khan had lost his majority. The next step was to bring a vote of no-confidence. "The real reason was to use a vote of confidence as a sword over my head to blackmail me into giving them amnesty." Mr Khan doesn't seem to be overly confident in the aftermath of victory in the National Assembly. It is hard not to wonder whether Pakistan and the Prime Minister's party, PTI, are at the crossroads.

## A chapter closed

President Joe Biden has suffered a setback. He will now have to stop pursuing the nomination of Indian-American Neera Tanden for the coveted post of Director of the powerful Office of Management & Budget (OMB). Ms Tanden wrote to the President on Tuesday, seeking to withdraw her nomination. It now transpires that her strongly worded tweets were central to the opposition to her candidacy from Senators on both sides of the aisle. In effect, Mr Biden will have to take, for now, a step back. In the event of winning the nomination, Ms Tanden would have become the first person of colour to lead the White House budget office, which decides funding priorities and ensures that agency rules and proposed legislation are in sync with the administration's policies and budget. President Biden has not had his way at the threshold. Ms Tanden, who was an adviser to Hillary Clinton's 2016 and 2008 campaigns, was director for domestic policy in the White House during the Clinton years and had also advised Barack Obama in his 2008 campaign. Her experience of working with former Presidents is, therefore, considerable. Her nomination has been at risk ever since Joe Manchin, a moderate Democratic Senator from West Virginia, had opposed her candidacy last month, saying that her "overtly partisan statements will have a toxic and detrimental impact on the important working relationship between members of Congress and the next director of the Office of Management and Budget." In a sense, the opposition has come from within the Democratic party. After the November election, Ms Tanden had reportedly deleted over 1,000 tweets and during her confirmation hearing she had repeatedly apologised for her comments. As it turned out, Mr Manchin and Republicans opposing Ms Tanden were criticised by Democrats for adopting double standards for supporting Trump nominees who had made social media attacks and had greater conflicts of interest. Donald Trump himself is known to have made personal attacks, both verbal and written, against his political opponents. Former Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Bernie Sanders, who heads the budget committee that interrogated Ms Tanden, had also expressed concern over her suitability for the post during the confirmation hearing. He had asked Ms Tanden if she would be influenced by corporations that had donated to the Center for American Progress and brought up attacks from Ms Tanden against him and his staff.

However, the White House persisted with Ms Tanden's nomination despite the growing uncertainty, hoping to make up for opposition from the Democratic side of the aisle with support from moderate Republicans. With centrist Republicans like Susan Collins of Maine having signalled their opposition to Ms Tanden, the uncertainty deepened this week following a meeting between Ms Tanden and the moderate Republican Senator, Lisa Murkowski, of Alaska. The deepening uncertainty must have prompted President Biden and Ms Tanden to decide on Tuesday evening to give up her nomination. A crucial chapter is closed.

# Owaisi and UP

It would perhaps be no exaggeration to state that more than Bihar or Bengal, Asaduddin Owaisi's real target is Uttar Pradesh, India's largest and politically most important state, which is to go to the polls in March next year

**A** nxieties over the threatened advent of Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen are causing more political tremors than perhaps justified. The last event was the proposal approach by the Congress to the maulana of Furfura Sharif, who is a popular leader in his area. As has been reported, Owaisi had stated during his visit to West Bengal that he has tied up with Furfura for fighting the forthcoming assembly election together.

Some observers feel that Mamata Banerjee is also worried about a Hyderabad invasion cutting her votes. Owaisi's apparent credibility in eastern India is owed to his party's win in five assembly seats in the recent Bihar assembly polls. In these polls, Owaisi also gained a reputation for being a greater spoiler than a winner.

No matter what he does in West Bengal, it is Uttar Pradesh in 2022 where Owaisi would be revealed to be a true Asad or lion, or merely a regional mouse. Whether his presence achieves a communal polarization in India's largest state, as happened in 1937 will be known soon enough. Within three years of that provincial election, M A Jinnah brought forth the Pakistan Resolution at Lahore.

If Owaisi achieves a big divide, it would be a matter of great challenge to all political parties in the country. For the BJP, the challenge could also be a great opportunity to divide the Muslim vote; Shia-Sunni, Ahmediya versus Muslims, mardana (men) versus janana (women), a common civil code, especially the abolition of polygamy. Plus, the BJP could publicize the pathetic post independence history of Pakistan and how badly Islamabad has treated the Balochs and the Sindhis. Nevertheless, following Owaisi's AIMIM is like asking for a reverse CAA law. For the self-styled secular parties, the threat posed by Owaisi is more immediate. MIM speakers would argue that they are at the exclusive service of their Muslim brethren. Other than them, MIM has nobody else to cater to. The Samajwadi Party has Yadavs and other voters to look after. The Bahujan Samaj Party has particularly Dalits to lead. The Trinamool Congress has more Hindus to cater to than Muslims. Similar is the case with parties like the Telangana Regional Samiti (TRS), Sharad Pawar's NCP and the CPM.

The Congress has always claimed that it represents every segment of Indian society. This has been so since the days of Gandhi. In any case, Muslims



have been voting for the Congress for six decades, Owaisi would argue, but what has the community gained from it? We are a less educated society; some would say rather backward and certainly less well off. This has been the community's refrain since the 1952 elections and continues to be so.

If Muslims vote only for the AIMIM, their identity would be secure. The community can of course ask the party to provide schools and hospitals and also expect jobs. Owaisi can forcefully argue that his party has succeeded in convincing a section of the Muslim qum to not only vote for it, but also enable it to win seats in the recent Bihar elections, and is quite hopeful of making an entry in West Bengal in the state's assembly elections due this year. In opposition to MIM, the secular parties might contend that the MLAs of the MIM would be less than sufficient to form governments. What then would its five MLAs from Bihar do? It will be the same story again and again. Janab Owaisi might feel pleased, but what about those who vote for his party? However, the threat of polarization posed by Owaisi and his party is real.

It would perhaps be no exaggeration to state that more than Bihar or Bengal, Owaisi's real tar-

get is Uttar Pradesh, India's largest and politically most important state, which is to go to the polls in March next year. The BJP not only dominates the state politically but in power headed by Yogi Adityanath has been unequivocal about its Hindutva, which also sees assertive expression from time to time. On the

other hand, there is a sense of angst among the Muslims at having lost the political veto they held over the state's ~ and the nation's ~ politics during the 'secular' heydays of Congress and Samajwadi rule. A good showing by Owaisi's AIMIM in Bihar, Bengal or elsewhere might just be the green light that segments of the community are looking for. It is of course, easy to dismiss such reasoning as alarmist. But one mustn't forget that in the 1937 provincial elections held across India following the passing of the Government of Act of 1935, a near defunct Muslim League not only came back into the political reckoning strongly, but within just five years by 1942, had become the sole spokesperson of the subcontinent's Muslims. The slippery road to Partition thereafter is well known. Significantly, the Muslim League itself fared poorly in the 1937 provincial elections. But the Congress, which claimed to be sole spokesperson for all Indians,

are increasingly transforming themselves into subsets with specific aspirations. Politics, too, is aligning itself around these microcosmic mobilisations.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,  
Nadia, 3 March.

### THE MAGIC FIGURE

SIR, This is to counter Mr Iftekhar Ahmed's letter 'BJP unlikely to win magic figure' (3 March). Suffering from paranoia arising out of fear mongering by the 'secular' parties joining hands with the clerics like Abbas Siddique, Mr Iftekhar Ahmed appears to have tacitly condemned a web of lies, corruption and the menace of extortion in a desperate attempt to create a smoke screen lest the facade of Mamata Banerjee being "a symbol of honesty" be exposed.

Mamata Banerjee herself admitted the menace of Syndicate Raj when she asked the *netas* to return the 'cut money'. Today the job-aspiring youths are the worst hit, with the runaway corruption in the recruitment process hitting the roof. Almost every day the job aspirants are seen agitating on the street for fair recruitment. The Kolkata HC stayed a number of recruitments on the grounds of lack of transparency. The real Amphan beneficiaries have been duped, with the

fared very badly in the Muslim seats of the United Provinces (as Uttar Pradesh was then known). Of the sixty Muslim seats in UP, the Congress contested nine but did not win a single one. However, its spectacular performance in the General seats enabled it to form provincial governments, as it now had comfortable legislative majorities of its own.

Earlier commitments of incorporating the Muslim League were soon dumped; in UP for example, the Congress agreed to include some leaders of the Muslim League into the government only if they agreed to dissolve the Muslim League in UP and merge themselves into the Congress. The League in no mood to commit political suicide, naturally refused. It now turned increasingly and firmly to M A Jinnah as its only saviour.

More significantly, Jinnah and the Muslim League used the 1937 elections to portray the Congress as a Hindu-only party. The perception was successfully utilized in galvanizing Muslim masses and political leaders in Punjab and Bengal. The prospect of de-colonization and the thought of an India under Congress, i.e., Hindu rule was anathema to them. They realized they needed a leader and forceful negotiator to advance their interests, which Jinnah repeatedly told them could be guaranteed only by the carving out of a separate state for themselves based on religious identity. Arguably, the UP and India of 2022 are very different from 1937. But the intransigence once of a particular community and political leaders waiting to exploit it are eerily similar.

Admittedly, the signs are not reassuring. No one in his or her right mind can even contemplate another partition along religious lines as a solution to this polarized existence. The times of the 1930s and 1940s were different; the majority community then in awe of Gandhi went out of its way to seek accommodation with others. But with the majority having turned assertive and stridently nationalist, any talk of a vivisection would be tantamount to wishing for civil war.

Clearly, the onus of taking a moderate path is squarely upon the religious minorities. No nation or modern polity can survive, leave alone prosper by continually caving in to obscurantist religious demands, which only invite backlash and are counterproductive to those indulging in it. Muslims are thus in need of genuinely moderate leaders and organizations which will lead them out of the dark fantasies of failed and destructive ideas and enable them to march lockstep with progress and modernity.

A MEMBER OF THE **NN**  
ASIAN VOICES

## Peak water

Political interference and project mismanagement, corruption and extortion, countless controversies, multiple deadlines and almost two decades later, there is finally water at the end of the tunnel. It is a significant milestone for the elusive Melamchi Water Tunnel project which is expected to divert 170 million litres of water per day from the Melamchi River in Sindhupalchok district to the Kathmandu Valley, where daily demand is estimated at 400 million litres.

While officials say it will take at least two months before Melamchi water is supplied to Valley residents, it has long been clear that 'Melamchi's water' will not be enough to fulfil the demand of households even when the second phase of the project, that is expected to supply another 340 million litres of water from the Yangri and Larke rivers, is complete. It is a major supply deficit, and the gap continues to widen primarily because of increased migration into the Valley from across the country and haphazard urbanisation that is now spreading beyond the city suburbs to the surrounding hills, which do not have national park status. These two factors alone threaten existing water resources. They have destroyed groundwater recharge systems and aquifers, and reduced the Valley's water table, according to water experts who foresee an acute shortage of water if we continue to ignore environmental truths while pursuing a foolhardy path to economic prosperity. While the long wait for Melamchi's water is now over, it is also proof that it is an unsustainable solution to addressing the water woes of the Valley or across the country, where water shortages continue to make life hard for the people. Worse, geological events and the effects of climate change and underground water extraction have put forth a new set of problems for the country. The government needs to understand that our sit-

**THE KATHMANDU POST**

uation will only deteriorate without scientific urban planning and investments in place for research and development. An environmental issue such as water scarcity, both natural and human-induced, requires innovative solutions that need scientific assessment for its sustainability. The Valley's water crisis has only exacerbated in the past four decades. At peak supply, Kathmandu Upatyaka Khanepani Limited claims to supply about 103 million litres a day which can go down to as meagre as 80 million litres a day or less in the winter. This is an ecological emergency that hasn't received the attention it should. As the water problems of the Valley residents grow by the day, the government has instead proposed mega projects in the Valley that will further increase the population and, unquestionably, demand for water. Water is an essential element of life. It is one of the most precious resources which is equally important for food security. Disruptions in water supply add to the economic burden of the people who have to spend more to purchase water for drinking and utility.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

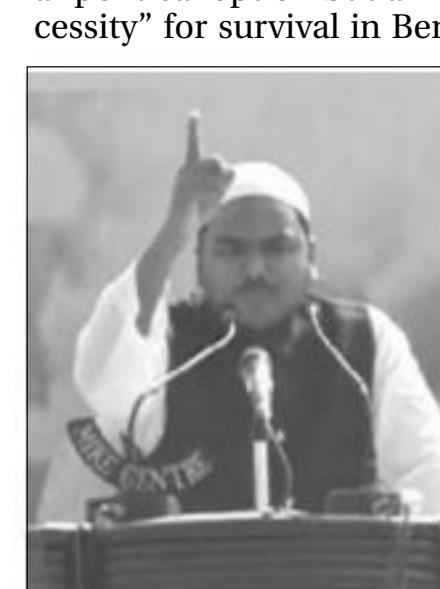
editor@thestatesman.com

## Rift in the grand alliance lute

SIR, This refers to the editorial, "Stuttering start" (3 March). The grand alliance of the Left parties, the Congress and the Indian Secular Front (ISF) on Sunday showed signs of cracks even before a final seat adjustment was sealed when ISF founder and Furfura peer Abbas Siddique heaped praise on praise on the Left Front leadership but attacked the Congress saying Congress President Sonia Gandhi is in favour of the alliance but some in the State are delaying the process.

Bengal's assembly election is being largely seen as a two-way contest between the ruling Trinamul Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party that has emerged as the principal challenger. Sunday's public meeting at Brigade Parade Ground proved that the third fledgling alternative may have pockets of influence, especially in minority-dominated areas. This is because the ISF is likely to concentrate its efforts on mobilising the Muslim vote that, some estimate, could decide the outcome in numerous seats.

Ironically, the ISF's perceived strength could weaken its allies. The Congress is worried about the ISF cutting into its traditional vote-base in North Bengal: its talks of seat-sharing with the



ISF have run into rough weather. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), too, knows that the Muslim vote could be crucial to its resurgence. The CPI-M has become inconsequential in national politics. A pre-poll alliance with the secular and democratic parties was not a "political option but a necessity" for survival in Ben-

gal. The Trinamul Congress would be keeping an anxious eye on a possible split in the minority vote. Although the BJP is likely to gain as a result of such a fracture and the counter-mobilisation that it would engineer among orthodox Hindus, an energised Left could also mean that some segments of voters, who had traded red for saffron, may be willing to return to their original party of choice. Traditional constituencies ~ Hindus, Muslims and caste groups ~ are

increasingly transforming themselves into subsets with specific aspirations. Politics, too, is aligning itself around these microcosmic mobilisations.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,  
Nadia, 3 March.

### THE MAGIC FIGURE

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Mamata Banerjee herself admitted the menace of Syndicate Raj when she asked the *netas* to return the 'cut money'. Today the job-aspiring youths are the worst hit, with the runaway corruption in the recruitment process hitting the roof. Almost every day the job aspirants are seen agitating on the street for fair recruitment. The Kolkata HC stayed a number of recruitments on the grounds of lack of transparency. The real Amphan beneficiaries have been duped, with the

money being siphoned off to swell the pockets of TMC cadres. Even Kolkata HC ruled in favour of CAG investigating the financial misappropriation of Amphan relief package. Who can deny the fact that the acceptability and credibility of Mamata Banerjee has waned to a great degree, thanks to the local mafiosi eking out political fortunes from the crumbs of the state's gig economy? With Mamata Banerjee failing to invite major investment in the state, Joblessness will assume a humongous proportion in the coming days. One can vote for TMC at his own peril. The mask has fallen off. Contrary to what Mr Ahmed said, people of Bengal are sharply divided on the lines of religion, with Mamata Banerjee herself to be blamed. Mobilising around Muslim identity politics without addressing their real grievances, Mamata Banerjee has triggered a reverse polarisation.

Yours, etc., Sudipta Ghosh,  
Jangipur, 3 March.

### STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

SIR, Apropos the report, "Delhi municipal bypolls: AAP wins 4 wards, Cong 1", Arvind Kejriwal and his political outfit is progressing from strength to strength. Only last year, the AAP had swept the Delhi assembly elections and on Wednesday it won four of the five civic wards in Delhi in the Municipal Corporation bypolls.

The AAP has certainly stamped its political authority with dignity in the national capital ahead of the civic polls due in 2022. The AAP, led by Kejriwal, is said to have done commendable work in the state with regard to social schemes, housing, healthcare, education, drinking water, electricity tariffs, etc. It has also sincerely worked towards the uplift of the marginalised and lesser privileged segments within society. Above all, most can-

### VACCINE HURDLES

SIR, The effectiveness of 80.6 per cent for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin at the first interim analysis of phase-3 trials in India is indeed promising, though it took two months for the data to be available after the vaccine was approved for 'restricted emergency use' by the Indian drug regulator. The vaccine efficacy which was measured on the basis of symptomatic Covid ~ mild, moderate or severe, two weeks after the second dose, seems to be quite satisfactory. As per the phase-I data published in *The Lancet*, Covaxin appears to be safe and highly immunogenic, and has also been found to be effective against the B.1.1.7 variant first found in Britain. Although, Covaxin accounts for less than 10 per cent of all Covid-19 vaccinations in India against the absolute number of vaccinations at over 1.6 crore till date, no deaths associated with this vaccine have been reported so far. The Indian regulator should therefore revise the restricted emergency use approval. Covaxin ought to be treated on a par with Covishield and should no longer seek additional precautions in the form of signed consent before vaccination and also remove the label "clinical trial mode" from the approval. With a narrow window of opportunity available to vaccinate people before a second wave probably sets in or dangerous variants get established, India can't afford to have hurdles in the uptake of either vaccine.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 5 March.

With the AAP gaining acceptability and acknowledgement from the local populace in Delhi, it will apparently be a huge challenge for both the BJP and the Congress to make significant inroads in next year's MCD polls, and the opposition parties will have to function unitedly.

Yours, etc., Anupam Neogi, Kolkata, 5 March.

HARSHA KAKAR

The Myanmar army took over the country in a coup on 1 February by removing the elected government. Myanmar had previously remained under army rule from 1962 to 2011. Democracy in the country was still fragile, with the army calling the shots from behind. The elected government had to play a balancing act in seeking to maintain a facade of democracy while keeping the position of the army secure. The recent elections, where Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory, caused ripples of fear within the army, which felt a threat to its power.

The population of Myanmar had witnessed a period of growth and freedom under democracy and hence were unwilling to be pushed back under the yoke of the army. Protests have rocked the country since the army takeover. Reports claim many have been killed and thousands arrested; however, there are no signs of protests slowing down.

Aung San Suu Kyi and members of her government are under arrest and face charges which could land them prison terms, ending Myanmar's short-lived freedom. World powers are rising in anger, demanding restoration of democracy and placing sanctions on the military leadership. Sanctions have never impacted Myanmar. It has faced them throughout five decades of army rule from 1962 to 2011. The two countries maintaining a studied silence are India and China, both neighbours of Myanmar. China has always supported autocratic governments and would come to the rescue of nations facing global pressure, seeking to win them over.

Indian silence is because it does not want the country to move into the Chinese embrace. A Myanmar riddled with instability and in the grip of China can enhance security concerns for India with North East terrorist groups gaining a lease of life as also China gaining a strategic foothold in the country. It would stall the India-Myanmar-Thailand tri-lateral highway and the Kaladan project, part of India's Act East policy. While China would block any move by the UN Security Council to censure Myanmar, India has been advising western nations to consider alternate options to sanctions. India desires stability in the region.

## Self-interest must guide India in Myanmar

There is no question that coups are against the global norm and return to democracy must be demanded. However, pushing for democracy by application of sanctions may not be the right approach as it would further isolate a nation which had recently joined the global stage after decades of self-imposed isolation. Application of even strict sanctions has not changed the behaviour of either Iran or North Korea. The population suffers, enhancing anger against nations imposing sanctions, while leaders continue to remain unhindered in power. Currently, while sanctions may appear as the most plausible approach, they are unrealistic.

Many western nations, including the US, support autocratic governments with a worse record of human rights where it suits them, while criticizing others where it does not. In any case, if the military is to continue remaining relevant in Myanmar, it cannot restore democracy early; however, it can release arrested politicians, as a sign of goodwill. That should be the global demand and would only come about with talks, and not under pressure or threats.

The visit last year by the Indian foreign secretary and army chief to Myanmar was a display of understanding between the political leadership and armies of both nations. India and Myanmar have collaborated in operations against insurgent bases on Myanmar soil. India has provided weapons to Myanmar and has also gifted the country a submarine. It trains Myanmar's military personnel in its academies.

China, on the other hand, is providing the country with wherewithal to crush protests opposing the coup. Chinese manufactured teargas and other crowd-control equipment have been seen wherever the police have retaliated against the protesters. Reports state that while there are no international flights arriving or departing from Myanmar, there are



daily cargo flights to China. Most of these flights are suspected to carry munitions to crush rising protests.

Instability in India's neighbourhood is exploited by China for its own goals. It attempted to exploit the political crisis in Nepal, until it was rebuffed. It is winning over the military junta in Myanmar, where growing protests have placed the country in a precarious position.

National interests guide a nation's foreign policy. India is no different. Indian foreign policy has to cater for growing competition for domination from China at its own doorstep. India has thus been careful in its criticism of the Myanmar government, while working behind the scenes to obtain the release of arrested politicians.

India had surrendered its influence in Sri Lanka and Maldives to China; however, has painstakingly

regained its hold. It is essential that India's immediate neighbourhood must remain pro-India if it seeks to continue keeping China at bay. India therefore needs to act, but carefully. It cannot come under pressure of Western nations that consider themselves as guardians of democracy and are located in distant corners of the globe, while the nation in turmoil borders India.

In Myanmar, the current Indian policy of silence is ideal, despite calls for application of sanctions and imposing other forms of pressure. India has attempted to explain to global powers, albeit unsuccessfully, that pushing the army in Myanmar to restore democracy by sanctions would be detrimental. Myanmar has faced sanctions for decades to no avail. The more the pressure, the greater the possibility of Myanmar moving into the Chinese lap as also

deeper into isolation. ASEAN foreign ministers have established contact with the military junta in Myanmar with the hope of pushing them to restore democracy. They are better suited to compel the army to release the democratically elected elite as the first step.

India should consider its own long-term interests and possible competition from China, prior to joining hands with global watchdogs of democracy and seeking to add pressure on Myanmar's army leadership. In the UNSC, where India is now present, it should abstain from voting against Myanmar. It is better to wait and watch rather than join the global chorus. India needs to adopt realpolitik rather than be swayed by global sentiments and pressure.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

## As special as a woman



ANJALI MEHTA

International Women's Day is celebrated on 8 March, and as always, one's thoughts turn towards women. We reflect on their struggles, their achievements, and their sometimes extraordinary lives. The theme for International Women's Day 2021 is - Women in Leadership: achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world. I laud some unsung leaders who take the reins of life firmly in their capable hands.

The first are the girls and women who work in fields, or rear cattle, to keep their homes and hearths running. It seems an ordinary enough life, but in actual fact they effortlessly tackle a daily spectrum of tough challenges. Women in the hills rise early and take their goats for grazing on mountainsides. Armed with sickles, they climb up on trees to cut branches and leaves for a rainy day, while goats contentedly graze on the grass below. They are compelled to go out and face the elements - rain, hail or snow, and maintain their balance on slippery slopes, to keep their herd

well-fed. Not for them the protective gear that professionals or sportsmen enjoy - golfing gloves to grip smooth irons better or cricket shin pads that save muscular legs from the thump of a hard ball. In olden days, it was men who were considered the hunter-gatherers, but women play that role now. A lady in our caretaker's family, Asha Devi, once bravely snatched her goat back from the jaws of a leopard. Of course, the goat was cooked for dinner by the poor family as it was too badly injured to survive.

In the plains, many young women face perils of a different sort when they go to gather the crops. The predators here can have a more human form. One hears unfortunate tales of many a young girl who is accosted while out in the fields or harmed by a stalker whose feelings she didn't reciprocate. Ancient drawings depict young warrior men heading home after the hunt with animal carcasses slung on their backs. Now we see young girls on village roads heading back with the household water carried on their strong heads

and shoulders.

In the urban areas too, very young girls are literally holding the fort. We had an eye camp in Khora colony recently at a school for underprivileged children. I was concerned whether the children would be able to carry their camp documents home safely to their parents and not lose them. The principal assured me that some children are so responsible that they manage their entire household, even locking the dwelling prior to departure, themselves. She narrated stories of young children who cooked and looked after their alcoholic fathers and other siblings after the demise of their mother. It was remarkable, as also a testimony to her commitment that these children somehow showed up at school daily, even with all these burdens on their young shoulders.

All these women, young and old, keep the wheels of life turning. Despite this, the prevailing social circumstances do not allow women to take pivotal decisions pertaining to their lives. Rigid stereotypes still exist of their destinies being governed by hookah-wielding patriarchs sitting comfortably under trees while women face exclusion and marginalization in decision making.

The second group I would like to laud are the fearless and feisty women activists who have been at the forefront of several popular movements in India. Many have been subjected to media trolling, bullying by the local authorities and undeserved jail sentences. I have a deep respect for activists because of their high level of empathy for others and their sense of justice which makes them work selflessly. Among many others, we had activists like Pinjra Tod NGO members, Natasha Narwal and Devangana

Kalita, fighting for the security of immigrants in far-off states, though they are themselves based in Delhi. I saw a news clip on Natasha's father (she lost her mother as a child) where he speaks so fondly and proudly of his daughter's gender-related activism. It was very moving. Though many people stand loyally with family and friends through their upheavals, it is activists who are the refuge of strangers in trouble.

History is replete with stories of activists who made great personal sacrifices for the good of the community. Like Nangeli of Cherthala village of Kerala, a poor Ezhava woman who cut off her breasts with a sickle when she was forced to pay tax for the 'luxury' of being allowed to cover them (only higher caste women were allowed to cover their breasts in Travancore in those days, anyone else doing so was taxed). Her actions led to the abolition of the tax.

What is ironical is that people who spend millions advertising their products and lobbying officials to increase their own net worth are deemed 'successful' in society, but activists who work to bring in changes that improve the quality of life of thousands are held in disdain by authorities for their social lobbying.

The third group I would like to focus on are housewives. A friend gave me a lovely definition of a mother as 'someone who can contain you'. Indeed, housewives have been the glue holding large joint families together and the generous sponges soaking up the disappointments caused by spouses and children. Like alchemists they turn the nadirs in their families' lives into opportunities, hope and even positive outcomes through sheer strength of effort and character. Housewives work long hours without payment and even without recognition at times. They learn to draw sustenance from the

welfare and happiness of their families. A recently released movie 'The Great Indian Kitchen' highlighted exquisitely the monotonous and relentless drill in the kitchen that some housewives follow day in and day out, till they are literally ready to drop with exhaustion at the end of a long day of chores.

In times of the Covid pandemic, housewives have faced exceptional challenges - increased demands on their time from family members confined to home, the frayed nerves and tempers of relatives displaced by the turn of events, increased incidents of domestic violence and reduced outlets for relaxation for themselves (in the form of friends or outings). Yet they have soldiered on, graciously believing that they have not been singled out, that others are facing their own challenges during the pandemic. As always, they think empathically of others.

In the professional world, a lot of care and enormous amounts of time go into apportioning credit for work done and dealing with the angst of professionals who feel they did all the work but someone else got the pay hike or promotion. Yet at home, the same detail of appreciation is rarely meted out by the 'head of the family' or other members to the Atlas-like woman holding up the family's personal world on her shoulders.

On International Woman's Day 2021, let us celebrate each and every woman as a special being with an important role to play in the changing world. That means shattering the barriers that hold back women. Let us truly hope that this woman's day is a turning point where women find a greater respect for their voice, their work, their thoughts and get to realize their full potential.

The writer is a Delhi-based medical practitioner.

NO 28848

100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

The contradictory character of the telegrams from Russia is graphically illustrated by the statement in one message that the Soviet Government has started a reign of terror - it surely did this some time ago - and in the next that it is trying to "pacify" public feeling. It is quite possible, of course, that both statements may be true, and that the Moscow criminals are losing that robust confidence in themselves which has hitherto enabled them to meet all opposition with the simple argument of the bomb or the revolver. If they have, indeed, been reduced to the necessity of conciliating public feeling, there must have been a melancholy falling off in their fortunes, and the descensus Averni, in their case, is likely to prove, both literally and metaphorically. One of the most interesting, and, if true, significant statements in the cables is the announcement that wholesale arrests of Jews have taken place, in view of the fears of a contemplated "pogrom." The idea of placing large numbers of Jews in confinement in order to save their lives is an ingenious one, the intrinsic probability of which is heightened by the fact that the Soviet Republic is directed almost exclusively by Jews. A long time, doubtless, must elapse before the facts of the present situation in Russia are elucidated, but it is at least clear that the dictators are in difficulties, whether they are surmounted now or not, are extremely likely to recur with interest.

### NEWS ITEMS

#### "HAT" LOOTING IN TIRHUT DIVISION

Replying to an interpellation in the Bihar and Orissa Council regarding the serious hat looting in the Tirhut division, Mr. Rainy, Chief Secretary, stated that two were reported from Muzzaffarpur, and two from Dharbhanga and Champaran, and there was reason to believe there were other cases not reported. The persons who started the looting first of all asked the price of a particular article, and when the price was mentioned alleged that Mahatma Gandhi had given an order that the price should be so much, usually about a quarter of the current market rate. When the shopkeepers refused to sell at lower prices they were abused and beaten and their shops were looted. As a result of the prompt measures taken by the Government the outbreak was short lived.

#### DESTRUCTIVE MILL FIRE IN BOMBAY

A destructive fire broke out in the David Sassoon Mill this afternoon, resulting in great damage to a portion of the building and other property. It appears that the fire originated in the mill department and very speedily spread over the whole of the spinning department. The fire brigade were promptly on the scene but it was over two hours before the fire was brought under control. Though the weaving department escaped the spinning section was entirely gutted. One of the fire brigade men was suffocated during the operations and was removed to hospital. The damage which is covered by insurance, is estimated at about 25 lakhs. The cause of the fire is not known.

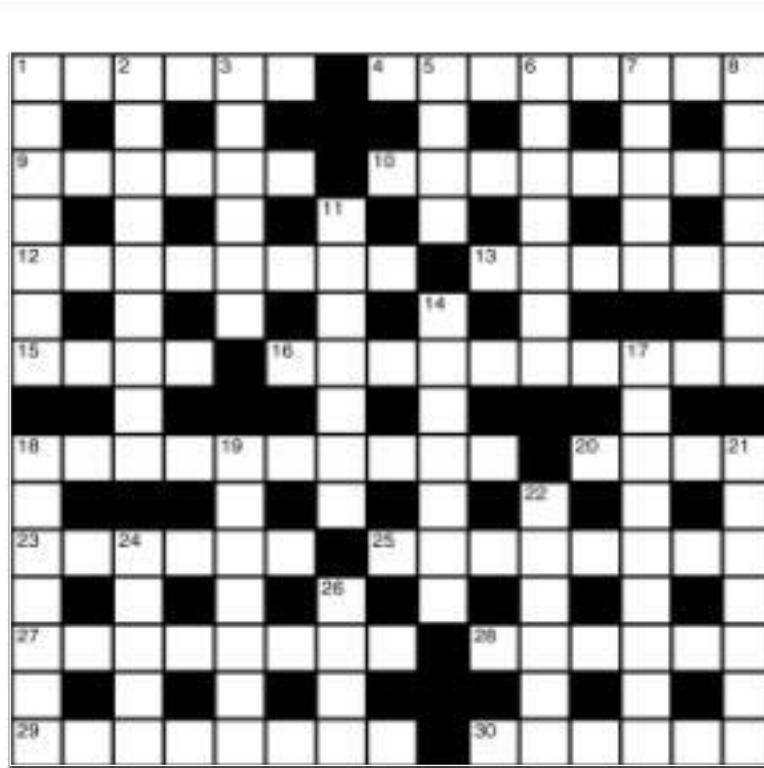
#### COTTON CULTIVATORS IN EGYPT

With a view to coping with the serious situation, in which small cotton cultivators are placed, the Council of Ministers has decided to purchase their cotton on the basis of twenty-three dollars for Sakellaridis and sixteen for Ashmori. It was also decided to permit the National Bank to make advances at seven per cent interest, with cannot be called in before next March, to authorise the Agricultural Bank not to appropriate small fields in the event of the owners not paying the loans, and to authorise the export of barley beans. Lord Allenby, in conveying the Imperial Parliament's decision with regard to Lord Milner's proposals, draws attention to Britain's good will in making the concession regarding the abolition of the Protectorate before negotiations.

#### REVOLT AGAINST SOVIET

Sensational reports of the spread of anti-Soviet risings in Russia continue, but it is obvious that there are difficulties in gauging the real situation. However, Reuter's Stockholm correspondent says that the papers regard as reliable the fact that revolutionaries hold Kronstadt, which is the centre of the revolutionary organisation. Many Fleet Commissaries have been arrested. Kozlovski, who was mentioned in the Moscow wireless, is an artillery commander. Messages from Moscow state that the Soviet has started a reign of terror, and wholesale arrests of Jews, who fear a recurrence of programs, have taken place. A message from Helsingfors states that the aim of the insurrection is the establishment of a Constituent Assembly. The troops are retiring to Odessa, while the Soviet is concentrating Chinese troops in Moscow.

### CROSSWORD



#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

#### ACROSS

- 1 Contents of box for designer footwear (6)
- 4 Stand by manifesto (8)
- 9 Shape of real bum (6)
- 10 Goes too far with mistress, having failed at first with other females (8)
- 12 Re-reading novel, but skipping, I gathered (8)
- 13 Signora's extremities need large shoe (6)
- 15 Belt that often goes missing in laundry (4)
- 16 Something afoot in the capital (10)
- 18 Find US shipper arranged dinner with chips? (4,6)
- 20 Unpleasant odour accompanying originally open toed footwear (4)
- 23 Piano stool leg occasionally missing pad under foot (6)

#### DOWN

- 1 Big sole, perversely, binds (7)
- 2 No time for accidental hints in speed contests (4,5)
- 3 After inhaling drug, pass on joint (6)
- 5 Be against entering into falsehood (4)
- 6 Relative of tortoise quietly lost ground (7)

#### 7 Like an egg, but an egg with nothing inside (5)

- 8 Missing a Mexican drink before a French salad (7)
- 11 Slip covering bottom, reportedly (7)
- 14 Trouble over, for example, a pupil? Could be against the rules (7)
- 17 Chewing hot taco, he gets this pain (9)
- 18 Make rep, cryptically, for diving equipment (7)
- 19 Pronounced retail angle to be greedy (7)
- 21 After conditional discharge, witness becomes more irritable (7)
- 22 Very material comfort (6)
- 24 What may separate ice from sole or similar fish (5)
- 26 Stubborn issue: mother's a nag and father's an ass (4)

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



*With our people first philosophy at the forefront of our business,  
all our people continue to be a priority within the organisation*

BALFOUR MANUEL  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, BLUE DART

## THUMBNAILS

**Resignation from M&M:**  
Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday said V S Parthasarathy, the president of its mobility services sector and member of the group executive board, has decided to leave the group effective close of 1 April 2021 to pursue personal interests. Parthasarathy, who joined the Mahindra group in 2000 and began with an HR stint, has expressed desire to leverage his rich professional experience to consult, mentor, build and scale businesses and initiatives across business, education and society in the next phase of his career, M&M said in a regulatory filing.

PTI

**Piramal Pharma foray:**  
Piramal Pharma Limited's consumer products division on Monday announced its entry into feminine intimate care category with the launch of "i-feel Gentle Intimate Wash". The product will initially be available in the West Bengal market and on all leading e-commerce platforms. The company has also announced its association with actress Yami Gautam as the brand ambassador for "i-feel", said a Press release from the company.

SNS

**Mi manufacturing partners:**  
Mi India said that it has onboarded two new manufacturing partners ~ DBG and BYD ~ for manufacturing smartphones in India. DBG has set up a smartphone manufacturing plant in Haryana, while BYD is setting up a plant in Tamil Nadu. The new partnerships are expected to further increase Mi India's manufacturing capacity in India, according to a Press release issued by the company.

SNS

**MINI launch:** The new MINI Countryman has been launched in India. Locally produced at BMW Group plant in Chennai, the new MINI Countryman will be available in two petrol variants ~ MINI Countryman Cooper S and MINI Countryman Cooper S JCW Inspired. The ex-showroom prices of the two petrol engine variants are Rs 39,50,000 and Rs 43,40,000, respectively, said a Press release.

SNS

**Samsung phone:** Samsung on Monday announced the launch of Galaxy A32. The phone comes with best-in-class 64MP quad camera, 6.4" FHD+ AMOLED screen with 90Hz refresh rate for smooth in-app navigation, browsing and gaming and a host of other innovative features, said a Press release. After the success of Galaxy A12, Galaxy A32 is the second Galaxy A series smartphone in India this year, it added.

SNS

**Yes essence:** Yes Bank on Monday announced the launch of women-centric "Yes Essence" services that will offer preferentially-priced loans and healthcare benefits, among other services. It has been launched on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

PTI

## Anupam Rasayan's IPO to open on 12 March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

Specialty chemical company Anupam Rasayan today fixed a price band of Rs 553-555 a share for its Rs 760-crore initial share-sale, which will open for public subscription on 12 March. The three-day public issue will close on 16 March, Anupam Rasayan said in a statement.

The IPO aggregating up to Rs 760 crore is entirely fresh issuance of equity shares and proceeds of the issue would be mainly used to pay debt.

The Surat-based company has reserved about 2.20 lakh shares for employees. Half of the issue is reserved for qualified institutional buyers, 35

## Moderately worse outlook for banks in FY'22: Fitch

The outlook is based on muted expectations for new business and revenue generation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

**F**itch Ratings today said it expects a moderately worse sector outlook for Indian banks for 2021-2022 based on muted expectations for new business and revenue generation, and deteriorating asset quality," it said in a statement.

## FITCH FORECAST

► "Fitch expects a moderately worse sector outlook for Indian banks for 2021-2022 based on muted expectations for new business and revenue generation, and deteriorating asset quality," it said in a statement.

► The state's less-than-adequate recapitalisation plans for its banks further underscores the risk, which will likely keep risk aversion high among banks amid continuing uncertainty about asset quality and an uneven economic recovery.

The rating agency said the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to pose challenges to Indian banks' improving financial performance once asset-quality risks manifest in the financial year ending March 2022.

Indian banks reported lower impaired loans and improved profitability for the nine months ended December 2020 due to various forbearance measures and continued large write-offs. Indi-

an banks, particularly state-run banks, remained more risk-averse than in prior years, which was reflected in their weak credit growth.

"Fitch expects a moderately

worse sector outlook for Indian banks for 2021-2022 based on muted expectations for new business and revenue generation, and deteriorating asset quality," it said in a state-

ment.

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worse sector outlook for Indian banks for 2021-2022 based on muted expectations for new business and revenue generation, and deteriorating asset quality," it said in a state-

ment.



► As the forbearance measures unwind, Fitch expects Indian banks to reverse the improvements in asset quality and profitability, with state-run banks more

vulnerable to higher stress than private banks, which have better profitability and higher contingent reserves and capitalisation.

The state's less-than-adequate recapitalisation plans for its banks further underscores the risk, which will likely keep risk aversion high among banks amid continuing uncertainty about asset quality and an uneven economic recovery.

As the forbearance measures unwind, Fitch expects Indian banks to reverse the improvements in asset qual-

ity and profitability, with state-run banks more vulnerable to higher stress than private banks, which have better profitability and higher contingent reserves and capitalisation.

State-run banks also have limited core capital buffers in the event of further asset stress, which is unlikely to be remediated solely via the state's planned capital injections of \$5.5 billion.

Besides, the decline in private consumption, and reports of rising urban utility-bill defaults and social security withdrawals point towards stress among retail customers.

"Fitch believes that the SME sector faces a litmus test in FY22 as short-term credit support extended in FY21, which, in our view, deferred the recognition of stress, comes up for refinancing," Fitch added.

It projects India's GDP growth at 11 per cent in the next fiscal. The faster-than-expected GDP rebound in the December quarter is positive, but many sectors continue to operate well below capacity.

In a regulatory filing, Tata

## Tata Motors to hive off PV biz into new entity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

favour and 8,99,098 votes (0.591 per cent) against the move, the filing added.

The company management had stated that it expects the process of hiving off its domestic passenger vehicles (PV) business to be completed around May-June this year, although it has not yet taken a call on a potential partner for the business.

Last year, Tata Motors had announced that it would turn its domestic PV business unit into a separate entity and seek a strategic partnership in order to help the unit secure its long-term viability.

Tata Motors has maintained that as part of an overall business reorganisation plan and in order to provide for the optimum running, growth and development of the PV undertaking and its interests, it was necessary to realign the PV business.

This shall help in providing differentiated focus for the PV and commercial vehicle businesses separately and help each of them realise their potential while also unlocking business value and enhanced management focus and operational flexibility in each of the businesses, the company had said.

## Coal India approves 32 mining projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

## PRODUCTION BOOST

► Out of 32 projects, 24 are expansion of the existing ones, and the remaining are greenfield (new) units.

► The incremental production by 2023-24 from the approved 32 projects would be to the tune of around 81 mtpa.



enables subsidiaries of CIL to escalate their production in the ensuing years.

CIL board and boards of the respective subsidiary companies have given their nod for the move.

The incremental production by 2023-24 from the approved 32 expansion and the greenfield projects would be to the tune of around 81 mtpa.

"Such high number, either in terms of projects or capacity addition, has not been

cleared in a single financial year so far," the company said.

CIL is striving to replace the coal imports through its own coal and any increase in domestic production would play a catalytic role in this effort.

The incremental production by 2023-24 from the approved 32 expansion and the greenfield projects would be to the tune of around 81 mtpa.

"Such high number, either in terms of projects or capacity addition, has not been

estimated incremental investment of Rs 18,657 crore accounts for 63.5 mtpa, followed by CCL at an investment of Rs 7,520 crore for 10 projects of 56.6 mtpa.

MCL with three projects would add up to 47 mtpa at an investment of Rs 14,057 crore.

The rest, nearly 26 mtpa, would be met through Eastern Coalfields Ltd, Northern Coalfields Ltd and Western Coalfield Ltd with the remaining investment between them.

"Currently, in tandem with production, the company is also strengthening the rail evacuation infrastructure through setting up rail lines, sidings and first-mile connectivity projects in the companies from where the majority of the output is expected," CIL said.

CIL accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output.

## Courts in 5 countries register \$1.4b Cairn arbitration award

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

nised and confirmed by courts in the US, the UK, Netherlands, Canada and France, three people with knowledge of the matter said.

Cairn

has started the

process to register the award in Singapore, Japan, the United Arab Emirates and Cayman Islands, they said.

The registration of the award is the first step towards its enforcement in the event of the government not paying the firm.

Cairn

Energy had moved

courts in nine countries to

enforce its \$1.4-billion arbitral award against India, which

the company won after a dispute with the country's revenue authority over a retroactively applied capital gains tax.

Of these, the 21 December award from a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands has been recog-

nising or challenging the Cairn arbitration award, but finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had last week indicated of going in for an appeal.

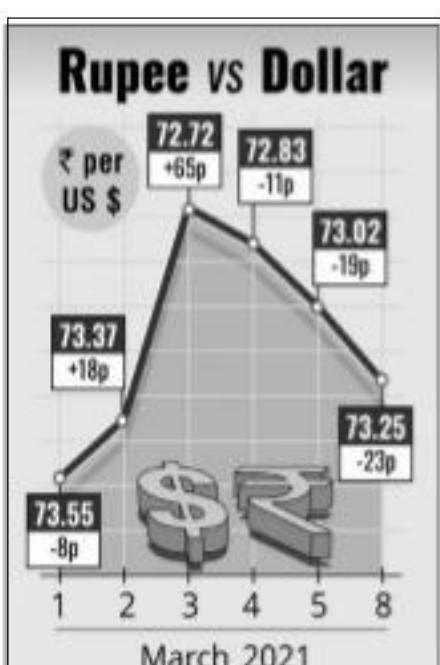
Cairn's shareholders, who include top financial institutions of the world, want the company to go for enforcement action should New Delhi fail to pay it.

While the company spokesperson wasn't reachable for comments, Cairn had on Sunday stated that it will "begin meetings this week with shareholders in the UK and US, with the international arbitration award high on the agenda."

"The company met the Government of India last month and is taking all the necessary steps to protect their shareholders' interests," it had said.

## Rupee falls 23 paise on strong dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 8 MARCH



to keep most of their production cuts in place," said Saif Mukadam, research analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

However, sharp fall may be prevented on positive domestic markets, Mukadam said adding that the rupee may trade in the range of 72.70 to 73.50 in the next couple of sessions.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.27 per cent to 92.22.

Meanwhile, Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.23 per cent to \$69.52 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 35.75 points or 0.07 per cent higher at 50,441.07 points, while the broader NSE Nifty climbed 18.10 points or 0.12 per cent to 14,956.20 points.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market as they

offloaded shares worth Rs 2,014.16 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

"The US dollar gained tracking a broad rise in treasury yields this Monday afternoon trade as concerns about inflation in the US intensified after the US Senate over the weekend passed President Joe Biden's \$1.9-trillion fiscal relief plan," said Sriman Iyer, senior research analyst at Reliance Securities.

Meanwhile, most Asian currencies depreciated against the dollar and weighed on sentiments, Iyer said.

Traders said rising crude oil prices weighed on sentiments amid fears of widening trade deficit.

According to Dilip Parmar, research analyst, HDFC Securities, the rupee is expected to trade with negative bias in coming days amid rising crude oil prices, higher US bond yields and risk of outflows from domestic equities.

As of 24 February 2021, 23.21 crore accounts, out of the total 41.93 crore accounts opened under the PMJDY scheme, belong to women account holders, the finance ministry said in a statement.

launched PMJDY 2.0 with enhanced features and benefits. Under the new version, the government decided to shift focus from "Every Household" to "Every Unbanked Adult" and free accidental insurance cover on RuPay cards doubled to Rs 2 lakh for PMJDY accounts opened after 28 August 2018.

At the same time overdraft (OD) limit too doubled to Rs 10,000 and the facility of OD up to Rs 2,000 without conditions was brought in.

As per extant RBI guidelines,

a PMJDY account is treated as inoperative if there are no customer induced transaction in the account for over a period of two years.

Stand Up India Scheme

was launched on 8 April 2016, to promote entrepreneurship at the grass-root level for economic empowerment and job creation.

This scheme seeks to leverage the institutional credit structure to reach out to the underserved section of people such as scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and women entrepreneurs so as to enable them to participate in the economic growth of the nation, it said.

The objective of this scheme is to facilitate bank loans between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1 crore to at least one scheduled caste (SC) or scheduled tribe (ST) borrower and at least one woman borrower per bank branch of banks for setting up a greenfield enterprise, it added.

## PMJDY: Majority account holders women

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

scheme, belong to women account holders, the finance ministry said in a statement.

With regard to the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), it said, about 68 per cent or 19.04 crore accounts with an amount of Rs 6.36 lakh crore (as of 26 February 2021) have been sanctioned to women entrepreneurs under the scheme since its inception.



The government has signed an advance purchase agreement for 8.5 million additional doses, enough to vaccinate 4.25 million people.

NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER JACINDA ARDERN

AFTER SIGNING AN ADVANCE PURCHASE AGREEMENT FOR 8.5 MILLION ADDITIONAL DOSES

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 09 MARCH 2021

09

# Thailand charges 18 activists with sedition, royal insults

The sedition charges stem from an anti-government rally in September

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BANGKOK, 8 MARCH

Prosecutors in Thailand charged 18 pro-democracy activists with sedition on Monday, while lodging additional charges of insulting the monarchy against three of them.

The sedition charges, which carry a maximum penalty of up to seven years in prison, stem from an antigovernment rally in September, though details on the alleged offenses were not immediately clear.

The three charged with violating the *lese majeste* law, which outlaws criticism of senior members of the royal family, are Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul, Jatupat Boonpattaraksa and Panupong.

A court denied bail for all three, and they were being



Pro-democracy activists gesture with a three-fingers salute, a symbol of resistance, in Bangkok on Monday. ■ AP

transferred to prison.

Thai authorities have stepped up their legal offensive against those involved in a student-led protest movement that is pushing for Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and his government to step down, the constitution to be amended to make it more democratic and the monarchy to be reformed to make it more accountable.

The latter demand is the

most radical and controversial because the monarchy has rarely faced any public scrutiny and is considered by many to be an untouchable pillar of Thai identity.

Those found guilty of violating the law against criticising or insulting key royals face up to 15 years in prison per offense.

The protest movement has struck a chord with many Thais but alienated others,

especially royalists shocked at its criticisms of the monarchy.

The movement began to lose steam late last year amid differences among its factions, and because of a resurgence of the coronavirus in Thailand.

Prosecutors last month charged four protest leaders with *lese majeste* and they were denied bail.

Jatupat, who was imprisoned for violating the *lese*

majeste law in the year 2017, said he and the other activists charged Monday would keep fighting from jail.

The movement outside will surely continue no matter what happens, he said.

Jatupat on Sunday completed a nearly 250-kilometer (155-mile) walk from Thailand's northeast to Bangkok's Democracy Monument. Along the way, he campaigned and talked to people about ousting Prayuth, amending the constitution and abolishing the *lese majeste* law.

According to the group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, at least 382 people, including 13 minors, have been charged in connection with the protests, which picked up momentum last summer.

Reports have mentioned that at least 60 of those people have been charged with *lese majeste*.

# Philippines police kill nine in raids on suspected rebels

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MANILA, 8 MARCH

The Philippine police backed by military forces killed nine people over the weekend in a series of raids against suspected communist insurgents, with authorities saying the suspects opened fire first.

Others, however, said those killed were unarmed activists. Police said Monday that all of those killed were associated with communist terrorist groups and had shot at officers while they were serving search warrants. The suspects died while being brought to hospitals, police said.

Police served at least 24 search warrants, mostly for illegal firearms and explosives, in a number of locations in Cavite, Laguna, Batangas and Rizal provinces over the weekend. Police said another six suspects were arrested and nine escaped.

The killings immediately drew condemnations by left-wing and rights groups, who demanded an independent



investigation into what some described as executions of legitimate activists being carried out under the guise of a crackdown on rebels who have been fighting a Marxist insurgency for the past five decades.

Cristina Palabay of the rights group Karapatan said many of those killed belonged to political and workers groups, adding that one slain couple who led a fishermen's group, were gunned down by police as their 10-year-old son watched while hiding under a bed.

National police chief Gen. Debold Sinas denied the suspects were victims of extra-judicial killings. Those were legitimate operations because they were covered by search warrants, Sinas told reporters.

Renato Reyes of the left-wing alliance Bayan said the Supreme Court should look into what he said was an alarming pattern of authorities providing questionable or fabricated details about suspected criminals to judges, who then issue warrants.

A policeman makes a wild allegation that you are in possession of just one hand grenade and a judge will sign a search warrant that could lead to your arrest or death, he said in a statement. Search warrants have been weaponised to go after unarmed activists.

Palabay blamed President Rodrigo Duterte, who she said encouraged military and police personnel to commit acts of impunity.

## CTD guns down 5 BLA militants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KARACHI, 8 MARCH

Pakistan's security forces on Monday killed five militants of the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army in the country's restive Balochistan province.

The militants of the separatist outfit were killed following an intelligence-based operation in Spinji area of Mastung district, a senior official of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Quetta said.

They were planning a big terror attack in Quetta. Explosives, detonators and arms were recovered from their hideout, he said.

The five militants were

involved in carrying out attacks on labourers and security forces, the official said.

When we raided their hideout, they opened fire on the police officials instead of surrendering, he said.

Some militants managed to flee in the darkness.

The CTD claimed to have recovered 10 kgs of explosives, three detonators, two explosive rods, two grenades, three Kalashnikov rifles, 100 live rounds, one remote control device and 13 battery cells.

The terrorists belonging to outlawed separatist outfits stepped up terror attacks in the province at the weekend, according to the official. On Friday, five labourers were killed and five others wounded.

## Vietnam vaccinates Covid-19 front-liners with its 1st doses

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HANOI, 8 MARCH

Vietnam administered its first Covid-19 doses Monday to the front-line workers who made the nation's relative success in controlling the pandemic possible health workers, contact tracers and security forces who handled quarantine duties.

The Southeast Asian nation of 96 million people has a goal to inoculate at least half of the population by the end of the year.

Thousands of doctors, nurses and technicians working at hospitals designated to treat Covid-19 patients lined

up in the morning and received the first jabs of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

I have been waiting for this day for a long time, nurse Nguyen Thi Huyen said after she got her injection.

Huyen has been caring for Covid-19 patients at a tropical disease hospital in Hanoi the past year. Health protocols limited her time with family, among other challenges.

"I hope the vaccine will be available for everyone so we can contain the virus and get back to normal life," she said.

The first batch of over 100,000 doses in a 30-million-dose order of the vaccine

developed by Oxford University and U.K.-based drugmaker AstraZeneca arrived two weeks ago. Separately, Vietnam expects to secure another 30 million doses of the same vaccine through COVAX, a U.N.-backed initiative created to ensure vaccine access to low- and middle-income countries.

It is also negotiating with Pfizer for another 30 million doses, according to the health ministry.

After Covid first responders, the next group to be vaccinated will be diplomats, workers providing essential services, teachers, senior citizens with chronic illnesses.

## SPEWING FIRE



Volcanic materials spewing from Mount Merapi as seen from Kaliurang, Indonesia. ■ IANS

# Hong Kong leader 'fully welcomes' proposed electoral changes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

HONG KONG, 8 MARCH

Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said on Monday the city's government fully welcomes changes to the city's electoral system that will substantially increase central government control over Hong Kong politics and exclude Beijing's critics.

Chinese authorities have said the draft decision before China's National People's Congress would mean the largely pro-Beijing committee that elects Hong Kong's

leader would also choose a large part of the legislature to ensure that the city is run by patriots.

The Election Committee would also have the right to vet candidates for the Legislative Council, weeding out any suspected of being insufficiently loyal to China and the ruling Communist Party.

Currently, half of Hong Kong's legislature is directly elected by voters, although the mass resignation of opposition legislators to protest the expulsion of four of their col-



leagues for being unpatriotic means the body is now entirely controlled by Beijing loyalists.

There are loopholes in the electoral systems, there are also

flaws in the systems in Hong Kong, Lam said at a news conference after she returned from the meeting in Beijing. I fully understand that this is not a matter that can be addressed entirely by the government.

I'm glad that the central authorities have, again, exercised its constitutional powers to help address this problem for Hong Kong, she said.

She declined to elaborate on the views she had shared with the central authorities regarding the electoral reforms, and said many pieces of leg-

islation in Hong Kong would have to be amended. The NPC, China's ceremonial legislature, will all but certainly endorse the draft decision, though it may not take immediate legal effect.

Unconfirmed reports say the legislation will also expand the size of the Legislative Council from 70 to 90 and the Election Committee from 1,200 to 1,500.

Seats on the Election Com-

mittee now reserved for directly elected district counselors will also be eliminated, further cementing Beijing's control

over the body.

Lam also said she could not confirm whether legislative elections already postponed for one year last September ostensibly because of the coronavirus pandemic would though it may not take immediate legal effect.

She also said the central government authorities are very sincere and very committed in trying to move towards the objective of universal suffrage.

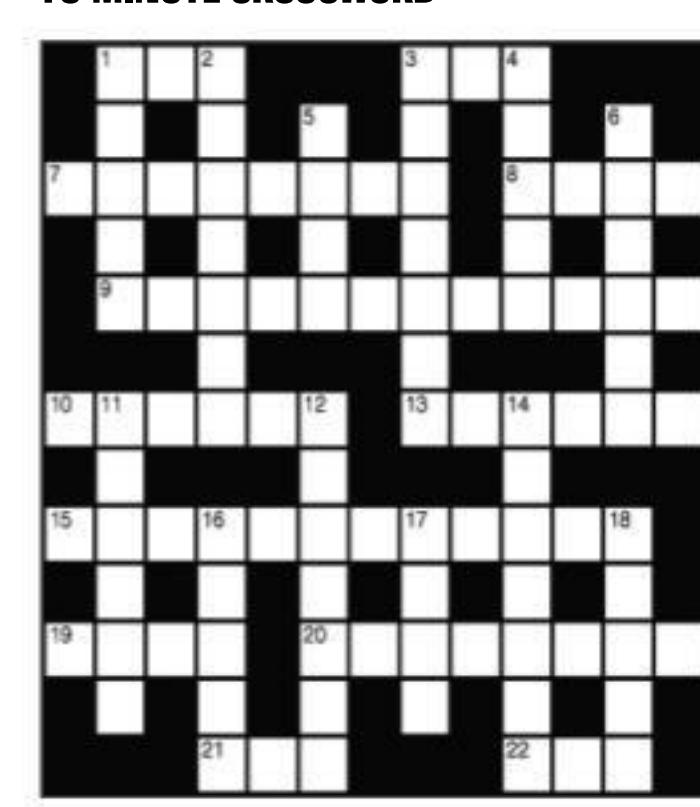
Universal suffrage would give Hong Kong voters the right to vote for the city's leader, although only candidates approved by Beijing would be allowed to run.

Hong Kong has in recent months cracked down on dissent, and most of the city's opposition figures including pro-democracy activists and former lawmakers are in jail or in exile.

As per reports, more than 100 people, most of whom are pro-democracy activists and supporters, have been charged under the city's sweeping national security law since it was implemented in the month of June.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



#### SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

**ACROSS**

- Male offspring (3)
- Owing (3)
- Caribbean island (8)
- Equipment (4)
- Picture (12)
- Cupboard (6)
- Go beyond (6)
- Calf-length trousers (5,7)
- Pudding ingredient (4)
- Client (8)
- Suffer (3)
- Gratitude (3)

**DOWN**

- Hindu teacher (5)
- Small snacks (7)
- Merit (7)
- Number in an octet (5)
- Betting chances (4)
- Wheeble (6)
- Room for manoeuvre (6)
- Characteristic (7)
- Cigar (7)
- Passable (2-2)
- Animal (5)

#### ACROSS

11 Lepor., 13 Turt., 15 Piccol., 16 Subside., 18 Super., 19 Watering hole., 20 Colt., 21 Cyan.

12 Evident., 14 Python., 15 Begin., 17 Bravo., 18 Soggy.

19 Laundry., 20 Matchless., 21 Heavy., 22 Gratuity., 23

24 Voucher., 25

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I know first hand the sexism and racism institutions and the media use to vilify women and people of color to minimize us, to break us down

TENNIS STAR SERENA WILLIAMS

FOLLOWING MEGHAN MARKLE'S INTERVIEW WITH OPRAH WINFREY

## THUMBNAILS



Palestinian security forces stop vehicles as part of a lockdown and quarantine measures at the entrance of the West Bank city of Ramallah.

**Senegal braces for protest:** Supporters of jailed Senegalese Opposition leader Ousmane Sonko have called for three more days of protests starting Monday following violent demonstrations last week that threatened to erode the country's reputation as one of West Africa's most stable democracies.

**Grammy 2021:** The Recording Academy has announced the names of the artists set to perform at the 63rd Grammy Awards and the list includes big wigs of the music industry like Taylor Swift, BTS, Harry Styles, Chris Martin, Cardi B, Dua Lipa and Billie Eilish.

**US-South Korea pact:** The United States and South Korea have reached agreement in principle on a new arrangement for sharing the cost of the American troop presence, which is intended as a bulwark against the threat of North Korean aggression. Deal includes an increase in Seoul's share of cost.

**Equatorial Guinea blast** hurts hundreds

BATA, 8 MARCH

At least 17 people have been killed and more than 400 injured in a series of explosions at a military base in Equatorial Guinea, officials say.

They say Sunday's blasts in the main city, Bata, were caused by stubble burning by farmers and negligence in the storage of dynamite at the base.

Almost all buildings and homes in the city suffered "huge damage", President Teodoro Obiang Nguema said. State television showed people looking for survivors in the rubble. There are fears the death toll will rise further as some victims may be trapped.

In a statement, President Obiang Nguema said the blasts had been caused "by the negligence of a unit charged with the care and protection of stores of dynamite and explosives" at the Nkoantoma military base. He said the base "caught fire due to neighbouring farmers clearing farmland by setting it alight, leading to the explosion". The President called for international aid.

In a series of tweets, the health ministry said 420 injured people were being treated in hospitals, and called for volunteer health workers to go to Bata Regional Hospital.

AGENCIES

# Cuomo defiant as top NY Senators ask him to quit

Stewart-Cousins is the first senior Democrat to say the governor should resign

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
NEW YORK, 8 MARCH

The two top Democrats in New York's legislature withdrew their support for governor Andrew Cuomo on Sunday amid mounting allegations of sexual harassment and undercounting Covid-19 deaths in nursing homes.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins became the first senior Democrat in the state to say the three-term governor should resign.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie stopped short of demanding that Cuomo quit, but said in a statement that it is time for the governor to seriously consider whether he can effectively meet the needs of the people of New York.

On Saturday, two more women who worked for Cuomo publicly accused him of inappropriate behaviour, on the heels of other allegations in recent days.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the call was intended to be private. Cuomo said the next six months will determine how successfully New York emerges from the pandemic. I'm not going to be distracted because there is too much to do for the people, he said, noting that the state must pass a budget within three weeks and administer 15 million more Covid-19 vaccines.

Support for Cuomo has eroded with surprising speed as he's faced twin scandals, one over his treatment of women in the workplace, and a second over his administration's months-long refusal



was elected by the people of New York state. I wasn't elected by politicians.

In a brief phone conversation on Sunday, prior to the Press conference, Cuomo told Stewart-Cousins he wouldn't quit and they would have to impeach him if they wanted him out of office, according to a person who was briefed by someone on the call.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the call was intended to be private. Cuomo said the next six months will determine how successfully New York emerges from the pandemic. I'm not going to be distracted because there is too much to do for the people, he said, noting that the state must pass a budget within three weeks and administer 15 million more Covid-19 vaccines.

Support for Cuomo has eroded with surprising speed as he's faced twin scandals, one over his treatment of women in the workplace, and a second over his administration's months-long refusal

to release complete statistics on Covid-19 deaths in nursing homes.

Some lawmakers have been infuriated by revelations that Cuomo's administration delayed releasing some data about deaths of nursing home patients in hospitals, at least partly because of concerns it could be used against them by President Donald Trump's administration.

Several women have publicly told of feeling sexually harassed, or at least made to feel demeaned and uncomfortable. The state's attorney general is investigating Cuomo and urged people to wait for that investigation to conclude before they judge him.

Others who have called for Cuomo's resignation include US Rep. Kathleen Rice, a Long Island Democrat.

Former adviser Lindsey Boylan, 36, said Cuomo made inappropriate comments on her appearance, joked about playing strip poker and once kissed her on the lips at the end of a meeting.

Former aide, 25-year-old Charlotte Bennett, said Cuomo asked if she ever had sex with older men and made other comments she interpreted as gauging her interest in an affair.

Another former aide, Ana Liss, told *The Wall Street Journal* in a story published Saturday that when she worked as a policy aide to the governor between 2013 and 2015, Cuomo called her sweetheart, kissed her hand and asked personal questions including whether she had a boyfriend.

Asked about Liss' story at his news conference Sunday, Cuomo said such talk was

my way of doing friendly banter.

Echoing comments he made in a news conference last week, Cuomo acknowledged he'd made jokes and asked personal questions in an attempt to be collegial and frequently greeted people with hugs and kisses.

I never meant to make anyone feel any uncomfortable, he said. Cuomo has denied touching anyone inappropriately.

While Cuomo has been apologetic in recent days over his behavior, at least tacitly acknowledging that some of the things women have said are true, he's also singled out a few accusations as flatly false.

On Sunday he disputed a story told by about him by Karen Hinton, a former Press aide to Cuomo when he served as the federal housing secretary under President Bill Clinton.

In a story published on Saturday in *The Washington Post*, Hinton detailed an uncomfortable hotel room interaction she had with Cuomo when the two met in California years ago as they were trying to patch things up after an estrangement.

Hinton said that as she got up to leave, Cuomo gave her a hug that was very long, too long, too tight, too intimate. She described the encounter not as sexual harassment but as a power play for manipulation and control. She was no longer an aide to Cuomo at the time.

Asked Sunday about Hinton's account Cuomo said it was not true and noted that the two had been longtime political adversaries.

After historic whirlwind visit, Pope leaves Iraq for Rome

BAGHDAD, 8 MARCH

Pope Francis on Monday wrapped up his historic whirlwind tour of Iraq that sought to bring hope to the country's marginalized Christian minority with a message of coexistence, forgiveness and peace.

The pontiff and his traveling delegation were seen off with a farewell ceremony at the Baghdad airport, from where he left for Rome following a four-day papal visit that has covered five provinces across Iraq.

As the pope's plane took off, Iraqi President Barham Salih was at hand on the tarmac, waving goodbye.

At every turn of his trip, Francis urged Iraqis to embrace diversity from Najaf in the south, where he held a historic face-to-face meeting with powerful Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, to Nineveh in the north, where he met with Christian victims of the Islamic State group's terror. The pontiff's visit witnessed scenes unimaginable in war-ravaged Iraq just a few years ago.

In Iraq's south, Francis convened a meeting of Iraqi religious leaders in the deserts near a symbol of the country's ancient past the 6,000-year-old ziggurat in the Plains of Ur, also thought to be the birthplace of Abraham, the biblical patriarch revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The gathering brought religious representatives across the country rarely seen together, from Muslims, Christians, Yazidis and Mandaeans. The joint appearance by figures from across Iraq's sectarian spectrum was almost unheard-of, given their communities' often bitter divisions. The pope called on them to work together and make peace.

AP

# With virus aid in sight, Democrats debate filibuster changes

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 8 MARCH

the Senate narrowed unemployment benefits and stripped out an increase to the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Over the weekend, the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, representing around 100 House liberals, called the Senate's weakening of some provisions bad policy and bad politics.

But Rep Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash, also characterised the changes as relatively minor concessions and emphasised the Bill retained its core bold, progressive elements.

Biden says he would sign the measure immediately if the House passed it. The legislation would allow many Americans to receive \$1,400 in direct checks from the government this month.

**Lessons learned:** If we have unity, we can do big things, a jubilant Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told.

Still, the Democrats' approach required a last-minute call from Biden to Manchin to secure his vote after he raised little resistance to the breadth of unemployment benefits. That immediately raised questions about the path ahead in a partisan environment where few, if any, Republicans are expected to back planks of the President's agenda.

Democrats used a fast-track budget process known as reconciliation to approve Biden's top priority without Republican support, a strategy that succeeded despite the reservations of some moderates. But work in the coming months on other issues such as voting rights and immigration could prove more difficult.

## Blinken offers plan to bolster Afghan peace process, says report



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 8 MARCH

TOLONews report.

Blinken also made clear in the letter that the Biden administration continues to consider a full withdrawal of the roughly 2,500 US forces in the country by the May 1 deadline negotiated by Trump administration. The State Department declined to comment on the TOLONews report.

We have not made any decisions about our force posture in Afghanistan after May 1, the State Department said in a statement. All options remain on the table. Afghanistan presents one of the new administration's most difficult foreign policy decisions.

The letter calls for bringing the two sides together for a UN-facilitated conference with foreign ministers and envoys from Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, India and the United States to discuss a unified approach to supporting peace in Afghanistan. Blinken also calls for holding talks between the Afghan government and Taliban in a senior-level meeting in Turkey in the coming weeks to hammer out a revised proposal for a 90-day reduction in violence.

The secretary of state has also called on special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad to share with both the Afghan government and Taliban written proposals to help accelerate discussions, according to the

US public is weary of a war nearly 20-years-old, but pulling out now could be seen as giving the Taliban too much leverage and casting a shadow over the sacrifices made by US and coalition troops and Afghan civilians.

Blinken urged Ghani to quickly embrace the proposal and underscored his concern that the security situation in the country could quickly deteriorate.

Even with the continuation of financial assistance from the United States to your forces after an American military withdrawal, I am concerned that the security situation will worsen and the Taliban could make rapid territorial gains, Blinken wrote in the letter.

In a series of tweets, the health ministry said 420 injured people were being treated in hospitals, and called for volunteer health workers to go to Bata Regional Hospital.

AGENCIES

## UNITED WE FIGHT



Members of the activist group, Women Democratic Front, take part in a rally to mark International Women's Day, in Islamabad, Pakistan on Monday. AP

## US First Lady Jill Biden sees teachable moment in depths of Covid pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WATERFORD (US), 8 MARCH

Jill Biden sees a teachable moment in the depths of the coronavirus pandemic.

The first lady sat in a socially distanced circle in the library at Fort LeBoeuf Middle School in Pennsylvania, listening and taking notes as parents expressed relief that the school had reopened and their kids were back in the classroom.

One mother talked about the bumpy patches of online learning and said reopening has been so great that she doesn't worry about her son and daughter. Another mom said the district included par-

ent input and she was comfortable that her children were in a safe environment.

A teacher herself, Biden praised the small circle of parents, teachers and administrators for working together to help reopen Fort LeBoeuf.

And she repeated a message she had delivered earlier that day while visiting Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in Meriden, Connecticut.

"We've been through really tough, hard times, but I think the one good thing about educators that I love and that includes the cafeteria workers, the bus drivers, the teachers, everyone involved is we've all learned from this,"

Biden said of the pandemic and its emotional, social and human toll.

"We're all going to take everything that we've learned and are going to turn it into opportunity to make things better for students as we move forward," she said.

The first lady seems intent on turning every aspect of her new job into an opportunity, for that matter, especially anything related to her triple passions for education, fighting cancer and supporting military families.

Biden told governors' spouses during a virtual meeting that her new platform is one that I would never let go to waste.

Floyd's death sparked sometimes violent protests in

## George Floyd case: At Derek Chauvin trial, jury selection is first battleground

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MINNEAPOLIS (US), 7 MARCH

Minneapolis and beyond, and led to a nationwide reckoning on race.

Chauvin and three other officers were fired; the others face an August trial on aiding and abetting charges.

Chauvin's attorney, Eric Nelson, argued that pretrial publicity of the case and the subsequent violent unrest in Minneapolis would make it impossible to find an impartial jury in Hennepin County. But Judge Peter Cahill said last year that moving the trial probably wouldn't cure the problem of a potentially tainted jury pool because no corner of the State of Minnesota has been shielded from pretrial publicity.

The potential jurors who must be at least 18, US citizens and residents of Hennepin County were sent questionnaires to determine how much they have heard about the case and whether they've formed any opinions.

Besides biographical and demographic information, jurors were asked about prior contacts with police, whether they have protested against police brutality and whether they believe the justice system is fair.

Some of the questions get specific, such as how often a potential juror has watched the bystander video of Floyd's arrest, or whether they carried a sign at a protest and what that sign said.

## Meghan Markle reveals suicidal thoughts, alleges royal racism in explosive interview

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LOS ANGELES/LONDON,  
8 MARCH

Meghan Markle contemplated taking her own life after marrying Prince Harry, the Duchess of Sussex said in a bombshell interview during which she raised allegations of racism in the monarchy and explained the rift in the royal family.

In the tell-all interview with Oprah Winfrey aired on Sunday, Meghan and Harry explained their dramatic exit from royal life in 2020. Harry said, like his wife Meghan, he had been trapped within an image-obsessed Buckingham Palace, asserting that his brother and father were also trapped.

"My father and my broth-

er, they are trapped. They don't get to leave. And I have compassion for that," a 36-year-old Harry said.

Winfrey reportedly sold the two-hour-long special to US broadcaster CBS for USD 7.9 million and retained the international rights to the interview.

During the interview, actress and producer, Meghan, 39, revealed that life within the royal family after her marriage in 2018 was so isolating, lonely and lacking in support that she was having "methodical" thoughts about suicide.

"I just didn't want to be alive anymore. And that was a very clear and real and frightening thought. I couldn't be left alone," she said.

He revealed that his father Prince Charles had stopped

taking his calls while the couple transitioned into their new roles after stepping away from the royal family.

Harry said he will always love his father, but he is "disappointed" by him. As for his brother Prince William, Harry said he "loves him to bits" but "we're on different paths."

In one of the only light-hearted moments, the couple revealed their second child, expected this summer, will be a girl, the first senior royal due to be born outside Britain in 100 years. "It's a girl!" the couple chimed in tandem.



## Reshaping global classrooms

**Ed-tech platforms are making expert coaching accessible to the remotest corners of the world, with lower overhead costs compared to physical schools**

SUMALI GROSH

The online learning industry was already witnessing considerable growth over the last few years, but a significant spike was observed after the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. While it affected almost every industry adversely, it distinctly favoured and enhanced the growth of ed-tech platforms that offered online classes and courses.

One has witnessed a significant global spur in the usage of online courses and online learning software for typical school learning as well as for supplemental coaching, especially for the STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects. While the initial thrust was on completely online classes and courses, the future forecast is a blend of synchronous and asynchronous classes that engender a continuation of online education.

An emerging educational trend is now blended learning through the Learning Management System. The LMS is a software application for the administration, automation and delivery of educational courses that

are particularly well suited for global use. This platform can be viewed and used on smartphones due to its mobile-friendly design.

Learning-on-the-go is the buzzword in education now, as it offers greater flexibility and scope for personalisation and customisation of individual learning schedules. Here's what blended learning is all about and why it has become an emerging trend:

### Blended learning- the trending programme

Blended learning has been heralded as hybrid and dual learning. The attempt is to combine the best of both worlds – the digital and physical. It allows for an incredibly effective educational programme that incorporates both online and offline learning experiences. Known for its effectiveness, this learning approach is super beneficial for students.

Academic institutes receive the dual benefits of flexible learning and occasional physical proximity, which allows for the social need for interaction. From offering a customised learning experience, enhancing learn-

er's efficiency, building engagement, better communication and boosting teaching efforts to improve collaboration, the benefits of blended learning are unlimited. Blended learning has emerged as one of the most preferred learning routes creating a niche category alongside online learning.

Notably, online learning will always appeal as a new generation of tech-savvy children embraces technology as a way of life. The ed-tech platforms are leaving no stones unturned in leveraging the components that blended learning offers.

### Online education at its prime

The reason behind the popular preference of students for online studying lies in the personalised learning experience where they are at liberty to proceed at their own pace and seek help as and when they need it, as opposed to being limited to the classroom time to clear doubts. Additionally, the performance and progress can be monitored by parents and teachers. Such real-time information and transparency help schools in reducing the time spent in mundane activities.

Personalisation can significantly boost students' engagement levels growing up in the digital age, where online games and online searches as a part of their lives. Research has shown that for any learner, the attention span starts to decline after the first 30 to 35 minutes of studying, but most physical classes last longer; that is where the possibility of pausing an online course has its unique appeal, which is too difficult to beat. Understanding and using technology will define the future, and students who don't jump on the bandwagon are likely to fall behind.

Teachers are offered an efficient way to deliver lessons and help individual students advance, irrespective of whether they are among the top 10 or the bottom 10 of the class. Teachers get the power to share and reuse instructional media such as videos, PDFs, podcasts, education infographics to appeal to students who may be more open to learning styles that include more credible visual content. Most importantly, edtech platforms help facilitate effective communication between students and mentors, keeping information easily

accessible on the one gadget we always have with us – our phone. Healthy relationships are formed with better communication.

Stem courses remained restricted to higher education in schools and colleges for a long time. The ed-tech platforms leveraged this opportunity to fill a widened gap that was made more evident by the pandemic by offering courses on a variety of Stem subjects that are always in high demand, such as mathematics, science, coding, AI, machine learning, game designing, app development, animation, data science and more.

The ed-tech platforms ensure students can avoid the embarrassment of voicing doubts in the presence of their peers in class. Ed-tech platforms are creating smart classrooms, shaping the global classroom by integrating an array of online learning courses, bridging vast distances, with expert coaching accessible to the remotest corners of the globe, with lower overhead costs compared to any physical school.

The writer is assistant professor, Case Western Reserve University, US

## CREATING CYBER WARRIORS

SANJEEV KUMAR SHARMA

Post pandemic, the global economy and society are now all the more interconnected by supply chains, communications technology and travel. The rapid growth of appliances, devices, vehicles and infrastructure has become interlinked, operating at a global level. The rise in demand for digitisation services has created a network of Internet of Things devices to enable better consumer experience on one hand but has raised the possibilities of cyber attacks on the other.

Nowadays the growth of jobs in the cyber security sector cannot be compared with any other technological domain. Companies, across the world, have been continuously targeted for cyber attacks. This scenario has given massive opportunities to professionals willing to enter cyber security. Today it serves as a major source of employment and a lucrative career option.

The first step is to acquire basic cyber security skills, followed by choosing a specific domain based on personal interest and market demand. For a successful career, students need to get in-depth training, develop skills and acquire specific certifications in the field.

According to a report by the Union ministry of electronics and information technology, India faced almost 700,000 cyber-attacks in August last year. According to the report, India was ranked third and one of the biggest victims of cyber-attacks in recent years.

India, which ranks second in terms of Internet users, needs to

brace itself by training an efficient pool of cyber warriors to deal with and deflect the ever-rising cyber security threats posed to its IT-driven product and service infrastructure and systems.

In recent years, both the government and private players have introduced a flurry of specialised and standalone courses on cyber security. From part-time to distance learning to an online mode with varied provisions for certification, diploma and degree programmes, such courses have found much popularity among students as well as professionals.

The government is actively promoting cyber security-related courses. It is said that around 204 colleges offer undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes in cyber security – including both government and private – in India.

Cyber security professionals are focused on delivering technologies that help business operations move forward while preserving sensitive information. However, despite the recent increase in popularity of cyber security as a course in universities, colleges and institutes, experts in the field in India are even lesser than 10,000. India being home to nearly a fifth of the world population with growing economic potential and expanding digital footprints, such a minuscule number is grossly insufficient. Therefore, it is time that cyber security as a specialised discipline with all its attendant sub-disciplines becomes an integral component of any IT syllabus. At the same time, it is also necessary to strengthen the foundations of our human resources by improving the quality of STEM graduates.

Apart from a relevant degree in technology, students need to have basic knowledge about advanced cyber security concepts, extensive

**Ranking second in terms of Internet users, India needs well trained professionals to effectively deflect ever-rising cyber security threats**



Innovations and trends in technology have a direct impact on digital security. The advancement and dominance of digitisation over every sphere has spurred a significant increase in cyber security solutions. We are moving forward and creating a digitally smart world that leaves no place for vulnerable cyber security and mediocrity.

Apart from a relevant degree in technology, students need to have basic knowledge about advanced cyber security concepts, extensive

work experience, industry certifications, and knowledge of regulatory policies to make a career in this space. The tremendous rise in cyber attacks has increased the opportunities for professionals from all backgrounds who want to make a career in the field. Even people from a humanities background can make a career in cyber security.

Options in this field range from incident responder and forensic expert to security specialist, security analyst, security administrator, security

manager and security auditor. All roles require a wide array of responsibilities depending upon the industry one opts for, whether it is banking, retailer or government bodies. However, the common objective in all of the roles is to protect data from being sabotaged. The growing popularity of cloud-based applications and widespread use of the Internet cyber security has great potential.

The writer is dean of academics, Sanskriti University, Uttar Pradesh

### PLUS POINTS

#### Women leaders



Indian Institute of Technology-Madras has launched the "Women Leading IITM" programme to boost women leadership in science and technology. It will provide grants each year to accelerate women technologists' careers as well as provide a supportive environment for women to thrive at IIT-Madras. The inaugural grants were issued on 8 March to mark the International Women's Day celebrations.

The Institute is planning to raise the \$2 million endowment by the end of 2021, which will provide annual grants to support programmes taken by women students, faculty and researchers. In the first year alone, the Endowment Fund aims to grant Rs 70 lakh for various initiatives.

#### Experts meet



A three-day conference on Quantum Matter Heterostructures was recently organised by Institute of Nano Science and Technology, Mohali, an autonomous institute of the department of science and technology, Government of India in association with IIT-Roorkee. Leading international and national experts discussed the role of emergent electromagnetic phenomena in designer thin films, heterostructures, and hybrids of quantum materials.

"Quantum materials are enticing for science and technology, and activities are being initiated with state-of-the-art facilities to synthesise new kinds of quantum devices for technological application. Combining the power and possibilities of heterostructure engineering with the collective and emergent properties of quantum materials, quantum-matter heterostructures open a new arena of solid-state physics," said Amitava Patra, director, INST, while addressing the inaugural session.

Other speakers included R Ramesh, department of physics, University of California, Berkeley and Masashi Kawasaki, department of applied physics, University of Tokyo to name a few.

#### Upgrading skills

The FORE School of Management recently announced the launch of a unique online certificate programme on healthcare analytics that commences from April. It is a hands-on interactive online programme on Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence. The last date of registration is 25 April.

The programme, divided into five modules, aims at strengthening one's existing vocation or progressing to a different profile or industry. The programme duration will continue for seven months. It will have sessions from both PhD holders from IITs and medical doctors, having hands-on experience. Extensive case-studies will be undertaken from real-world data (of patients). For details, visit, [exed@fsm.ac.in](mailto:exed@fsm.ac.in).

#### Worthy initiative



In a bid to keep its personnel fit, the Central Reserve Police Force has collaborated with Lovely Professional University to establish the Institute of Immunology and Nutrition Management at the Force Group Centre in Jalandhar, Punjab. The institute was inaugurated by director general of CRPF AP Maheshwari recently in the presence of LPU chancellor Ashok Mittal, pro chancellor Rashmi Mittal and many others. The newly inaugurated institute will train the CRPF's cooking staff to prepare tasty and nutritious meals keeping the physical and mental requirements of the force in mind.

A special focus area of the training will revolve around immunity building to ensure the force is better prepared to handle any seasonal diseases caused by viruses and bacteria. The cooks will be trained and upskilled in 20 different modules prepared by the faculty members of LPU.



For more updates

**LEADERSHIP POWER**  
Former captain Michael Vaughan (*in photo, left*) has argued that England Test skipper Joe Root should also get to pick his best players irrespective of ECB's rotation policy, just like limited overs leader Eoin Morgan "gets what he wants". "It is very clear where the leadership power lies in English cricket - it is with Eoin Morgan and not Joe Root. Vaughan fears that Morgan being too powerful could end up harming English cricket.

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**THUMBNAILS**

**PCB shuts offices:** The Pakistan Cricket Board on Monday decided to close down offices at its headquarters in Lahore after a senior official tested positive for COVID-19. The PCB decided to adopt a safety first approach soon after the official tested positive and asked its employees to work from home.

**Gender parity:** World Athletics (WA) on Monday pledged to bring gender parity in its highest decision making body and in its administrative staff by 2027 to empower women by bringing them to leadership positions and "breaking traditions" regarding how the competitions are being held.

**All-Frazier fight:** Boxing fans everywhere are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. Ed Brophy celebrates it every day. The world's most famous boxing ring, the one in New York City's Madison Square Garden where the Fight of the Century was staged 50 years ago Monday, is the centerpiece of the Boxing Hall of Fame in upstate New York where it's on permanent display.

**Gauff wins:** Coco Gauff had trouble closing out and needed to save two match points before finally fending off Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-6 (3), 2-6, 7-6 (8) to advance to the second round of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championship.

**'Gender-balanced Games':** The Tokyo Olympics, which will be held from July 23 to August 8 this year, will be the first "gender-balanced" Games in Olympic history, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) said on Monday. "The IOC is committed to gender equality in all areas, from the athletes competing on and off the field of play to leadership roles in sports organisations," said IOC President Thomas Bach.

**"Gift a ball" campaign:** To celebrate International Women's Day with a great purpose and impact football development in the Capital City, Football Delhi today launched "Gift A Ball" campaign at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex in New Delhi. The campaign was kick started by Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju in the presence of Indian football legend Bhachung Bhutia.

**India vs England women Test:** BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Monday announced that the Indian women's team will be pitted against England in a one-off Test match, which will be held later this year. The last Test match that Mithali Raj and her team played was against South Africa women at Mysuru in December, 2014 and it will be another traditional format game after six long weeks.

## T20 dilemmas: Problem of plenty for team selection

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
AHMEDABAD, 8 MARCH

**T**he Indian team management faces a problem of plenty going into the five T20 Internationals against England, an assignment which marks the beginning of the side's build-up to this year's T20 World Cup at home. There are 19 players available for selection and with two in contention for each slot, the XI for the five games, starting on Friday, will be an indication to how head coach Ravi Shastri, captain Virat Kohli and bowling coach Bharat Arun are looking at the next six to seven months for the shortest format.

So where does the team management fit in Rahual, who has been a successful IPL opener? Will he be slotted in the middle-order as Dhawan's game is not suited to batting lower down? These are two pertinent questions and in the answer, will be a follow-up question.

With skipper Kohli himself coming in at No 3 and two game-changers like Pant and all-rounder Hardik Pandya expected to play the big shots at Nos 5 and 6, where does it ideally leave Rahual? The only place he can be slotted is No 4 but Shreyas Iyer and Suryakumar Yadav are also jostling for a place.

If one closely follows the pattern of picking the playing XI, Surya, a sentimental favourite, will have to wait for his turn as Shreyas has done nothing wrong. But when it comes to a three-way battle between Rahual, Shreyas and Surya, the Karnataka man beats the two Mumbai boys hollow with his repertoire of

big gloves.

Shikhar Dhawan (*in photo, right*) and Rohit Sharma were a settled white ball opening pair till recently but Rahual's emergence as a potent white ball specialist has spiced up the competition. Dhawan recently had a score of 150 odd in the Vijay Hazare Trophy for Delhi and when it comes to Rohit, there's nothing to be discussed.

Will they look for a settled combination to first clinch the series and then experiment or will they field absolute rookies in the squad looking at the bigger picture? For a team that's so closely followed, the result does matter and that's why one can expect a settled first eleven for the first three games since all matches are at the same venue on similar kind of tracks.

The roaring comeback of Rishabh Pant will lead to a lot of interesting developments at the top of the order. Pant's inclusion means that KL Rahul, who till a few months back was the first choice keeper-opener, is unlikely to don the



**There are 19 players available for selection and with two in contention for each slot, the XI for the five games, starting on Friday, will be an indication to how head coach Ravi Shastri, captain Virat Kohli and bowling coach Bharat Arun are looking at the next six to seven months for the shortest format.**

strokes and ability to shift gears.

Similarly, in the pace department, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, once upon a time India's best white ball exponent, is coming back after a long lay-off and will be engaged in a two-way fight with Deepak Chahar and Shardul Thakur. For Bhuvneshwar, his experience and being a better bowler at the death compared to Chahar holds him in good stead but he hasn't played a lot of cricket save a few Mushtaq Ali games. Ditto for Chahar, a potent outswing bowler but more of a one-trick pony with lack of variations during the back-10.

Shardul is a crafty bowler who can swing it at brisk pace and among the three can use the long handle to the best effect. Yuzvendra Chahal, Washington Sundar and Axar Patel are the three spinners expected to feature in

the playing XI on the sluggish Motera tracks. In another three-way fight, Thangarasu Natarajan, with his variation of Yorkers, stands a better chance to start off compared to Navdeep Saini.

Two players, who will only get a look-in if someone is injured or forcefully rested are Ishan Kishan and Rahul Tewaria as the two simply can't be fitted anywhere.

## Bajrang takes gold, number one rank; bronze for Kaliramana

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
ROME, 8 MARCH

Olympic-bound Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia pulled off a two-pointer in the last 30 seconds of the gold medal bout to defend his title at the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event, a result that propelled him back to world number one rank. Up against Mongolia's Tulga/Tumur Ochir, Bajrang was trailing 0-2 till the final moments of the 65kg final but managed to level the scores, 30 seconds from the final whistle.

Since the last scoring point came from the Indian, he was declared the winner on criteria on Sunday night. Bajrang's leg defence seemed to be a particularly improved aspect of his game in the one-year break, forced by the coronavirus pandemic. The 27-year-old though said he needs to work more on his defence as he is eyeing a medal at the Tokyo Games.

"I found that my leg defence has improved compared to where it was before the break. I have got better but it still needs more work. I also need to be better on my attacking moves," Bajrang told PTI. Asked about his struggle in the final against the Mongolian, one of the three men's Indian wrestlers to have qualified for the Tokyo Games said it indeed was tough. "Look, the 65kg category is extremely competitive. The

Mongolian has qualified for the Tokyo Games. He is not a weak opponent. All the wrestlers in this category have the same aim of doing well in Tokyo, so all are tough and we are all almost at same level," he said.

Bajrang will now be back in the national camp but wants to train outside before the Asian championship, scheduled to be held in Kazakhstan from April 9 to 11. Bajrang was trailing 0-2 till the final moments of the 65kg final but managed to level the scores, 30 seconds from the final whistle.

The fresh rankings are based on results of only this tournament which means that gold-medallists get the top spot.

Vishal Kaliramana too impressed in the non-Olympic 70kg category by winning a bronze with a 5-1 win over Syrbaz Talgat from Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, Narsingh Pancharan Yadav, who recently made a return to competitive wrestling after a four-year doping ban, lost his bronze medal play-off 0-5 to Kazakhstan's Daniyar Kaisanov.

The loss notwithstanding, he was impressive with his power and temperament. India returned with seven medals from the first Ranking Series event in a year with Vinesh Phogat and Sarita Mor winning gold and a silver respectively in the women's event.

## Opportunities come but we will see where it goes, Ganguly keeps it open-ended on joining politics

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, 8 MARCH

BCCI President Sourav Ganguly (*in photo*) kept his cards close to his chest amid mounting speculation that he might take the political plunge ahead of the West Bengal assembly elections, saying he will see "where it goes" amid the "opportunities" coming his way. Ganguly, who is still resting at his Kolkata residence post his angioplasty after minor heart attacks, knows how there has been a speculation of him joining politics, more specifically the BJP, ahead of the eight-phase elections from March 27 to April 29.

"We will see where it goes, what opportunities come in the way, we will take it from there," Ganguly told 'India Today' when asked what's next after cricket administration. Ganguly said his life has been full of surprising twists and turns and he has never really had a clue about what's coming next for him.

"When I first became India captain, I didn't expect it as Sachin (Tendulkar) was captain. I probably wouldn't have got it had Sachin not resigned."

"Similarly, when I became BCCI president, I didn't know the minute before I would be the BCCI president. That's

the way my life has been... So we will see where it goes," he said.

According to him, opportunities need to be considered factoring in various aspects of someone's life.

"Opportunities come and you get influenced by a lot of things, your family, lifestyle, work, health, we will see where it goes," he didn't give away anything despite saying a lot of things. He laughed off the attention that he gets in his home city Kolkata, crediting it to his friendly demeanour.

"I am fortunate to get so much attention. I don't seek it and I go about doing my job. I lead a normal life in this city. I speak to people, talk to them and that's my nature."

"I am a very friendly sort

of a person with no hang-ups. I don't take to heart what people say. Because I am a popular person, I don't believe that I have to be unreachable."

"I lead my life because at the end of the day it's life and that's why people are fond of me over here."

Risk element factored in while not allowing crowds in IPL, Ganguly said allowing crowd in the IPL would have been a bigger logistical issue compared to letting in limited fans during the recently-concluded Test series versus England.

The BCCI has announced that no crowds will be allowed at the venues -- Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru and Ahmedabad -- where the matches will be

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**Blown away in opener, rusty India aim to bounce back**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
LUCKNOW, 8 MARCH

A rusty Indian women's cricket team will be seeking some rhythm in the second ODI against South Africa here on Tuesday after being outplayed by the visitors in the series-opener.

Though captain Mitali Raj and her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur had insisted that rustiness won't be an issue in their first series in 12 months, India clearly looked a side which had not played for a long time in the opener of the five-match series on Sunday.

A better prepared South Africa, on the other hand, were clinical and will be hard to beat in the coming games.

After the game, Kaur realised the players needed some time to gel as a unit. Barasingha Kaur, Raj and Deepita Sharma to a certain extent, none of the batters could apply themselves on a decent batting surface.

A lot of them were guilty of poor shot selection as pointed out by Kaur after the game.

The spinners, who are traditionally considered India's strength, hardly troubled the South African duo of Lizelle Lee and 21-year-old Laura Wolvaardt, who put up the highest ever opening wicket stand against India to run away with the contest.

There were some positives, however, such as Raj scoring a gritty half-century and

pacer Jhan Goswami showing she is still among the best in the business. Both the veterans were playing their first game since November 2019.

Kaur too looked good in her 100th ODI but would have liked to convert the start into a big score.

Opener Smriti Mandhana struck three delightful fours before falling to a loose shot and would be backing herself to bat long on Tuesday.

"Few of them got starts but couldn't convert. The bowlers need to be more consistent with lines and lengths, maybe they weren't consistent because they're coming back after a long break," Raj acknowledged after the match in which India could post only 177 that South Africa chase down in just 40.1 overs.

Pacer Monica Patel was handed her debut on Sunday and more caps can be handed out in the second game with the management keeping one eye on preparations for the World Cup next year.

Pulling off one back against South Africa seems like a daunting task considering the way they played in the opener. They looked a team high on confidence having blanketed Pakistan at home recently.

Their pace attack led by Shabnim Ismail was impressive and Indians will have to find a way to negate that threat.

Match starts at 9 am.

## Mumbai beat Goa in penalty shoot-out, enter into ISL final

**AGENCIES**

GOA, 8 MARCH

Mumbai City beat FC Goa 2-2 (6-5 after penalty shootout) in the semi-final to book their berth in the final of the Indian Super League (ISL) 2020-21 season.

The game remained goalless at the normal time and an added extra time before a penalty shoot-out settled the winner. Rowlin Borges scored the spot-kick that sent the Islanders into the final. The first leg encounter had ended in a 2-2 draw. This is the first time in their history that the Islanders have made it to the final of the competition.

Mumbai City, under the leadership of Sergio Lobera, had undergone a major revamp this season. They assembled a very strong squad and that paid off as they topped the charts at the end of the league stage and bagged the ISL League Winners Shield. They also sealed an AFC Champions League (ACL) group stage slot, thereby becoming only the

second Indian club to do so after FC Goa.

The Goan outfit, led by Juan Ferrando this season, too had undergone a revamp and only had a few familiar faces from last season. They finished the season fourth on the table with 31 points from their 20 games.

Mumbai City will now wait for the conclusion of the second semi-final between North-East United and ATK Mohun Bagan on Tuesday to find out who they will play against in the final.

**ATKMB, NEUFC need outright win to secure ISL final berth**

Having drawn their first-leg tie, both ATK Mohun Bagan and North-East United FC would look for an outright win in the second leg semifinal clash in pursuit of a final spot in the Hero Indian Super League here on Tuesday.

They have conceded five goals in the last three games which cost them the Hero ISL League Winners Shield as well as an advantage in the first leg.

For NEUFC, who are unbeaten under Jamil, it will be their first-ever final, provided they beat ATKMB. "There is always pressure. I have told the boys to enjoy this pressure," he said.

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