

on Sunday

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### NEARBY



Rahul seeks strategy, not 'laundry list of diplomacy'

NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, at a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on External Affairs held on Saturday, called Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's presentation "at best a laundry list of diplomacy" and demanded "global strategy".

NEWS ► PAGE 8

Merge Trinamool with Congress: Adhir Ranjan

KOLKATA

West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president and Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has urged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to merge her Trinamool Congress with the Congress in the wake of the recent defections from her party to the BJP.

NEWS ► PAGE 8

Rajasthan BJP puts up brave front amid feuds

JAIPUR

Confronted with internal feuds after an outfit in support of former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje was launched here recently, the BJP's Rajasthan unit has put up a brave front and denied factionalism as rumours. The party leaders insisted there were "no divisions" in the BJP.

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## Vaccines safe, ignore rumours, says PM

AIIMS chief, NITI Aayog member and SII CEO among those vaccinated on Day 1

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched the countrywide COVID-19 vaccination drive.

He said India-made vaccines were safe and asked people not to believe rumours. He congratulated all Indians and the country's scientists. He noted that the world had not seen a vaccination drive of this scale, and India's response to the pandemic had been acknowledged globally.

"The vaccines have come about in the shortest time span and this is an achievement for India and its contribution towards the battle against COVID-19. There are 100 countries which do not have a population of three crore but India in the first phase will inoculate three

FULL COVERAGE: PAGE 7

crore healthcare and frontline workers, and in the next step, we will take this number to 30 crore. There are only three countries in the world with more than 30 crore population: India, the U.S. and China. Hence, this is going to be the biggest vaccination drive," Mr. Modi observed.

On the first day, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) medical director Dr. Randeep Guleria and NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr. V.K. Paul were among the first to be vaccinated, along with a sanitation worker at AIIMS.

Serum Institute of India



The wait is over: Sanitation worker Manish Kumar getting vaccinated in New Delhi in the presence of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and AIIMS chief Randeep Guleria. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

(SII) CEO Adar Poonawalla also took the vaccination.

### Much cheaper

"Indian vaccines are much cheaper than foreign ones and easier and more conducive to India's conditions. There are vaccines abroad whose single dose costs up to ₹5,000 and have to be kept in freezers at minus 70 degrees temperature. India-manufactured vaccines are best suited for us," Mr. Modi used during the drive.

Mr. Modi said around 60% children of the world would get vaccines manufactured in India. The world put its trust on India's vaccine science and research.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 6

MORE REPORTS ► PAGES 2, 3 & 5

## 4,319 health workers get vaccine shot in Delhi

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 vaccination drive started in Delhi on Saturday, as part of the national roll-out, with 4,319 healthcare workers being vaccinated at 81 sites across the city. Both Covaxin and Covishield vaccines were used during the drive.

### Total 81 centres

Each of the 81 centres had aimed to cover 100 workers on the first day, but many fell short of the target of 8,100 despite a hand-picked list of people. While a lot of

healthcare workers adopted a wait-and-watch approach, many volunteered for the drive.

Directions were issued to inoculate only those healthcare workers who were below 50 years of age to avoid any possible complications. Hence the people to be inoculated on the first day were not randomly selected, according to officials.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the vaccination drive was "successfully" conducted on the first day.

DETAILS ON ► PAGE 2

## Consent form mandatory for Covaxin shot

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

India began its COVID-19 vaccination drive on Saturday with two approved vaccinations – Serum Institute of India's Covishield, developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca, and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.

Those receiving Covaxin have been asked to sign a consent form before being vaccinated as the vaccine "has been allowed by the government in clinical trial mode". The form adds that compensation for serious adverse events will be paid by the company if it is proven to be causally related to the vaccine.

"The clinical efficacy of Covaxin is yet to be established and it is still being studied in phase 3 clinical trials. Hence, it is important to appreciate that receiving the vaccine does not mean that other precautions related to COVID-19 need not be followed.

The Central Licensing Authority has granted permission for Covaxin for restricted use in emergency situations in public interest... in clinical trial mode," the form says.

The consent form, however, states that in phase 1 and phase 2 clinical trials, COVAXINTM has demonstrated the ability to produce antibodies against COVID-19.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 6

## NIA summons farm leader, TV journalist

40 persons to be examined in SFJ case

VIJAYA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has summoned around 40 persons to be examined as 'witness' in a fresh case registered against the Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), a foreign-based group that advocates secessionist and pro-Khalistani activities in India.

Asked if any farmer leader engaged in the ongoing dialogue with the Centre had also received summons, the official said: "They need to be examined as witnesses to ascertain details of the investigation. A number of people have been called and we are not aware of their profession or if they are involved in the farmers' agitation or engaged in dialogue with the government."

an actor, a sweet shop owner and other businessmen. They have been asked to appear at the NIA's Delhi headquarters from January 18-21.

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CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 6

## WhatsApp pushes policy rollout to May 15

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Following a severe backlash over the latest update to its privacy policy, Facebook-owned WhatsApp on Saturday said it has pushed back the policy rollout by three months to May 15.

The company said it will also do a lot more to clear up the misinformation around how privacy and security works on WhatsApp and "we'll then go to people gradually to review the policy at their own pace before new business options are available on May 15".

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CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 6

## Furfura pilgrimage site is the epicentre of Muslim politics in West Bengal

Owaisi's visit has generated attention

SHIV SAHAY SINGH  
FURFURA

Trening with thousands of people who travel here in hundreds of vehicles, Furfura, a village in West Bengal's Hooghly district, transforms every Friday into a major pilgrimage centre. Before the afternoon prayers, people queue up at the *mazar* (shrine) of Hazrat Abu Baqr Siddique (1846-1939), a prominent *peer* (holy person) of the town. People say this is the second most prominent *mazar* in the country after Ajmer Sharif in Rajasthan.

### SPECIAL

On January 3, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi visited Furfura Sharif and met Abbas Siddique, the *peermada* and secretary of Furfura Sharif, at his office-cum-residence. The meeting generated a lot of attention in political circles. It became the first instance of the coming together of the minority Urdu-speaking and majority Bengali-speaking Muslims of the State. Mr. Owaisi unequivocally announced his support for Mr. Siddique in the upcoming Assembly polls.

On his meeting with Mr. Owaisi, Mr. Siddique said: "We are in the process of forming a Muslim tribal front in West Bengal and are in talks with several groups, including Left parties and the Congress. The meeting with Mr. Owaisi is also a part of a



In the limelight: Devotees proceeding to the shrine at Furfura. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

series of meetings we are having." The religious leader claimed that he would announce the front by the end of January, and that the front would put up candidates for about 100 seats.

Asked whether this front would not split the Muslim votes and help the BJP, Mr. Siddique said: "It is only because Mamata Banerjee that the BJP has been able to have a foothold in the State and the very existence of Muslims is at stake."

Toha Siddique, another representative of the family, however, said: "Abbas Siddique is young, but we will not allow any development that will malign the image of the place and help communal forces."

The developments at Furfura have created ripples in Kolkata. Representatives of the Imam Association of Bengal issued a statement saying that Muslims in Bengal could not be divided.

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Honourable Home Minister, Government of India, who is arriving in Karnataka to address the JANA SEVAK SAMAVESH at Belagavi on 17<sup>th</sup> January

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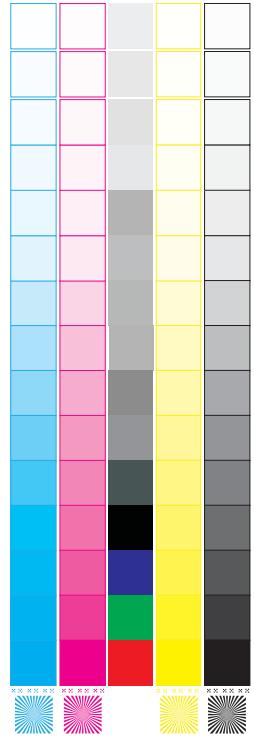
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## IN BRIEF

## Delhi zoo confirms dead owl infected with bird flu

NEW DELHI A dead owl in the Delhi zoo has tested positive for bird flu, officials said on Saturday. "The cloacal, tracheal and ocular swabs of a brown fish owl were sent to a lab for examination, and it was found positive for H5N8 avian influenza virus," said zoo director Ramesh Pandey. Chicken feed to raptors and entry of vehicles inside the zoo have already been stopped. On Monday, samples taken from crows and ducks at parks and lakes in the national capital had tested positive for the avian influenza.



## Sweeper backs out of getting a jab at Lok Nayak Hospital

Doctor kept under temporary observation after feeling giddy

NIKHIL M BABU  
NEW DELHI

A sweeper who was supposed to be the first person to be inoculated backed out on Saturday morning at Lok Nayak Hospital, while a doctor was moved to the AEFI (Adverse Effect Following Immunisation) management room after she felt some giddiness.

### Phone calls

Each centre had prepared a hand-picked list of 100 healthcare workers to be inoculated on the first day.

Though the beneficiaries were supposed to get a message on their registered mobile numbers about the time and date of vaccination as per government guidelines, it did not happen. Many said they got phone calls from the hospital informing them about the vaccination.

The first person backing out led to a quick decision to start the drive at Lok Nayak with a nurse, an official said. At the hospital, there was a round of applause when the first person to be inoculated completed her 30 minutes of observation time without developing any problems.

A 28-year-old doctor, Sneha Harish, who was moved to the AEFI monitoring room in Lok Nayak Hospital after she was inoculated,



Healthcare workers during the vaccination drive at Lok Nayak Hospital in Delhi on Saturday. ■ SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

told *The Hindu* that she was fine after resting for about 20 minutes. She said she had volunteered to get the shot on the first day.

"Initially, I was a little anxious. After the vaccination, I was a little tired and also felt giddy. When I told them about it, they made me lie down in the AEFI management room for about 20 minutes. They gave me something to eat. After that, I felt better," she said.

Rani Devi, the sweeper who backed out, told the newspaper that she did not want to get inoculated on the first day.

She said she had got multiple calls from the hospital. She said the hospital was even ready to send a vehicle

to bring her to the venue.

"I didn't give my name. I don't want to get the vaccine now. I had told them two days ago as well that I do not want to get vaccinated. I don't know how my name got in the list," she said.

Ms. Devi said she was not forced by the authorities.

### Different date

At G.B. Pant Hospital at 2.30 p.m., a group of five civil defence volunteers was busy calling everyone on a list of 100 people to be vaccinated on Saturday. But, only 29 people turned up.

"Sir, no one on the list will be coming now. Many of them asked for a different date," one of them told the officer-in-charge.

"The one severe case was reported from AIIMS. As per information from the hospital

tal, a male health worker developed some kind of allergy after the vaccination and had to be given medication. He is stable as per latest reports," Ankita Chakravarty, District Magistrate (south Delhi) told *The Hindu*. Covaxin was administered to all healthcare workers in AIIMS.

AEFI has been divided into "minor", "severe", and "serious" categories by the government. A Delhi government spokesperson, however, maintained there was no AEFI on Day 1.

Health Minister Satyendar Jain said the vaccination drive was "successfully" conducted on the first day.

Healthcare workers in many city hospitals said they did not get a message on their registered mobile numbers about the time and date of vaccination, as earlier

## 4,319 health workers vaccinated on Day 1, initial target was 8,100

While many volunteered for the drive, others adopted wait-and-watch approach



Healthcare workers after getting immunised at the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Delhi on Saturday. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

ter Arvind Kejriwal inspecting Lok Nayak Hospital and reiterating that the "vaccine is safe" and "do not believe in rumours".

### Rose and goodies

Everyone who was vaccinated at Lok Nayak, the largest COVID-19 hospital in the city, got a rose, while at Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, the beneficiaries were presented with a basket of chocolates, juice and other eatables.

Biji Tomy, 48, a nurse from Kerala who got the first shot of the vaccine at Lok Nayak Hospital, said she had volunteered for the drive.

"I knew I would have to get inoculated at some point, so why not today," she told *The Hindu*.

Around 2.30 p.m. at G.B. Pant Hospital, Lokesh Kumar Meena, 36, who got the vaccine shot in the morning was working.

"I gave my name for the first day. I am completely fine and I have been working after taking rest for a while. There are no complications and everyone should take the vaccine," he said.

The vaccination drive will continue from Monday. The city aims to inoculate about 2.4 lakh healthcare workers in the first phase.

## 'I was slightly scared but someone had to do it'

Nursing officer at GTB Hospital recounts his experience

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

A 39-year-old nursing officer who had gotten infected while on duty, a 50-year-old sanitation worker, and a 32-year-old senior resident doctor were among those who got vaccinated at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital on Saturday.

Akhilesh Sharma, nursing officer at GTB Hospital for the last 10 years, who practically lived with COVID-19 patients while on duty since the outbreak, emphasised the importance of the vaccine and said that he has been at the forefront of the fight against the deadly virus and was now ready to be among the first ones to get vaccinated for others to see the results.

"I was slightly scared but someone had to do it. I feel absolutely okay after getting the vaccine. They had asked me about my medical history and gave me the shot only after they found me fit to be

vaccinated," he said.

### Away from children

Before getting vaccinated, Mr. Sharma recalled the difficult time his family had to face when he and wife - also a nursing officer here - were found to be infected two months ago.

"Mine was a severe infection and I was hospitalised for six days while my wife had quarantined herself at home. We had sent our children to their grandparents' house. They are four and eight years old and couldn't even understand what was happening. It was a tough time," he said, adding that his wife is more scared and he is trying to convince her that if the Prime Minister is endorsing the vaccine then she shouldn't worry".

Mr. Sharma said that after the second shot of vaccine followed by 14 days observation period, he'll finally be able to hug his children "freely without a thought".

"We still maintain distance at home with our children. Hopefully, after the vaccine, there'll be some ease even if we'll still follow protocol".

An anxious Amravati Devi, a sanitation worker at a nursing college, brought her friend, a lift operator, much before she was given a call to come to the waiting room before getting vaccinated. "I am nervous but I want to get the vaccine shot to feel safe. My daughter cheered me up this morning before I left for work," she said.

The first to get the shot at GTB Hospital was Akansha Rathor, a senior resident, who had no idea that she would be the first one to get inoculated.

"I had a very minor pain at the time of vaccine. I am feeling normal... just like before and I would like to tell everyone that there's nothing to be scared of. Trials have happened before. We'll see in the coming days if we feel okay," she said.

## Vaccine selection process irks sanitation workers at RGSSH

They recall spending months away from their loved ones

HEMANI BHANDARI  
NEW DELHI

At Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, random selection of people to get vaccinated irked a few sanitation workers who were waiting since morning to get the shot on Saturday.

Arun Kumar, who has been posted as a sanitation worker in the flu unit where people are tested for COVID-19, said he and his colleagues were waiting since 7 a.m. but due to some "issue" their names were not in the list on Saturday.

"They had taken our names on Friday and told us that we'll get vaccinated today. Our supervisor is looking into the matter to correct this. I am unable to understand as to how people have been selected," he said, adding that he is, however, sure that they'll all get vaccinated.

Another sanitation worker, Shiv Kumar, 40, said that he got infected by COVID-19

in May and was admitted in the hospital as well.

"We have been and continue to be closely in touch with COVID-19 patients. It's important for us and our families. They are only safe if we are. When I got infected, I stayed away from my family for a month and a half. Even today, I stay away from them for two hours after I go home," he said.

While the sanitation workers waited, the first one to get the vaccine shot at RGSSH was Vikas Dogra, head of school of pulmonology and nodal officer for COVID-19 at the hospital, who doesn't remember the number of times he got tested for COVID-19.

They had taken our names on Friday and told us that we'll get vaccinated today. Our supervisor is looking into the matter to correct this. I am unable to understand as to how people have been selected," he said, adding that he is, however, sure that they'll all get vaccinated.

apartment and looking at them from a distance. But finally I went home because it didn't seem to end," he said, adding that his daughter's birthday was also witnessed by him from a distance.

Among those who also got vaccinated was Ansar Ali, nursing orderly (NO), who stayed away from his family for seven months, living in the hospital accommodation and finally went home in November. He continues to stay away and goes only occasionally. "I hope I gather the courage to be near them again after the vaccine shot," he said.

Shahid Riyazuddin was another NO who got vaccinated on Saturday. She said she had joined the hospital in April and 17 days later, she was infected by COVID-19.

"I continued to work after recovering. Now, I am feeling okay about getting vaccinated. I was told by my seniors that I should feel safe," she said.

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## After months of rigour, a dose of hope for many

Efficacy will be ascertained only after second vaccine shot, say some doctors

SHINJINI GHOSH  
NEW DELHI

The first day of the vaccination drive on Saturday was welcomed by healthcare workers as the "beginning of the end" to an ordeal that has lasted for over 10 months. From long duty hours in stuffy Personal Protective Equipment kits at COVID-19 wards to not being able to see family for weeks at a time, healthcare workers on Saturday said there was finally some "hope" after months of tribulations.

Romil Saini, a senior resident in the psychiatry department, said: "There were times when we had month-long duties. Trauma centre duty was the most difficult while wearing PPE kits. The burden was immense when the virus was at its peak. Now that the vaccine is available, one can say that it is the 'beginning of the end'."

"I got to visit my family in December for the first time since the pandemic began. I am happy to receive the vaccine. Up till now, there has been no side effects," said Dr. Saini, who lives in Haryana.

### 'Had no doubts'

Najafgarh resident Bijay Kumar Yadav, a member of the hospital administration, said: "I had no doubts about the vaccine. We have been working since the beginning without any breaks and at this point we cannot take a step back as it will not be good for the country."

While most doctors said that they had no apprehensions of taking the vaccine,



A health worker prepares a vaccine shot at a hospital in Delhi. • SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

some who got vaccinated cautioned that the efficacy would be determined only after the second dose.

Roshan Mathew, a senior resident in the emergency medicine department, said: "There are some common side effects with every vaccine, so some minor ones might be there but serious adverse effects should be rare. We are required to take two doses, hence, after the first shot, one cannot be completely sure. However, I am feeling hopeful and will continue to take precautions that I have been taking all these months. Though there was slight apprehension in the beginning, after the vaccine, we are hopeful."

At Safdarjung Hospital, Poornima Tiwari, who works in the community medicine department, said: "As of now there have been no side effects and it feels fine. All these months we were distressed with the thought of carrying the infection back home. Once the second dose is administered, there will be some sort of assurance."

## Administer Covishield vaccine and not Covaxin, appeal RML Hospital doctors

They are apprehensive about trials of Bharat Biotech product

STAFF REPORTER  
NEW DELHI

Stating that doctors were "apprehensive" about COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin, Resident Doctors' Association of the Central government-run Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital on Saturday requested the medical superintendent (MS) to inoculate them using Covishield vaccine instead of Covaxin.

RDA vice-president Niranjala Mohapatra said that they did not announce any formal boycott of Covaxin and that they were yet to meet the MS of the hospital.

### 'Defeat the purpose'

"We would like to bring to your notice that the residents [doctors] are a bit apprehensive about the lack of complete trial in case of Co-

vaxin and might not participate in huge numbers, thus, defeating the purpose of vaccination. We request you to vaccinate us with Covishield which has completed all stages of all trials before its roll-out," the letter said.

Six Central hospitals of the total 81 sites were inoculating healthcare workers using Covaxin. The rest of the 75 were using Covishield.

Govt. offices told to function at full strength

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Government offices here "shall function at maximum strength" given the declining COVID-19 cases and infection rates, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority stated in an order issued on January 14.

The offices will have to strictly adhere to social distancing norms. On Saturday, the positivity rate was recorded at 0.42%.

## DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Delhi Development Authority announced Mega e-Auction Phase XI for various categories of plots in Jan 2021 with the last date for online submission of mandatory Documents with EMD as 23.01.2021. DDA is pleased to add new commercial plots in the ongoing e-Auction and the entire process is being extended with online submission upto 30.01.2021 (06:00PM) IST for giving maximum chance to bidders for registration and participation. For further details kindly login the DDA website www.dda.org.in or www.ddaeauction.co.in.

Subu R. Commissioner (LD)

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10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Date of Interview:

25.02.2021 (Thursday) &

26.02.2021 (Friday)

Time will be intimated

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### BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

#### INDEX OF MATRIMONIAL

#### BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

#### BRIDES WANTED

#### BRIDES & GROOMS WANTED

Classification common for Brides, Bridegrooms, Brides & Grooms

#### Assamese

#### Awadhi

#### Bengali

#### Bhojpuri

#### Bihari

#### Chhattisgarhi

#### English

#### Gujarati

#### Haryanvi

#### Hindi

#### Kannada

#### Kashmiri

#### Konkani

#### Malayalam

#### Manipuri

#### Marathi

#### Marwari

#### Nepali

#### Oriya

#### Parsi

#### Punjabi

#### Saurashtra

#### Sindhi

#### Tamil

#### Telugu

#### Tulu

#### Urdu

#### Advocate

#### Business

#### Defence

#### Doctor

#### Engineer

#### Finance/ Banking

#### Government/ Quasi-Govt.

#### IAS/ Allied Services

#### Information Technology

#### MBA/ CA/ ICWA

#### NRI

#### Cosmopolitan

#### Divorcee

#### Physically Challenged

#### MARRIAGE BUREAUS

#### WEDDING ARRANGEMENTS

#### BENGALI

#### TAMIL

#### TAMIL

#### TELUGU

</div

## Anganwadi centres to be relocated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

JAIPUR

About 17% of the Anganwadi centres in Rajasthan, functioning from rented buildings, will be shifted to school or departmental buildings, with the target for 1% relocation every month. A proper infrastructure and basic facilities will also be created for each centre.

Chief Secretary Niranjan Arya also praised the initiative for developing kitchen gardens at some of the centres, saying the vegetables grown there would be used for preparing nutritious food for children.

## Punjab to vaccinate 1.74 lakh health workers

On Day 1 of the first phase, three doctors, two others get first dose in presence of CM Amarinder Singh

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHANDIGARH

Punjab rolled out the COVID-19 vaccination drive on Saturday with five healthcare workers getting the jab in the presence of Chief Minister Amarinder Singh, who virtually kicked off the process to inoculate 1.74 lakh such workers in the first phase.

### Next Phase

Dr. Sandeep Singh, Dr. Charan Kamal, Dr. Dilip Dhaliwal Srivastava, computer operator Asha Yadav and Class IV employee Surjit Singh were administered the first dose of Covishield at a civil hospital in Mohali.



A medical worker inoculates a colleague with COVID-19 vaccine in Amritsar on Saturday. • AFP

Capt. Amarinder said it was his desire to get vaccinated first, but in accordance with the directives of the Central government, only healthcare workers could

be covered in the first phase. "I will definitely get myself vaccinated in the next phase," he said.

### Army, police personnel

After covering health staff, the vaccine would be administered to Army and police personnel, in line with the guidelines of the Government of India.

He said he had written to the Prime Minister for permission for free distribution among the lower income groups.

To a query on the vaccine safety, the Chief Minister said it would not have been approved unless the scientists were sure of its safety.

Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said all arrangements had been put in place for a smooth vaccination drive, including online portal for registration, operationalisation of 366 sites for administering the dose etc. in the State. In the initial stage, as many as 408 vaccination teams had been constituted and 59 teams were working to inoculate the healthcare workers, he added.

Apart from these, 729 coldchain points had been established in the State for storage of vials at the desired temperature, he said.



Biranchi Naik getting the first COVID-19 vaccine dose in Odisha on Saturday. • BISWARANJAN ROUT

## Sanitation worker gets first shot in Odisha

Vaccination drive begins at 161 centres

SATYASUNDAR BARIK

Bhubaneswar

A sanitation worker was given the first COVID-19 vaccine as the Odisha government began a mass vaccination drive at 161 centres across the State on Saturday.

try in the critical last leg of our fight against COVID-19. We intend to vaccinate 16,100 persons at the rate of 100 persons each at 161 centres on Saturday," said Pradip Mohapatra, Additional Chief Secretary (Health).

"We are trying to cover 3.28 lakh health workers by January 25. As many as 1.92 lakh out of 3.28 lakh will be vaccinated with the first lot of Covishield and Covaxin," he added.

Mr. Patnaik interacted and took feedback from those who were given the vaccination in different districts on the first day.

### Good news, says CM

"This is good news for us. A long wait finally comes to an end. We again seek the cooperation of doctors and health workers," he said.

Mr. Patnaik congratulated the vaccine makers for rising up to the occasion.

The government has decided to pause the drive for a day on Sunday in order to observe the impact of the vaccine. The drive will resume on Monday.

## Over 5,900 get inoculated in Haryana

In terms of numbers, Gurugram tops the table, Jhajjar records the least

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

As many as 5,907 beneficiaries - around 80% of the total target of 7,533 - were administered the COVID-19 vaccine by the Haryana Health Department at 77 immunisation sites across the State on Saturday.

In terms of absolute numbers, Gurugram topped the table with the maximum 608 being vaccinated and Jhajjar recorded the least number of 112 vaccinations. Jind recorded only 52% vaccination - the lowest in the State - with only 156 people inoculated against the target of 300.

Thirteen beneficiaries complained of Adverse Event Following Immunisation with the maximum nine at Palwal followed by two at Jind and



A healthcare worker administering the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine to a front-line worker in Gurugram. • PTI

one each at Kaithal and Hisar. Additional Chief Secretary Health Rajeev Arora expressed satisfaction at the vaccination rate. On 13 cases of AEFI, Mr. Arora clarified that it was in all immunisations. "Small pain, giddiness for some time, mild fever etc. That is why we make people sit for 30 minutes for obser-

vation," he said. He added that around 5,000 vaccinators and health workers were imparted training for the drive.

Earlier, soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address, the first phase of COVID-19 vaccine rolled out in the State with sanitation worker Saroj Bala, 45, being

the first beneficiary at Civil Dispensary, Sector 4, Panchkula. Ms. Bala said being a front-line worker, she was enthusiastic to get the shot and felt fine after it was done.

The vaccine was then administered to Director-General of Health Services, Haryana, S.B. Kamboj and Additional DGHS, Veena Singh. Dr. Kamboj and Ms. Singh said the vaccine was safe and prepared after much research. Medanta Hospital director Naresh Trehan was among those inoculated in Gurugram.

Health Minister Anil Vij said 67 lakh beneficiaries would be administered the vaccine in a phased manner, including 2.25 lakh healthcare workers in the first phase.

## Mamata seeks adequate doses from Centre

If needed, State can bear the cost'

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

The vaccination drive for COVID-19 started in West Bengal on Saturday with 20,000 health workers being administered the vaccine across 207 centres in the State.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, while addressing the health workers, said she has requested the Centre for adequate doses for the State, and added, if required, the State is willing to bear the financial burden.

She mentioned that she has already requested the Government of India to supply adequate number of vaccines for not only front-line workers, but also for all the people of West Bengal. She

said all the people of the State should get vaccines free of cost. "If needed, the State will bear the financial burden," a press statement issued by the State government said.

Meanwhile, a controversy erupted after two Trinamool Congress leaders - Katwa MLA Rabindranath Chatterjee and Subhash Mondal - reportedly got the first dose of the vaccine. While the two leaders said they got the vaccine as front-line health workers, the Opposition parties, particularly BJP, criticised the development.

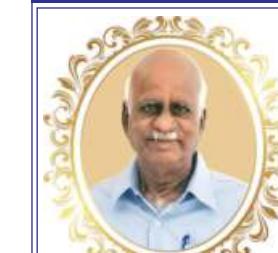
"I don't know whether they have been vaccinated or not... The first stage is for healthcare workers," State Minister Firhad Hakim said.

At 11.05 a.m., the first vaccine dose was administered. "It is a matter of great satisfaction that the vaccination has marked our en-

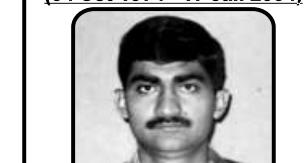
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### DEATH

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### DEATH

T.A.SAMPATH (84), Retired Officer (General Administration), THE HINDU, Chennai passed away on 16-01-2021. Address: M-241, 25th Main Road, Besant Nagar, Chennai-600090. Mobile: 9444133711

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Complexion: Shallow, Height: 4'8", Face: Round, Built: Thin, ID: Mentally unstable, Clothing: White coloured flower printed saree, Blue coloured blouse & Black coloured slipper in feet. Any person having any information/Clue about this missing female, may inform SHO, Mandawali, Delhi at E-mail: [cic@cbi.gov.in](mailto:cic@cbi.gov.in) or website: <http://cbi.nic.in>

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Sita Devi

### North Eastern Railway

E-Tendering Tender Notice No. 01/2021  
Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.), N.E. Railway, Itazagar for and behalf of President of India invites "OPEN" e-tender through online (E-Tendering) for the following work:

S. No. : 1. Description of Works : Construction of Type-II 15 units Quarters for C & W and Operating staff at TPU station (under sanctioned work (I)-Construction of Type-II-15 nos. & Type-III 06 nos. Quarters at TPU for C&W & Operating staff & Type-II-04 nos. & Type-III-02 nos. Quarters at BNSA for Operating staff in IZN Division), Approx. Value : Rs. 1,32,77,306.43, E.M.D. Money : Rs. 2,16,400/-, Cost of Tender Forms : Rs. Nil, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter : 12 Months.

S. No. : 2. Description of Works : Construction of Type-II 04 units Quarters at BNSA and 01 unit Quarters at PBE station. (Total-05 units Quarters) (under sanctioned work (I)-Construction of Type-II-05 nos. & Type-III-02 Units Qtr's at BNSA Station under jurisdiction of ADEN/PBE (2) Construction of Type-II-15 nos. & Type-III 06 nos. Qtr's at TPU for C & W & Operating staff & Type-II-04 nos. & Type-III-02 nos. Qtr's at BNSA for Operating staff in IZN Division.)

(3) Construction of Type-II-01 Qt (KSI-01 units), Type-II-04 Quarters (KPV-01, KGM-01, KJN-01, PBE-01 units) and Type-II-08 Quarters (RUPC-02, BH-02, LKU-01, KPV-01, FBD-02 units) for RPF staff at different stations. Approx. Value Rs. 61,95,390.89, E.M.D. Money : Rs. 1,23,900/-, Cost of Tender Forms : Rs. Nil, Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter : 09 Months.

1. Online e-tender can be submitted upto 15.00 hrs. of dated 09.02.2021.

2. For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways IREPS website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

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## FROM PAGE ONE

## Vaccines are safe, ignore rumours, says PM

Mr. Modi cautioned the beneficiaries against lowering the guard after getting the vaccine shot. People should remember that the vaccines comprised two shots and had a gap of close to a month between them.

"The vaccine starts working 14 days after the complete round is finished. But don't lower your guard during or after vaccination. The mantra 'Dawai Bhi, Kadaai Bhi' should be followed, and the use of mask and social distancing norms is essential," he stated.

The vaccines had been introduced after trials and dry

runs. People should safeguard against rumours. India had reached this stage today only because of the sacrifice of the healthcare workers, he pointed out.

"They fought for every single life. During the pandemic, they stayed away from their families and many never returned. India has so far fought COVID-19 with self-confidence and self-reliance and we have to keep up this spirit even during the vaccination programme."

Today, by vaccinating this vulnerable population first, we are recognising their service," he said.

## Consent form mandatory for Covaxin shot

The declaration says: "I further emphasize that any information provided by me prior to taking the vaccine will be archived in the database maintained by the immunization program of the government and privacy as well as confidentiality of the information provided by you will be maintained."

The recipients will be handed over a fact sheet and a form to report adverse

effects, in which they have to note down symptoms like fever, pain within seven days.

Currently beneficiaries don't have a choice of vaccine and several Central government hospitals in Delhi – AIIMS, Safdarjung, Ram Manohar Lohia hospital, Kalawati Saran Children Hospital – administered Covaxin to its staff under the first round of vaccination.

## NIA summons farm leader, TV journalist

The notices have been issued under Section 160 Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)-Police officer's power to require attendance of witnesses in FIR no 40/2020 under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Last week, the Supreme Court had suspended the implementation of the three farm laws until further notice and appointed a committee to resolve the issue. The farmers' unions have so far held nine rounds of discussions with two Union Ministers – Narendra Singh Tomar and Piyush Goyal – that have remained inconclusive.

The leaders raised the issue of various government agencies sending notices to people associated with the agitation with the Ministers.

*The Hindu* spoke to some of the persons summoned by the NIA.

Jasveer Singh Muktsar, a journalist with the U.K.-based TV channel KTV who has been covering the protests at Delhi border, said: "I have been asked to appear before the NIA on January 18. I do not know why I have been summoned."

**'Oppressive policy'**  
Nobelit Singh, a cloth shop owner from Hoshiarpur who has also been asked to appear on January 18, said: "I have been at the forefront of protest against the three black laws. I have also been to Singhu border and the

government has issued notices to all the farmers in the state."

The NIA registered a fresh case against the SFJ on December 15 where it alleged that large amounts of funds being collected by Khalistani terrorist outfits are being sent through NGOs to Khalistani elements based in India.

## WhatsApp pushes policy rollout to May 15

WhatsApp, it said, was built on a simple idea: what you share with your friends and family stays between you, while stressing that users' personal conversations are end-to-end encrypted so that neither WhatsApp nor Facebook can see these private messages.

"It's why we don't keep logs of who everyone's messaging or calling. We also

can't see your shared location and we don't share your contacts with Facebook," it said, adding that with the recent update, this will not change. Instead, the update will include new options people will have to message a business on WhatsApp, and provides further transparency about how the platform collects and uses data.

## Himachal panchayat polls: first phase voting today

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA SHIMLA**  
The first of the three-phase Panchayati Raj Institution elections in Himachal Pradesh will be held on Sunday and over 1,200 panchayats will go to the polls, Election

Officer Sanjeev Mahajan said. Voting in 1,227 gram panchayats will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., he said on Saturday, adding that the remaining two phases will be held on January 19 and January 21.

## We need to change the way we view police: Shah

RAF unit at Bhadravati, for which Union Home Minister laid the foundation stone, will cater to Karnataka, Kerala and Goa

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
HASAN

Home Minister Amit Shah, who arrived on a two-day visit to Karnataka on Saturday, laid the foundation stone for establishing a unit of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) at Bhadravati in Shivamogga district.

The RAF, the specialised wing of the Central Reserve Police Force, will be the first battalion of its kind in the State. The State government has provided the CRPF with 50.29 acres of land for the purpose.

"We have started Indian National Defence University and National Forensic Sciences University, the first of its kind in the world. I suggest the Chief Minister to set up colleges in Karnataka with affiliation to these universities," he said.

Stating that recognising the sacrifice of police personnel, the Centre had set up

and neighbouring States, said Mr. Shah.

Among government officials, the job of the police is the toughest. We need to change the way we look at the police. The police do not get a holiday even to celebrate festivals. They will be on the field to maintain law and order. Many have sacrificed their lives while on duty," he said.

The Centre, under the leadership of Narendra Modi, had taken many steps to modernise the police force. The government had allotted ₹800 crore for the purpose.

"We have started Indian National Defence University and National Forensic Sciences University, the first of its kind in the world. I suggest the Chief Minister to set up colleges in Karnataka with affiliation to these universities," he said.

Stating that recognising the sacrifice of police personnel, the Centre had set up



**Grand launch:** Home Minister Amit Shah taking part in the foundation laying ceremony for the Bhadravathi Rapid Action Force Centre in Shivamogga on Saturday. ■ PTI

a national police memorial in Delhi, he appealed to the public to visit the memorial.

"Your gesture to appreciate the police force and their sacrifice would boost

the morale of the force," he said. The establishment would and other essential amenities.

Mr. Shah lauded Mr. Yediyurappa's leadership in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and said the go

vernment would complete its full term in office.

Mr. Shah said the BJP government would complete the full term and the party would come to power again after the 2023 Assembly elections in the State. The Opposition Congress need not have doubts about the completion of the term by the BJP government, he said.

After the virtual inauguration of the police quarters under Police Gruha-2020 scheme and Police Gruha-2025 in various parts of the city, the Home Minister said Karnataka's fight against the pandemic was "very good" and appreciated the Bengaluru police's role in maintaining the law and order during the lockdown.

He also inaugurated Indian Reserve Battalion unit's administrative office building at Tikota, Vijayapura district.

(With inputs from Bengaluru bureau)

## Karnataka notifies draft rules for transportation of cattle

Anti-cow slaughter Ordinance comes into effect tomorrow

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

**BENGALURU**  
The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Ordinance, 2020, to ban slaughter of cattle, will come into effect from January 18. The State government issued a notification to this effect on Saturday. The Ordinance bans slaughter of cows, bulls, and bullocks of all ages, besides he or she buffaloes aged below 13.

The government also framed draft rules under the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle (Transportation of Cattle) Rules, 2021. The draft rules have been notified for seeking objections/suggestions.

The rules state that cattle can be allowed for transportation only after obtaining permission from the competent authority for agricultural or animal husbandry purposes. Cattle should not be transported between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. and also during summer months – March to May – between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. No motor vehicle transporting cattle on road should exceed the speed of 25 km per hour.

Cattle over six months of pregnancy should not be transported, unless it is being transported for the purpose of treatment.

Each consignment of cattle transport should bear a label showing in bold red let

ters the name, address, and telephone number of the consigner and consignee, the number and types of cattle being transported, and the quantity of rations and food provided.

Motor vehicles meant for carrying animals should not be permitted to carry any other goods except food, water, and fodder. In cases where not more than two milch animals and their calves are transported in a local area of 15 km, transport certificate might be exempted.

In case of death of cattle in transit, the owner of the cattle should obtain the post-mortem report from the competent authority before transporting it.

## A.P. BJP moves to rope in Kapu leader Mudragada

Veerraju explains party's action plan

**STAFF REPORTER**

**KIRIKAMPUDI**  
BJP Andhra Pradesh president Somu Veerraju on Saturday urged Kapu leader Padmanabham to join the national party to play a strategic role in the State.

Mr. Veerraju met Mr. Padmanabham at his residence here, and explained him the current political situation in the State and the BJP's action plan.

This was Mr. Veerraju's second meeting with Mr. Padmanabham, who had recently quit the Kapu reservation movement.

Speaking to newsmen after the meeting, Mr. Veerraju said, "I have explained him the need for an alternative to the existing political parties in the State that are encouraging family politics. I have also explained him the reason behind aligning with the Jana Sena Party."

Mr. Padmanabham would have to play a bigger role in the State politics in the future, Mr. Veerraju observed. "Mr. Padmanabham can take his time to arrive at a final decision on our proposal," the BJP leader added.

## Kerala traders to launch political party, back UDF

KVVES claims it has the support of 10 lakh members

**STAFF REPORTER**

**KOZHIKODE**  
The Kerala Vyapari Vyavasayi Ekopana Samiti (KVVES) has decided to go ahead with the launch of its own party named Kerala Karshaka Vyapari Party.

A decision on party structure, political alliance, and strategy for the Assembly elections will be taken at a State committee meeting of the KVVES in Ernakulam on Sunday.

KVVES functionaries say they have the support of over 10 lakh members and 3,000 units across the State

for the new political mission. They also indicate that the new party will work for the success of the United Democratic Front.

The formation of a political party has been a long pending declaration of the State's biggest merchant forum.

Though there had been declarations to field own candidates during Assembly elections, the plans were dropped on promises made by political parties to address their issues.

State secretary K. Sethumadhavan said the new party would enlist the support of farmers and traders to emerge as a powerful political force.

In support of the merchant forum's move, local leaders of the KVVES had taken up a number of protests in solidarity with the support of the agitation of farmers in New Delhi.

There were also candidates backed by the KVVES in the recent local body elections to test the response of voters.

According to the KVVES leaders, their nominees had won 28 seats in the election.

A Forest Department worker observing the footprints of the elephants in Chittoor.



A view of the Orvakal airport in Kurnool. ■ U. SUBRAMANYAM

## DGCA nod for Orvakal airport in Kurnool

Saturday, said the DGCA approval was granted through a certificate on Friday.

"With all the efforts and budgetary support of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath, the Kurnool / Orvakal airport got the DGCA approval after completion of works as per its specifications," the Collector said.



**Amaravati JAC plans 'yagam' from tomorrow**

**VIJAYAWADA**

After a series of protests for more than a year to persuade the Andhra Pradesh government to drop its plan to shift the capital from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam, the farmers in the Amaravati region are now seeking divine intervention. As part of the Amaravati movement, the JAC leaders will perform 'Srividya Maha Yagam' from January 18 to 26 at Uddandarayunipalem village.

**Free IAS coaching for poor launched in Kerala**

**KOCHI**  
A scheme to provide free coaching to civil services and other competitive examinations to 10,000 meritorious but financially poor students across Kerala was launched by Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Saturday. Declaring open the 'One School, One IAS' programme, he said, "This higher education platform will give the children a chance to completely redecorate their future plans and broaden their horizons..." ■ PTI

**Hyderabad LitFest to go online this year**

**HYDERABAD**  
The annual jamboree of bibliophiles – Hyderabad Literary Festival – beginning on January 22, is a totally online affair this year. This was announced at a presser by chairperson of the festival organising committee Jayesh Ranjan. "The chief guest for the 11th edition of the three-day literary festival will be Gulzar who has consented to inaugurate as well as read his anthology of poetry," said Mr. Ranjan.

Efforts to drive them back into forests in Tamil Nadu fail

**STAFF REPORTER**

**CHITTOOR**  
A three-member herd of wild elephants, which crossed into Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh from Tamil Nadu three weeks ago, is now lingering at a denuded forest stretch between Vadamalapeta and Tirupati, giving sleepless nights to farmers and forest officials.

The elephant herd, known in local circles as the 'Bachelor's Group', is now over 150 km away from its habitat in Tamil Nadu. Forest officials tried in vain to drive the herd back into the forests when it entered the outskirts of Chittoor municipality. The herd continued to advance towards the eastern mandals with poor forest

to the forests towards Koundinya wildlife sanctuary is now remote, officials are of the view that the herd can now be diverted into the nearby Seshachalam hill range, 30 km from Vadamalapeta mandal.

The herd's movement towards the Seshachalam ranges would pose a high risk as the terrain is a sparse jungle.

Forest Range Officer Sivanna said that the herd was temporarily driven into a jungle, adjoining the Gulluru waterbody, near Puttur, on Saturday evening. As the presence of wild elephants in the plains of Puttur and Vadamalapeta region was never heard of before, it led to tension among farmers.

District Collector G. Veerapandian, in a release on



**First dose:** (From left) PM Narendra Modi monitoring the vaccination process on Saturday; health worker Madhura Patil receiving the vaccine in Mumbai; a health worker in Srinagar; and beneficiaries listening to the PM in Bhopal. ■ ANI, VIVEK BENDRE, NISSAR AHMAD, A.M. FAROUQI



## No case of hospitalisation so far: govt.

Nearly 2 lakh persons receive vaccine on first day; culmination of five months of hard work, says Vardhan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
After a review of the first day of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, the Health Ministry said 1,91,181 beneficiaries were administered the vaccine on Saturday.

The Ministry said 16,755 personnel were involved in organising the immunisation session sites. "No case of post-vaccination hospitalisation has been reported so far," it said.

The Ministry said a few issues came up, including a delay in uploading beneficiary lists at some sites, and healthcare workers were vaccinated though not scheduled. "Resolutions were provided for both the issues."

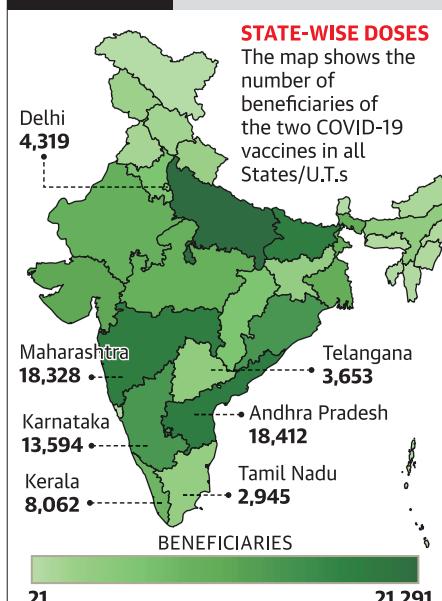
Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said the launch of the world's largest vaccination drive marked the culmination of five months of hard work. He added that it was a day of tremendous relief.

### 'All areas covered'

"With our population and a history of Universal Immunisation Programme, which involves targeted vaccination against 12 vaccine-preven-

### D-day

As many as 1.91 lakh persons received the first shot of COVID-19 vaccines in India on Saturday



### STATE-WISE DOSES

The map shows the number of beneficiaries of the two COVID-19 vaccines in all States/UTs

**DOSES PER LAKH IN THE WORLD**  
The chart depicts the number of vaccine doses administered per 1 lakh people in a country. It is important to note that the figures do not represent the number of people, but the number of doses administered

Israel	25,340
U.A.E	16,840
U.K.	5,420
U.S.	3,710
Italy	1,660
Spain	1,640
Canada	1,220
Germany	1,150
China	690
Russia	690
France	600
Saudi Arabia	510
<b>India</b>	<b>14</b>

ble diseases, India stands at the cusp of recording history and showing the way to peers across the globe. After smallpox and polio, it is the turn of COVID-19. All the remote, hard to reach areas, urban slums, tribal belts were covered in Saturday's exercise," he said.

Dr. Vardhan said more than one lakh vaccinators were trained and multiple mock exercises and a pan-India exercise were conducted to hammer out the slightest of glitches.

**Use of technology**  
"Technology was used to bolster performance as the eVIN platform was re-pur-

posed to CoWIN, SMS sent to all beneficiaries since the last two days [for Saturday's session] which would be repeated on schedule for their second dose and across all beneficiaries in all sessions."

The Minister said a proactive, pre-emptive and graded approach, with a meticulous monitoring of the trajectory

of the disease, effective clinical management enabled a valiant fight and saved people to a very large extent.

He noted that India had the highest recovery rate – more than 96% – and the lowest fatality rate (below 1.5%) in the world.

### 'Route to victory'

Calling the vaccines the "route to victory", he said: "The vaccine will be remembered like *sanjeevani* for clinching the victory over COVID-19."

"We need to counter the rumours and myth mongering in relation to administering the vaccines. People should not be misguided by the misinformation campaigns and believe only credible and authentic information."

The Minister visited the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Gangaram Hospital, where he interacted with the healthcare and frontline workers and saluted their spirit of serving the nation. "We have been safe because of your continued and selfless contribution for so many months," he told them.

## Science behind jabs is resolute: Vardhan

He rejects doubts raised by Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The science behind the COVID-19 vaccines is resolute, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan tweeted on Saturday, responding to Congress MP Manish Tewari's post questioning their safety.

"Concerns that I have articulated are real and not imagined. It is not fear-mongering. Look what is happening in Norway. It may be a different vaccine but do not hide behind vaccine nationalism," Mr. Tewari tweeted.

The Minister responded: "Our scientists have worked at lightning speed to expedite functions that contribute to the development of a vaccine but not a single function has been circumvented. Safety above all else has been the guiding principle!"

He accused the Congress of spreading distrust and rumours. "Manish Tewari and Congress are only passionate about spreading distrust and rumours. Open your eyes, sharing photos of eminent doctors and govern-



Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan displaying a vaccine vial in New Delhi. ■ PTI

ment functionaries getting inoculated."

Dr. Vardhan quoted writer Charles Caleb Colton: "So blinded are we by our passions that we suffer more to be damned than to be saved."

**Virtual sparring**  
The virtual sparring came after Mr. Tewari said, "If the vaccine is so safe and reliable and efficacy is beyond question then how is it that not a single functionary of the government has stepped forward to get themselves vaccinated as it has happened in other countries around the world?"

**C** This is a proud moment for every Indian and I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to all the scientists for the remarkable speed with which the vaccines were developed in a record time  
**M. VENKAJAH NAIDU**  
Vice-President

**C** This 'Made in India' vaccine represents the determination of this self-reliant India. On this historic day, I bow to all our corona warriors  
**AMIT SHAH**  
Union Home Minister

**C** It brings me great pride that #COVISHIELD is part of this historic effort & to endorse its safety & efficacy, I join our health workers in taking the vaccine myself  
**ADAR POONAWALLA**  
CEO, Serum Institute of India

**C** It is a revolutionary step we are taking today. I salute the corona warriors who selflessly treated patients when there was no remedy available  
**UDDHAV THACKERAY**  
Maharashtra CM

**C** We risked our lives and were pained to see so many deaths every day. It is a relief that we have a vaccine against coronavirus now  
**BIBI TOMY**  
A nurse in Delhi who got the shot

**C** It seems we are slowly coming out of the pandemic, which has claimed so many lives... From today, we will again relive our lives  
**FIRHAD HAKIM**  
West Bengal Urban Development Minister

## + Active COVID-19 caseload drops to 2% of total cases

Country reported 191 fatalities in the past 24 hours : Ministry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
India reported 191 deaths due to COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, with six States and Union Territories accounting for 66.19% of them.

Maharashtra saw the maximum of 45 fatalities, followed by Kerala (23) and West Bengal (16), the Union Health Ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

The total active caseload (2,11,033) in the country further slumped to account for 2% of the total cases.

"The total recoveries have crossed 96% of the total cases, at 96.55%. Currently 2,11,033 cases are positive and are either in supervised home isolation or in hospitals. The recovered cases are above one crore (1,01,79,033). The recovery rate has progressively shown a sustained climb," the Mi-



**Leading the way:** NITI Aayog member V.K. Paul receiving the vaccine at AIIMS in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ SANDEEP SAXENA

nistry said. The gap between the total recovered cases and the active cases had grown to 99,68,682.

The active cases followed a downward slide, with 25 States and UTs reporting less than 5,000 active cases. Ker-

ala reported the maximum number of single day recoveries (4,603), followed by Maharashtra (3,500) and Chhattisgarh (1,009). The Ministry said 80.81% of the new cases were from eight States and UTs.

## 20 healthcare workers at ITBP hospital receive jab

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Twenty healthcare workers at the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) hospital in Leh received the first shots of the COVID-19 vaccine on Saturday.

Three doctors and 17 paramedical staff were administered the Covishield vaccine. Chief Medical Officer Katyayni Sharma said over phone from Leh that she was "anxious" before the inoculation.

"I feel proud that sitting here in Leh, I am one of the first to get the vaccine," Dr. Sharma, 35, added.

Skalzang Angmo, Assistant Commandant Medical Officer, said she had not felt any adverse symptoms after taking the shot.

"We were under observation for 40 minutes and feel completely fine," Dr. Angmo said.

Sanitation worker at AIIMS Manish Kumar discounts fear

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Manish Kumar, a 34-year-old sanitation worker at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences who became the first person in Delhi to get the COVID-19 vaccine, said he himself asked the hospital authorities to give him the shot as his colleagues who were chosen for the exercise were "scared".

Mr. Kumar, whose mother Laxmi Rani also works at the hospital, said he was "proud of getting the vaccine".

He was administered the vaccine during the launch of the nationwide vaccination programme at AIIMS in the presence of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday.

"I did not know that I am the first person to receive the vaccine. I told her it is just an injection. After taking the dose, I asked my

**C** Many of them were scared. So, I went to my seniors and said I should be given the vaccine first

sleep last night, came here (hospital) in the morning and talked to the other staff who were to get the shot," he said.

"Many of them were scared. So, I went to my seniors and said I should be given the vaccine first. I wanted to prove to my colleagues that there is no need to be scared," Mr. Kumar said.

A resident of Najafgarh, Mr. Kumar has been working at the hospital for the past eight years. He said his wife was very nervous as well.

"She even asked me not to take the vaccine. I told her it is just an injection. After taking the dose, I asked my

mother to tell my wife that I am safe," he said.

**C** No discomfort

"I would like to tell everyone that the fear about the vaccine is unwarranted. I have not noticed any reactions so far. There is no pain, or trouble breathing or difficulty in moving my limbs," he said.

Laxmi Rani said she was scared and kept praying for her husband. "The almighty gave him the chance to get the vaccine and the courage to face the fears," she said.

Shaukat Ali, Mr. Kumar's colleague, said he was "very scared" before he got the jab in the morning.

"I have undergone three surgeries for kidney stones. So, I was obviously scared, but Manish gave me confidence. I am not worried now, I am happy," the 37-year-old said.

## Arnab hinted at military strikes in chats

Three days before Balakot, he told ex-Barc CEO that something big would happen

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI  
Three days before the Balakot strike by the Indian Air Force, Republic TV Editor Arnab Goswami told former Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc) CEO Partho Dasgupta "something big will happen", indicating that he knew about the confidential military action, alleged WhatsApp conversations between the two reveal.

The transcript of the WhatsApp messages is part of the supplementary charsheet filed by the Mumbai police in the Target Rating Point (TRP) tampering case.

On February 26, 2019, the IAF hit a Jaish-e-Mohammad training camp in Pakistan's Balakot town. The govern-



Arnab Goswami

ment claimed that this was in response to the February 14 terrorist attack in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir, in which 40 CRPF personnel were killed.

According to the transcript, at 10 p.m. on February 23, the conversation began with Mr. Goswami boasting about Republic TV bagging then Home Minister

Rajnath Singh's first-ever interview after the Pulwama incident. He then told Mr. Dasgupta, "On another note something big will happen." To which Mr. Dasgupta asked, "Dawood?"

Mr. Goswami responded: "No sir Pakistan. Something big will be done this time."

Mr. Dasgupta, in response, said, "It's good for big man in this season." He will sweep polls then." The 2019 general election was just a few months away.

Mr. Dasgupta pressed for further clarity, asking Mr. Goswami, "Strike? Or bigger?" Mr. Goswami responded, saying that it would be "bigger than a normal strike". Then he went on to add, "And also at the same

## Former Barc CEO hospitalised

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Partho Dasgupta, the former CEO of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (Barc) who was arrested in the TRP rigging case, has been admitted to the ICU of a hospital here after his blood sugar levels shot up, officials said on Saturday.

His daughter took to Twitter to allege that he was tortured in prison, and appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others to "save his life".

Mr. Dasgupta, 55, a diabetic, was rushed to the State-run JJ Hospital here from Taloja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai around mid-night, a prison official said. He is on oxygen support.

## Traders' body moves SC over WhatsApp's new privacy policy

CAIT seeks rollback, says

# Gyawali presses for border resolution

Visiting Nepal Foreign Minister meets Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to discuss bilateral ties

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
NEW DELHI

India and Nepal have weathered the last year of a strain in ties over the boundary issue, said visiting Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, but stressed that the dispute over Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyudhara areas should be resolved for the benefit of "future generations".

"Nepal wants to resolve this problem so we can have an undisputed, peaceful stable boundary. These are issues awaiting discussion and interaction from the leadership, so that we can focus on the future free from historical baggage for the future generations," Mr. Gyawali told journalists during an interaction on Saturday, at the end of a three-day visit when he attended the 6th India-Nepal Joint Commission meet-



**Warm welcome:** Rajnath Singh, left, with Pradeep Kumar Gyawali in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ PTI

ing with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

Mr. Gyawali also met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and discussed bilateral ties. This is the first Nepali ministerial visit since tensions over the boundary demarcation erupted in May 2020.

"The Raksha Mantri (Defence Minister) conveyed his personal connect, long association with leadership and special regard for the people of Nepal. Both the dignitaries expressed their satisfaction at the excellent military-to-military cooperation. Raksha

Mantri stated that India is ready to provide humanitarian assistance & disaster Relief (HADR) training & capacity building to Nepal," a Defence Ministry statement said.

#### No meeting with Modi

However, in a possible indicator that India was still displeased over the Nepal government's decision to amend its map to include Indian territories, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not have a meeting with Mr. Gyawali.

Sources told *The Hindu* that the Nepali delegation had requested a meeting, and hoped it would be granted, given that Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli had granted meetings to Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla, Army Chief General

Manoj Naravane, and R&AW chief Samant Goyal when they visited Kathmandu on separate occasions last year.

Speaking to the media, Mr. Gyawali said he would inform them "later" about the possibility of meeting the Prime Minister, indicating he had expected the meeting would materialise.

According to former Ambassador to Nepal Rakesh Sood, the Prime Minister's decision was a signal that despite a thaw in ties, all is not well between New Delhi and Kathmandu yet.

"I think the fact that there was no call on the Prime Minister [Modi] during Mr. Gyawali's visit is a message to the Oli government that India is still looking for more signs of flexibility, and that it isn't all hunky-dory," Mr. Sood told *The Hindu*.

# NITI Aayog denies RTI request on CMs' panel on agriculture

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ  
NEW DELHI

NITI Aayog's Committee of Chief Ministers for the Transformation of Indian Agriculture held its last meeting in September 2019. More than a year later, its report has yet to be made public, although its mandate was to suggest structural reforms in agriculture.

A Right to Information request by activist Anjali Bhardwaj, seeking details of the panel's meetings and report, has now been denied on the grounds that the report is yet to be presented to Niti Aayog's governing council.

The Centre has cited this panel as proof that Chief Ministers of key States were consulted on the contentious new farm reform laws, although Punjab Chief Minister Capt. Amarinder Singh says the new laws were never proposed in the panel's meetings.

Three meetings were held, in July, August and September 2019, according to the response to Ms. Bhardwaj's RTI request. A report was also submitted, but NITI Aayog refused to



**Protests continue:** Farmers and their families at the Singhu border on Saturday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## Left to seek repeal of farm laws in Budget session

Yechury says other parties will join in

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Opposition parties will move for a repeal of the three contentious farm reform laws during the Budget session of Parliament, according to Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

Speaking on the sidelines of a convention of Left political parties organised in support of the farmers' movement, Mr. Yechury said that he expected parties like the Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, Yuva Jana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) and Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) to support the move for a repeal. "With all of these parties opposing them, the government would not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha on this issue," he said.

"It will be first placed before the 6th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog and when it is held, for appraisal of State Chief Ministers and Governors of UTs who are the constituent members of the Governing Council. Hence, at this stage constrained with the sharing of the report," said the response, dated January 13.

"NITI Aayog also refused to provide the names of those who attended the three meetings, or the copies of the minutes of those meetings, saying such information also constituted part of the report.

Government would not have won. The Bills were ultimately passed by a voice vote amid vociferous protest.

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) leader Brinda Karat argued that the way the laws were passed "shows the government's contempt for democracy". She decried the lack of consultations with State governments, and other stakeholders, and the government's refusal to send the Bills to a Parliamentary Standing Committee.

"In September, when there were 1 lakh COVID cases a day, the government called Parliament just to push through the ordinances. But in December, when there were only 30,000 cases a day, they used COVID as an excuse not to convene Parliament to discuss the crisis and the farmers' demand for repeal," she said.

Ms. Karat urged all Opposition parties to come out openly in support of farmers, and support the call for repeal both within and outside Parliament.

## Rahul demands strategy rather than 'laundry list of diplomacy'

Congress leader takes part in House panel meeting

SOBHA NAIR  
NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, at a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on External Affairs held on Saturday, said a "laundry list of diplomacy" would not work and that India needed strategy.

This was the first meeting of the committee since the Galwan valley incident and realignment of Chinese troops at the LAC (Line of Actual Control) in Ladakh.

The agenda of the meeting was "India Global Strategy" and Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla made a presentation on the



Rahul Gandhi

occasion. Mr. Gandhi, it is learnt, said the presentation at best was a "laundry list" of the things that the government was doing in diplomacy but not a "global strategy".

Pointing out the recent measure by the Chinese to

remap the ancient silk route, explicitly "beheading" India out of it, Mr. Gandhi said the Chinese strategy was to move from the maritime to the terrestrial, to change the old silk road into a land route linking China to Europe and to bypass the old centrality of India, making it irrelevant.

According to sources, Mr. Jaishankar responded that he didn't believe that China would become dominant enough. He asserted that it was unlikely that the world would return to a bi-polar situation with two powers holding the ends of the spectrum.

"With so many leaders quitting your party almost

## Merge Trinamool with Congress: Adhir Ranjan

He urges Mamata to introspect

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president and Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury has urged Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to merge her Trinamool Congress with the Congress in the wake of defections from her party to the BJP.

In 1998, a number of Congress leaders, including Mamata Banerjee, defected from the Congress and floated the Trinamool Congress. It came to power in 2011 by forging an alliance with the Congress and ending 34 years of Left Front rule.

"This calls for a moment of introspection as to what the party stands for," he said.

on a daily basis, it seems that your party does not have an ideological fulcrum to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party. Therefore, you should merge the Trinamool with the Congress, which will provide you the ideological platform to fight the BJP," Mr. Chowdhury observed at a public meeting.

The Member of Parliament from Baharampur in Murshidabad district noted that the Trinamool Congress stood at a crucial juncture when its leaders were quitting the party and joining the BJP.

"It will be first placed before the 6th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog and when it is held, for appraisal of State Chief Ministers and Governors of UTs who are the constituent members of the Governing Council. Hence, at this stage constrained with the sharing of the report," said the response, dated January 13.

"NITI Aayog also refused to provide the names of those who attended the three meetings, or the copies of the minutes of those meetings, saying such information also constituted part of the report.

## Report finds 'brazen class bias' in govt. policies during pandemic

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

A report highlighting the experience of vulnerable groups in accessing citizenship, early childhood care and education, public employment and protected

paraprofessionals.

The report found that the condition of migrant workers from Odisha's Ganjam district in the textile industry in Surat had been desperate even before the pandemic. The experience of sex workers in Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad was highlighted through a survey of 600 sex workers conducted by the

All-India Network of Sex Workers.

In her chapter, Prof. Ghosh argued that public employment was necessary for securing social goods, including security, justice, health, sanitation and education. "Public employment can be a major way of improving the quality of life for all citizens by providing essential public services. While this has been evident for a while it has become starkly clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. The importance of public workers to ensure essential health services, to monitor labour rights and assist workers and to provide a range of other essential services is now apparent to all," she wrote.

"This should be a moment of civilisational introspection. A recognition of the abject collapse of our moral centre and our collective culpability in the social crime of the radical dispossession of our people," he wrote.

The report found that the

condition of migrant workers from Odisha's Ganjam district in the textile industry in Surat had been desperate even before the pandemic. The importance of public workers to ensure essential health services, to monitor labour rights and assist workers and to provide a range of other essential services is now apparent to all," she wrote.



Vasundhara Raje. ■ FILE PHOTO

tional posts. Former Minister Ghanshyam Tiwari, who had left the party over differences with Ms. Raje, was also inducted back into the party last month.

BJP State president Satish Poonia said here that the party's parliamentary board would take a decision on projecting an individual as the chief ministerial candidate.

#### PM only face\*

"No one is bigger than the party. The BJP has only one face, that of [Prime Minister] Narendra Modi," he said at a press conference.

Mr. Poonia also distanced himself from some social media groups created for supporting him and said the messages being made viral

should be "dismissed as someone's mischief". He said the upcoming urban local body elections in 20 districts later this month were more important, for which the BJP had started making preparations.

The BJP has tried to shift focus on factionalism in Congress in the aftermath of rebellion by the then Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and the MLAs supporting him in July last year. "The Congress is using Rajasthan to save its credibility. Its support to the agitating farmers amounts to political hypocrisy," Mr. Poonia said.

The Congress has picked holes in the BJP's claims of having confronted the ruling party in a united manner.



**Making a splash:** Common Pochard seen at the Harike wetland in Punjab. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Migratory birds flock to Punjab wetland

VIKAS VASUDEVIA  
CHANDIGARH

Winter migratory water birds using the central Asian flyway have started making a beeline to Punjab's Harike wetland, offering a delight for bird lovers.

Birds such as the Eurasian coot, greylag goose, bar-headed goose, gadwall and the northern shoveler are the prominent ones that could be sighted at Harike. Among others species, common pochard, spot-billed duck, little cormorant, pied avocet, great cormorant,

## Gujarat rivers remain highly polluted

Effluents continue to be dumped in Sabarmati and Mahisagar

MAHESH LANGA  
AHMEDABAD

The unchecked flow of untreated industrial effluent into rivers in Gujarat has led to increasing pollution in the Sabarmati, Mahisagar, Narmada, Vishwamitri and Bhadar. According to data from the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), the Sabarmati is among the most polluted rivers in the country.

Gujarat ranks fourth among the top five States with highly polluted rivers, with as many as 20 rivers in the critically polluted category. Recently, a thick froth on the Mahisagar, along a stretch of several kilometres, raised serious concern, prompting the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) to constitute a high-level committee to study the rising level of pollution in the river.

"Pollution in rivers has emerged as a major threat in the last few years because the lackadaisical approach

of the authorities has emboldened the industries to discharge untreated effluents into flowing rivers," said Vadodara-based environmental activist Rohit Prajapati.

He said that both treated and untreated effluent is released into the estuary of the Mahisagar and Gulf of Cambay, flouting the guidelines of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

As per the official parameters, if the chemical oxygen demand (COD), which indicates organic pollutant load, is higher than 250 mg per litre, then it should not be released into the rivers.

"Most of the Gujarat rivers where the effluents are dumped into, the COD level is in the range of 700 to 1000 mg per litre. While Dissolved Oxygen (DO) level [indicating the health of a river] in perennial rivers like Mahisagar should be in the range of 6 to 8 mg per litre, it is actually below 2.9 mg per litre," he added.

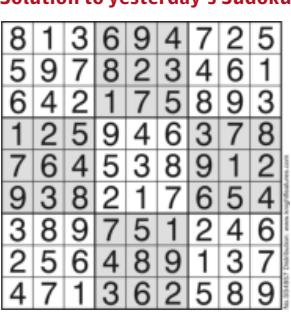
The Vadodara Enviro Channel Ltd, which runs a 55-km-long pipeline to discharge treated effluents into the deep sea, releases the effluents into the river. The effluents are not getting discharged into the deep sea as required," a former official of the Gujarat Pollution Control Board told *The Hindu*.

Now, the State government has proposed a ₹2,300 crore project for a deep sea effluent disposal pipeline to cater to nearly 4,500 industrial units. The project will serve four highly industrialised districts (Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Kheda and Rajkot), which are the main sources of pollution.

## SUDOKU



**Solution to yesterday's Sudoku**



# Biden pledges to boost vaccine supplies

He announces setting up of vaccination centres to meet his goal of 100 million shots in 100 days

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WILMINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to boost supplies of coronavirus vaccine and set up new vaccination sites to meet his goal of 100 million shots in 100 days. It's part of a broader COVID strategy that also seeks to straighten out snags in testing and ensure minority communities are not left out.

"Some wonder if we are reaching too far," Mr. Biden said on Friday. "Let me be clear, I'm convinced we can get it done."

The real payoff, Mr. Biden said, will come from uniting the nation in a new effort grounded in science.

Mr. Biden said he is upgrading the White House Science Adviser position to Cabinet-level – a sharp break from predecessor Donald Trump as America grapples with the pandemic.

Eric Lander, a geneticist



Scaling up: A police officer receiving a COVID-19 vaccine at a stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts, on Friday. • AFP

who helped map the human genome, will head the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and advise Mr. Biden.

"Science will always be at the forefront of my administration -- and these world-renowned scientists will ensure everything we do is grounded in science, facts, and the truth," Mr. Biden said in a statement announcing the appointment of Mr.

Lander and other experts.

Mr. Biden spoke a day after unveiling a \$1.9 trillion "American Rescue Plan" to confront the virus and provide temporary support for a shaky economy. About \$400 billion of the plan is focused on measures aimed at controlling the virus. Those range from mass vaccination centers to more sophisticated scientific analysis of new strains and squads of local

health workers to trace the contacts of infected people.

"You have my word: We will manage the hell out of this operation," Mr. Biden declared. He underscored a need for Congress to approve more money and for people to keep following basic precautions, such as wearing masks, avoiding gatherings and frequently washing their hands.

Throughout the plan, there's a focus on ensuring that minority communities that have borne the brunt of the pandemic are not short-changed on vaccines and treatments.

A key challenge for Mr. Biden and the nation: Vaccines are in too-short supply.

Mr. Biden said he would use the Defense Production Act, a Cold War-era law, to boost vaccine supplies and work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to set up 100 vaccination

centres around the country by the end of his first month in office.

## Rising toll

"Almost a year later, we're still far from back to normal. The honest truth is this: Things will get worse before they get better," he said on Friday, as U.S. deaths climbed closer to 4,00,000. The global toll has now reached 2 million.

Mr. Biden seconded the Trump administration's call earlier this week for states to start vaccinating more seniors, reaching those 65 and older as well as younger people with certain health problems.

Until now States have been focused on inoculating health care workers, and some are starting to vaccinate people 75 and older. Relatively few are providing shots to people between 65 and 75.

## Vidur Sharma in U.S.'s virus response team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON

Joe Biden has named Indian-American health policy expert Vidur Sharma as testing adviser in his COVID-19 response team, as the U.S. President-elect laid out his ambitious goal to intensify vaccinations across the country to tackle the spread of the deadly pandemic.

The announcement of Mr. Sharma's appointment as Policy Advisor for Testing was made by Mr. Biden on Friday along with additional members of the White House COVID-19 response team.

During the Obama administration, Mr. Sharma served as a health policy advisor on the Domestic Policy Council.



Nancy Pelosi

## Pelosi tasks General with security review

Some House Republicans under scrutiny for their 'role in coordinating' with rioters

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Friday that retired General Russel Honore, who coordinated the Hurricane Katrina response, will oversee an immediate security review at the U.S. Capitol following last week's deadly riot by a pro-Trump mob.

She also said there was "strong interest" in Congress for a 9/11-style investigation of the unprecedented attack on the Capitol that has been described as an insurrection, and which led to the swift second impeachment Wednesday of President Donald Trump.

"Justice is called for," she said.

But Ms. Pelosi declined to reveal when she will send the article of impeachment – for "incitement of insurrec-

President-elect Joe Biden from taking office on January 20.

"We must subject this whole complex to scrutiny in light of what happened, and the fact that the inauguration is coming," the top Democrat told reporters, referring to Mr. Biden's upcoming swearing-in on the steps of the very Capitol where rioters fought with police and plotted to kill lawmakers.

"To that end, I have asked retired lieutenant general Russel Honore to lead an immediate review of security infrastructure, interagency processes, and command and control," Ms. Pelosi said.

She described Gen. Honore as "a respected leader with experience dealing with crises," including the military relief response along the Gulf Coast when

Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans in 2005.

The 80-year-old speaker said that while the entire Congress remained passionate in its reaction to the deadly Capitol violence, "we must be very dispassionate in how we make decisions to go forward for security, security, security."

A handful of House Republicans loyal to Mr. Trump are under scrutiny for their role in potentially coordinating with hardline activists who helped plan the action on the Capitol.

"If in fact it is found that members of Congress were accomplices to this insurrection, if they aided and abetted the crime," Ms. Pelosi said, "there may have to be actions taken beyond the Congress in terms of prosecution."

## Merkel ally wins race to lead her party

As the head of CDU, Armin Laschet has vowed to continue with centrist policies



Top job: New CDU leader Armin Laschet, left, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, in this file photo. • REUTERS

ny's next Chancellor.

A soft-spoken political moderate with a reputation for pragmatism, Mr. Laschet is currently the leader of Germany's most populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

If anything, he is seen as

He is a sworn Merkel loyalist who famously stuck by the Chancellor in 2015, when Germany left its borders open to hundreds of thousands of migrants from Syria and other hotspots.

During his campaign to head the CDU, he positioned himself as the Merkel continuity candidate, telling Stern magazine that "a break with Angela Merkel would send exactly the wrong signal".

Mr. Laschet emerged as an early favourite when the race to head the party was thrown open last year after the resignation of Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer.

But his path to the top was anything but smooth, with critics accusing him of flip-flopping and poor leadership over his handling of the pandemic in North Rhine-Westphalia.

If anything, he is seen as

even more pro-migration than Ms. Merkel, celebrating diversity as a economic and social boon to his state.

During his campaign to head the CDU, he positioned himself as the Merkel continuity candidate, telling Stern magazine that "a break with Angela Merkel would send exactly the wrong signal".

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If anything, he is seen as

## Museveni wins 6th term, amid allegations of rigged election

Bobi Wine dismissed results as 'cooked-up and fraudulent'



Yoweri Museveni

self-described "ghetto president" had strong support in urban centers where frustration with unemployment and corruption is high. He has claimed victory.

In a phone interview from his home, which he said was surrounded by soldiers, Mr. Wine urged the internation-

al community to "please call Gen. Museveni to order" by withholding aid, imposing sanctions and using Magnitsky legislation to hold alleged human rights users accountable.

Mr. Wine repeated that all legal options are being considered, including challenging the results in court and calling for peaceful protests.

The Electoral Commission said Mr. Museveni received 58% of ballots and Mr. Wine 34%, and voter turnout was 52%, in a process that the U.S. diplomat to Africa called "fundamentally flawed." The vote followed the East African country's worst pre-election violence since the 76-year-old Mr. Museveni took office in 1986.

## U.S. carries out last execution of Trump era

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
TERRE HAUTE

The Trump administration early on Saturday carried out its 13th federal execution since July, an unprecedented run that concluded just five days before the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden – an opponent of the federal death penalty.

Dustin Higgs was convicted of ordering the killings of three women in a Maryland wildlife refuge in 1996.

President Donald Trump's Justice Department resumed federal executions last year following a 17-year hiatus. No President in more than 120 years had overseen as many federal executions.

Mr. Higgs, 48, was pronounced dead at 1:23 a.m.

Asked if he had any last words, Mr. Higgs said, "I'd like to say I am an innocent man... I am not responsible for the deaths," he said softly.

"I did not order the murders."

## Sri Lanka's Tamil parties seek mechanism to probe 'war crimes'

No scope for a domestic process, they note in letter to UNHRC

MEERA SRINIVASAN  
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's main Tamil political parties have sought an international probe, including at the International Criminal Court (ICC), into allegations of human rights abuses during the civil war, deeming there is "no scope" for a domestic process that can "genuinely" deal with accountability.



R. Sampanthan

Leader G.G. Ponnambalam, and Tamil Makkal Tesiya Kootani Leader and former Chief Minister of the Northern Province C.V. Wigneswaran, apart from civil society organisations in the north and east.

filled commitments to promote accountability and reconciliation, the Tamil leaders urged that UN organs, including the UN Security Council and General Assembly, to take "suitable action by reference to the International Criminal Court and any other appropriate and effective international accountability mechanisms to inquire into the crime of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity."

They also sought an international evidence gathering mechanism such as the one set up for Syria.

### Burial rights

Further, the Tamil parties said the persisting "militarisation and surveillance" in war-affected areas, and the denial of burial rights to Muslims – during Covid-19 pandemic – and the right to memory, underscored the urgency of addressing the deteriorating situation."

Tamil people's right to commemorate came under sharp focus recently, when authorities at the University of Jaffna demolished a memorial on campus, built to remember those who died in the final phase of the war in 2009.

Following student protests and wide condemnation from within and outside Sri Lanka, the University Vice-Chancellor assured students that a new "peace memorial" would be built.

Citing Sri Lanka's unful-

## Five Hong Kong activists who fled the city seek asylum in U.S.

They escaped by boat last July after security law came into effect

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
HONG KONG

Five Hong Kong democracy protesters who reportedly fled to Taiwan have arrived in the United States intending to seek asylum, an activist group said on Saturday.

Their escape follows the mass arrest of democracy figures in Hong Kong under a new national security law that is part of a mounting crackdown by China on the financial hub.

The Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC), a U.S.-based group, said it had welcomed a group of young activists to America this week and their journey had been

"arduous and perilous".

"The activists, all under the age of 30, took part in the ongoing pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, faced protest-related arrests and charges, and fled the city by boat last July," Samuel Chu, founder of HKDC, told AFP.

"I am relieved and overjoyed to welcome them to the United States and to assist them as they seek asylum and a new life," Chu added.

Through a statement issued by the HKDC, the five activists now in exile said their hearts have been "filled with anxiety and all kinds of emotions" from the

moment they left Hong Kong.

After massive democracy protests across Hong Kong in 2019 in which more than 11,000 people were arrested, Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law late last June to silence dissent.

In August, another group of 12 Hong Kong activists made an attempt to flee by speedboat to Taiwan but were arrested by Chinese coastguards.

Last month, a Chinese court jailed 10 of these 12 fugitives for up to three years for "organising and participating in an illegal border crossing".

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Date: 13.01.2021

### ONLINE INTERVIEW

It is proposed to fill up the post of RESEARCH ASSOCIATE (1 post) in the pay scale of Rs.54,000/- + 16% HRA per month on contractual basis. The post is purely temporary and co-terminus with the project. Eligible candidates may submit their applications as per prescribed proforma with self attested copies of educational qualification / experience certificates, etc through email to [nrcbreruitment@gmail.com](mailto:nrcbreruitment@gmail.com) on or before 28.01.2021 (4.30 PM). For further details, please visit our Institute website [www.nrcb.res.in](http://www.nrcb.res.in)

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Tender No: 63/20-21/PHC/PKD. JJM - Supplying Laying distribution system and providing FHTCs 4000 Nos in Kizhakancheri Panayath. EMD : Rs. 500000. Tender fee : Rs. 16800. Last Date for submitting Tender : 08-02-2021 03:00 pm Phone : 0491-2544927

Website : [www.kwa.kerala.gov.in](http://www.kwa.kerala.gov.in) Superintending Engineer PH Circle, Palakkad

F.32 (177)/NHM/H&WC/2020-21

Dated-

### NOTICE OF CORRIGENDUM

RFP published vide Notification No. F.32 (177)/NHM/H&WC/2020-21/543, dated 26.12.2020, UBN No.:MHS2021GLOB2159 was uploaded on [sspp.rajaasthan.gov.in](http://eproc.rajaasthan.gov.in) portal, website <http://eproc.rajaasthan.gov.in> and departmental website [www.rajaasthan.nic.in](http://www.rajaasthan.nic.in). Proposals shall be submitted online in electronic format on the website <http://eproc.rajaasthan.gov.in>. The Revised timelines are as below:-

End Date for the submission of Bid Online at e-Procurement website	27.01.2021 at 02:00 PM Wednesday



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Apple payout on VirnetX patent may exceed \$1.1 bn

REUTERS

A federal judge denied Apple Inc.'s bid to set aside or reduce a \$502.8 million patent infringement verdict favouring VirnetX Holding Corp., and awarded interest and royalties that could boost Apple's total payout in two lawsuits above \$1.1 billion.

In a decision issued on Friday, U.S. District Judge Robert Schroeder in Tyler, Texas rejected Apple's request for a new trial and several other claims.

These included that VirnetX's award should not exceed \$113.7 million, and that jurors should have been told the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office had deemed VirnetX's claims "unpatentable." Jurors in October found that Apple infringed two VirnetX patents related to secure networks, known as virtual private networks, to which owners of various iPhones and iPads may connect.

Schroeder also awarded royalties of 84 cents per unit for future infringements, mirroring the rate set by the jury. Apple had said future royalties should be zero, or else no more than 19 cents per unit.

Apple and VirnetX did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Apple, based in Cupertino, California, and VirnetX, based in Zephyr Cove, Nevada, have battled in patent litigation for more than a decade.

Last March, Apple paid VirnetX \$454 million after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the iPhone maker's appeal in an earlier patent case. In a December 18 court filing, Apple said the latest award could boost its payout in both cases to \$1.16 billion.

# HDFC Bank Q3 profit rises 14.4% on surge in net interest income

Asset quality improves, provisions rise 12%, credit grows 15.6%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

The country's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank on Saturday reported a 14.4% jump in consolidated net profit to ₹8,760 crore for the December quarter, driven by a surge in core income.

Standalone net profit for the three-month period grew 18.1% to ₹8,758.29 crore, on the back of a 15.1% growth in net interest income to ₹16,317 crore. Deposits grew 19.1%.

This is the maiden earnings declaration under new CEO and MD Sashidhar Jagdishan, who succeeded Aditya Puri as the head of the bank. The bank's credit growth came at 15.6%, while net interest margin was 4.2%. Non-interest income



**Off the gas pedal:** The bank reported a decline in outstanding auto loans to ₹81,880 crore from ₹83,552 crore. ■ BIJOY GHOSH

grew 11% to ₹7,443 crore, largely on the back of a gain or revaluation in an investment at ₹1,109 crore, which stood at ₹676 crore in the year-ago period. The results showed an improvement in the asset quality with the gross non-performing assets (NPA) ra-

tio at 0.81% of total assets as against 1.42% a year earlier and 1.08% at the end of the preceding September quarter, the bank said.

**Stable, sans moratorium**  
Even excluding the benefit of the Supreme Court order

asking banks not to classify stress during the moratorium period in NPA computation, the GNPA ratio would have been at 1.38%, it added.

Overall provisions and contingencies for the reporting quarter, which saw the economy trying to recover from the reverses of the pandemic, grew to ₹3,414 crore from ₹3,043 crore a year earlier. It said 0.5% of its ₹10.82 lakh crore in advances had been restructured under the special scheme announced by the RBI to handle COVID-related stress.

The bank, which had detected malpractices in its auto lending vertical earlier, reported a reduction in overall auto loans outstanding to ₹81,880 crore from ₹83,552 crore.

Centre mulls BIC model for bank recap

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

With the RBI raising concerns over the issuance of zero-coupon bonds for recapitalisation of public sector banks (PSBs), the Finance Ministry is examining other avenues for affordable capital infusion, including setting up of a Bank Investment Company (BIC), sources said.

Setting up a BIC as a holding company or a core investment company was suggested by the P.J. Nayak Committee in its report on 'Governance of Boards of Banks in India'.

The report recommended transferring shares of the government in the banks to the BIC which would become the parent holding company of all these banks; as a result of this, all the PSBs would become 'limited' banks.

# 'Refine quality of expenditure to aid fiscal sustainability'

Targets must be qualitative too: Das

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Maintaining and improving the quality of expenditure would help address the objectives of fiscal sustainability while supporting growth, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Saturday.

"As per IMF's calculations, the total fiscal support in response to COVID-19 amounted to about 12% of global GDP by mid-September 2020," Mr. Das said while delivering the Naresh Palkhivala Memorial Lecture online on the subject, 'Towards a Stable Financial System'. "Global public debt is said to have reached 100% of GDP in 2020. As a result, most economies are expected to emerge from the pandemic with higher deficits and debt vulnerabilities."

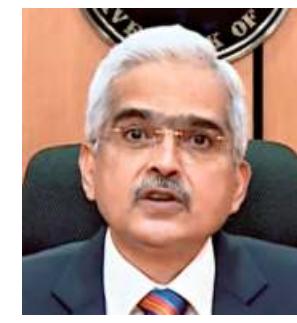
While conventional parameters of fiscal discipline will ensure medium- and long-term sustainability of public finances, measurable parameters of quality of expenditure would ensure that welfarism carries significant productive outcomes and multiplier effects, Mr. Das added.

He also said that the principal objective of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) during the pandemic was to support economic activity.

"Looking back, it is evident that our policies have helped in easing the severity of the economic impact of the pandemic," he said.

He reiterated that the RBI "remains steadfast to take any further measures, as may be necessary, while at the same time remaining fully committed to maintaining financial stability."

Responding to a question, he said the RBI was open to examining any proposal for setting up a bad bank. "It is up to the government and the private sector to put up such a proposal," the RBI Governor added.



Shaktikanta Das

GDP ratio, but also in terms of measurable parameters relating to quality of expenditure, both for the Centre and States."

While conventional parameters of fiscal discipline will ensure medium- and long-term sustainability of public finances, measurable parameters of quality of expenditure would ensure that welfarism carries significant productive outcomes and multiplier effects.

He said although the scale of fiscal spending was expected to breach the quantitative targets of fiscal prudence across most economies in the short-run, it was crucial in the context of the pandemic from the perspective of the welfare aspect of public expenditure.

## 'Multiplier effect'

"Expenditure on physical and social infrastructure including human capital, science and technology is not only welfare-enhancing, it also paves the way for higher growth through their higher multiplier effect and enhancement of both capital and labour productivity," Mr. Das said.

"Going forward, it becomes imperative that fiscal road maps are defined not only in terms of quantitative parameters like fiscal balance to GDP ratio or debt to

## ATF prices raised for fourth time in 2 months

Petrol, diesel remain unchanged

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Jet fuel, or ATF, price on Saturday was hiked by 3% – the fourth increase in two months – on firming international oil prices, while petrol and diesel rates remained unchanged after hitting new highs.

Air aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was raised by ₹1,512.38 per kilolitre (kl) and ₹2,96%, to ₹52,491.16 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

This is the fourth increase in price since December 1. Rates had gone up by 7.6% (₹2,288.38 per kl) on December 1, by 6.3% (₹2,941.5



per kl) on December 16 and by ₹1,817.62 (3.69%) on January 1.

The increase in ATF price, which makes for close to 40% of the running cost of an airline, will put additional burden on airlines that have been struggling to return to normal business after COVID-19 lockdown had halted their operations.

## Trump tells U.S. departments to pare purchases from China

Bid to thwart 'attempts to infiltrate U.S. IT networks'

REUTERS

WASHINGTON

In another action against China days before he leaves office, U.S. President Donald Trump directed government departments to look at ways to minimise procurement of Chinese goods and services to reduce the risks from espionage, his national security adviser said.

In a statement on Friday, Robert O'Brien accused China of targeting the information systems of the U.S. government for personnel records, military plans, and other data through cyber and other means.



Donald Trump

human espionage activities directed at the Federal Government," he said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

He said Mr. Trump had directed government bodies to conduct reviews "to minimise the procurement of People's Republic of China (PRC) goods and services by the Federal Government."

Mr. O'Brien did not give examples of the procurement he referred to, but a senior administration official said a key aim was to push back against Chinese attempts to infiltrate U.S. IT networks.

## Lenders back Piramal's bid for DHFL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Piramal Enterprises' bid for debt-ridden DHFL received the most votes from lenders at the close of the voting process on Friday, sources said.

Piramal Enterprises' bid received 94% votes as compared to 45% for the U.S.-based Oaktree Capital.

After this, the Committee of Creditors is likely to take a final call and send its recommendation to the NCLT, the sources added.

According to sources, suitors have submitted bids in the range of ₹35,000-₹37,000 crore.

As of July 2019, the company owed ₹83,873 crore to banks, the National Housing Board, mutual funds and bondholders. Its large lenders are SBI, including SBI Singapore, with ₹10,083-crore exposure.

## IRB InvIT Q3 revenue up a tad at ₹333 cr.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

IRB InvIT, India's first listed infrastructure investment trust, said its revenue for the December quarter this fiscal remained almost flat at ₹333 crore.

It had clocked a revenue of ₹330 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal, it said in a statement. "India's first listed Infrastructure Investment Trust will distribute ₹2.50 per unit for Q3 FY21," it added.

With this, the cumulative distribution for the nine months in FY21 is now ₹6 per unit, which includes ₹4.80 per unit as an interest component and ₹1.20 as return on capital.

The trust has set January 21 as the record date for the distribution.

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## INTERVIEW | N. MOHAN

### Retail inventory has piled up'

Incentivise creation of jobs, MD of Clarks India urges govt.

N. ANAND

*The domestic footwear industry was among the earliest to be impacted by the pandemic as the COVID-19 lockdown restricted people's movement. It is limping back to normalcy following a shift in marketing strategy, according to N. Mohan, MD of British shoemaker Clarks India. Edited excerpts from an interview:*

Footwear was the among the earliest to be impacted by the pandemic. Are you back on track?

■ COVID-19 severely affected the retail industry, more so the footwear industry because people did not step out of their homes for a very long time. As an industry, we witnessed a sharp drop in sales throughout the period. We are confident that the business will be back to previous year levels in 2021.

How was your sales performance over the last nine months?

■ With the announcement of lockdown towards the end of March, all malls and high streets were shut... closing down our stores in major metros and other cities for an uncertain period.

There were 'no sales' till June, except for some States where the regulations were not so stringent.

The business gradually started again with some sales coming from our e-commerce channel after the restrictions were eased but didn't speed up due to consumer sentiment being at an all-time low. However, the major thrust to our business came from the pre-festive and festival season in September-November due to pent-up demand, helping us reach 70-75% of our previous year's numbers.

How did you address the situation?

From the spring summer of 2022, things will rebound as customer confidence will improve

■ The pandemic led us to revisit our plans and pivot our strategy around three key areas – product, selling environment and communications. Growing 'remote-working' led us to retrieving more athleisure products from our archives, which would provide comfort while being fashionable.

These products would suit western and traditional outfitts, providing flexibility to our consumers.

We shifted our focus from brick-and-mortar to 'unified commerce' and towards digital. New processes were introduced to activate our omni-channel and B2B businesses, which helped us reach 75% of last year's actuals.

What kind of losses did the industry suffer from April to December on account of cancellations by overseas buyers?

■ Worldwide, due to frequent lockdowns, many brands and retailers are sitting on a huge inventory. Consequently, industry exports are down by 34.8% and imports by 50.3%.

In India, many brands will end up with 55-60% of last year's sales.

Also, there is a huge change in the type of footwear now preferred due to the change in lifestyle and people adapting to the new normal. It may take at least

we must enhance India's image as a preferred manufacturing hub in terms of quality and productivity.

We must enhance India's image as a preferred manufacturing hub in terms of quality and productivity.

The trust has set January 21 as the record date for the distribution.

CM YK

SNAPSHOTS



Solid shock

Scientists have revealed that some species of electric eels go out at night to hunt in packs, in a study published in *Ecology and Evolution*. Earlier it was believed that the snake-like eels of South America only move singly. It is worth noting that even singly, these eels have been known to attack prey with shocks of about 860V, which can kill a person.



Fresh insights

Mutations in tandem-repeat DNA are found to be common in people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) than their siblings. Analysis revealed 25 mutations in individuals with ASD that were harmful. These mutations are rare in other individuals. The study published in *Nature*, can inform research on the role of tandem repeat DNA in other diseases.

# Vaccine dilemma: to take or not to take Covaxin

Restricted use approval was granted for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin in the absence of any efficacy data, putting potential recipients in a fix

R. PRASAD

end there.

What the Health Secretary did not mention is that the safety and efficacy data used by the regulators in India, the U.S. and the U.K. to grant an emergency use approval are very different. While people in India will have to take a particular vaccine without knowing its efficacy, interim safety and efficacy from phase-3 trials, these are known for Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines that people in the developed countries get.

#### The difference

The emergency use approval granted by the U.S. FDA to Pfizer and Moderna and by the U.K. regulator to three vaccines - Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca - have been based on interim safety and efficacy data from large phase-3 trials with median follow-up of at least two months after the second dose. While both Pfizer and Moderna have nearly identical efficacy of 95%, the efficacy of the AstraZeneca vaccine is 62% even when standard dose for the first and second dose is considered.

The similarities of not providing the recipients the option to choose a vaccine, be it in the U.S., the U.K. or India

In contrast, the Indian regulator issued restricted use



Contrast: Covaxin has been greenlighted in a 'clinical trial mode' as a matter of 'abundant precaution', together with informed consent. No such riders are there for Covishield.

• GETTY IMAGES

approval for the Pune-based Serum Institute's Covishield based on safety and immunogenicity tested in India on a small number of participants and safety and efficacy data from over 24,000 participants outside India.

The restricted use approval was granted for the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech's Covaxin even in the absence

of any efficacy data. The approval was solely based on a small number of participants studied during phase-1 and phase-2 trials; vaccine efficacy is studied only during a phase-3 trial.

#### Matter of precaution

In addition, Covaxin has been greenlighted in a "clinical trial mode" as a matter of

"abundant precaution," and informed consent has to be taken from the recipient before immunisation. There are no such conditions or riders in the case of Covishield. Hence, is it correct to compare the situation in India with other countries using vaccines with interim safety and efficacy levels known?

According to the Union government, vaccine sites will offer either Covishield or Covaxin in order to avoid providing recipients the option to choose one vaccine over the other. Since COVID-19 vaccination is not compulsory, people walking into a site that provides only Covaxin can choose not to get vaccinated.

#### A question of ethics

But is it ethical to offer one health-care worker Covaxin whose efficacy is unknown and another health-care worker Covishield whose efficacy is known even though both face the same risk of infection at work? "This situation could have been avoided if the government had waited for few more weeks for the efficacy data of Covaxin to become available before granting it restricted use approval," says Bhopal-based Dr. Anant Bhan, a researcher in global health and bioethics. "They could have begun vaccinating with Serum's Covishield and added Covaxin after approving it based on efficacy data."

Will health-care workers and others who have refused to get vaccinated with Covaxin be offered another chance

to get the vaccine on priority when data becomes available showing the vaccine has high efficacy? Likewise, if Covaxin is found to have less than 50% efficacy, will everyone who has been immunised with this vaccine be offered another highly efficacious vaccine?

People at the vaccine sites offering Covaxin are required to take an informed consent from each recipient before immunisation. "Good consent also requires time. Some may want a day's time to think over before consenting. Will this be allowed or will the person be compelled to give his/her consent then and there?" asks Dr. Bhan.

#### Ensuring lack of bias

State governments will decide which vaccine goes to which sites. But how can States ensure the allocation of health-care workers to sites, particularly those that offer Covaxin, is done without bias? "There has to be fairness - either random allocation or something to that effect. It could also be those who are willing to take Covaxin under 'clinical trial mode' are assigned to sites offering the vaccine," says Dr. Bhan.

## Glucose addiction can foment tumours

Study reveals genes' roles in regulating glucose utilisation by breast cancer cells

ASWATHI PACHA

Breast cancer is the top cause of cancer-related deaths in Indian women and is the most prevalent type of cancer in women. Worldwide statistics show that about two million new cases were detected in 2018.

Researchers studying cancer metabolism have often noted that tumour cells are addicted to glucose. Once glucose enters the cell, it quickly gets fed to pathways and is utilised to multiply and grow. In contrast, normal cells primarily use glucose for energy production. This reprogramming of glucose metabolism by cancer cells often alters the response to drugs used in cancer treatment.

An international team has discovered the conflicting roles of two genes in regulating glucose utilisation by breast cancer cells. They revealed that the CBX2 gene



Genes at play: One gene promotes glucose uptake and consumption by breast cancer cells whereas another does the opposite. • GETTY IMAGES

promotes glucose uptake and consumption by breast cancer cells whereas CBX7, a sister gene, does the opposite. Targeting these genes and/or their glucose pathway can pave way for new cancer treatments.

#### Essential roles

"The reason we chose to study CBX genes is because of their essential role in human embryonic development. Since metabolic requirements during embryogenesis and carcinogenesis share a striking similarity, we got interested in CBX genes and their role in breast cancer," says Mohammad Askandar Iqbal from Jamia Millia Islamia University who led the study.

When asked if gene therapy - where one can disrupt the problematic gene - can be used here, Dr. Iqbal explains: "We can try to specifically knock out the CBX2 gene in breast tumour cells; however, we cannot take the chance of knocking the gene out of our body as it plays an essential role in human embryonic development. Alternatively, we can target the glucose consumption by breast cancer cells."

**Drug sensitivity analysis**  
The team performed a drug sensitivity analysis on FDA-approved drugs which could treat breast tumours with higher CBX2 and/or lower CBX7 expression levels. They identified methotrexate and rapamycin as candidate drugs to which patients with higher CBX2 expression in breast tumours may respond favourably.

"To enrich our knowledge of therapeutic biomarkers, we are interested in delving into the mechanistic basis of these important observations and profile the dependency of breast tumours on this pathway for designing personalised treatment strategies," adds Dr. Iqbal.

Males modulate their reproductive investment based on perceived competition

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

A study of fruit flies bred in the lab shows that they may actually evolve to modulate their reproductive traits based on the extent of competitiveness of their competing males. This study of 150 generations of fruit flies, spanning about six years, shows how the environment can influence evolution of reproductive traits.

It is a well-known fact that males of different species compete for the attention of females to mate with. In species where the female mates with many males, as in *Drosophila* (fruit fly) the sperms extend this competition to the post-copulatory domain. This is known as post-copulatory sexual selection.

**Evolving traits**  
This study shows that over several generations, males actually evolve to modulate their reproductive invest-



Shaped by competition: Evolved traits enabled the fruit flies to maintain fitness in adverse conditions.

• VIJAYA ANAND

ment based on their perception of the number and quality of the competition. The study was published in the journal *Evolution*.

It is significant because it shows how male fruit flies change the expression of their reproductive traits depending on the changes in the environment. "This study shows the evolution of plasticity according to the change in the socio-sexual environment," says N.G. Prasad of Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali, who led the research. "In general, the rapidly changing environment can have a great impact on an organism's behaviour. Ac-

quiring plasticity enables an individual to cope with the fluctuating environment and maintain fitness in adverse conditions," he adds, in an email to *The Hindu*.

The researchers maintained the study for over 150 generations. "The flies are maintained on a 14-day life cycle every generation. Therefore, one generation corresponds to 14 days, and 150 generations corresponds to 2,100 days, which is approximately six years," explains Dr. Prasad.

#### Competing sperm

In general, post-copulatory sexual selection can be competition between the various sperm in the female reproductive tract to fertilise the egg, and also sperm choice mediated by the female reproductive tract.

To understand this, the group studied three reproductive traits for males of male-biased and female-biased regimes. These were mating latency, copulation duration and sperm defence ability. Of these, mating latency is a measure of female receptivity and male courtship efficiency and intensity. Sperm defence ability is the ability of the experi-

mental male sperm to displace another from a rival male. While mating latency and copulation duration were manually observed, the sperm defence ability was inferred from the eye colour of the offspring.

The experiments demonstrated that first, males can plastically modulate their reproductive investment in response to change in socio-sexual environment experienced in early-life. Secondly, evolution under different operational sex ratios led to divergence of male reproductive investment patterns.

In order to eliminate the potential of parental effects to influence the results of the study, the flies were passed through one generation of standardisation. "During this process, flies were maintained in ancestral conditions and selection was not imposed on them. Then all the experimental conditions were also retained same for both the populations (male-biased and female-biased) and all the treatments," he says.

## Exotic food exchange in the second millennium BCE

Trade flourished long before the Silk Routes were established



### SPEAKING OF SCIENCE

D. BALASUBRAMANIAN

We are familiar with the 'Silk Route' that connects Chinese and Central Asian regions with Southern Asian and West Asian regions of the world and how trade between these regions had started over 4,000 years ago, or the second millennium BCE. It was then that the King of Babylon (the region near the Euphrates River) Hammurabi ruled and had strict moral laws for his subjects. In this connection, the remarkable and 'must read' book 'The Silk Roads: A New History of the World', written by Peter Frankopan mentions how even before that time, trade and cultural ties were going on between the East and the West in the Bronze Age (3000 BCE), that is, 5000 years ago. People from the Mediterranean region were trading with those in the Central, South and East Asia, introducing horses, camels and donkeys, and likewise from India through the Gulf



Ancient commerce: Trade and cultural ties took place between the East and the West even in the Bronze Age. • GETTY IMAGES

region. Exchange of 'exotic' (non-native) food items such as wheat, rice, pulses, sesame, banana, soybean and turmeric was taking place.

#### Bronze Age bodies

Happily, studies from the Levant Region, a large land mass including Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, still has the bodies of people who lived there in the Bronze Age, in the cemeteries and burial grounds. Studies of the bodies have been carried out by a group from Israel, Germany, Spain, U.K. and the U.S. The exciting paper, titled 'Exotic foods reveal contact between South Asia and the Near East during the second millennium BCE', has appeared in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, or PNAS, in December 2020.

Ancient literary sources referred to how long-distance travel was taking place

in the third millennium BCE, of the transport of live animals such as the movement of donkeys from Egypt to the Southern Levant, i.e., the region between modern-day Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria and the cities of Amman, Aleppo, Beirut and Damascus, and even between Italy and Mesopotamia (Iran, Syria and Turkey). Botanical evidence also confirmed the exchange of fruit trees such as melons, citrus fruits and others from Southern Asian region during the Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE).

This showed the evidence of a Mediterranean cuisine, and even trading between the Indus Valley Civilisation and the Southern Asian region such as from Indonesia to the Southern Levant, in particu-

lar the Middle Bronze Age sites such as in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

#### Dental calculus

Two sites in this region, Megiddo and Tel Erani, were chosen. The research group had access to tombs, cemeteries and burial sites in this region. Sixteen (16) samples were collected, from which they could obtain bones of the long-dead people. Analysis of the tooth bones, in particular the lower teeth connecting the jaw, was done and studied in detail. Scientists call this analysis, 'dental calculus'. (By the way, this term calculus has nothing to do with mathematics at all, so please do not think that they were doing any advanced mathematical analy-

#### Proteome analysis

The group followed it up with the proteome analysis, which tells us the entire set of proteins expressed in the cells of the material. This revealed the presence of vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg, jasmine, cloves and peppercorn, revealing thereby that trade routes existed as early as the Bronze Age (3000-1200 BCE) and the Iron Age (500 BCE) between the Southeast and the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea-Dead Sea regions.

Bronze Age in India, particularly in the Northwest part of the country, is well documented by archeologists and historians. (The details of Bronze Age in the South of the region are still being studied). The Indus Valley Civilisation had already moved from the Stone Age into the Bronze Age (3300 - 1300 BCE). Metallurgy was practised.

The researchers could analyse the dental calculus of 16 individuals buried in Megiddo and Tel Erani, and the analysis revealed the presence of millet, date palm, flowering plants, grasses and dietary plants such as wheat, rice, sesame, barley, soybean, banana, ginger and turmeric, among others.

• GETTY IMAGES



### Question Corner

DNA exchanges in plants

Do plants share genetic material with each other?

Genetic material of plants and animals are well protected in the nucleus of each cell and store all the information that forms an organism. In addition, cells contain small organelles that contain their own genetic material. These include chloroplasts in plants, which play a key role in photosynthesis, and mitochondria, which are found in all living organisms and represent the power plants of every cell. Scientists at the Max Planck Institute of Molecular Plant Physiology in Potsdam have shown, through experimental approaches, (*Science Advances*) how the genetic material is not actually permanently stored within one cell but can migrate from cell

to cell.

They conducted experiments with tobacco plants using grafting. Two different tobacco plants were grafted on to each other and the cells of the junction were observed microscopically in real time. They could observe that genome transfer from cell to cell occurs in both directions with high frequency at this site.

The researchers were able to observe structural changes in the cell walls in the wound tissue of the graft site. Protrusions formed on the cell walls, thus creating junctions between the two partners. The size of the created pores allowed the migration of an entire plastid. "Therefore, the genome does not migrate freely, but encapsulated from cell to cell." Dr. Alexander Hertle says in a release. However, to actually make this possible, the plastids have to shrink and become mobile. These rod-shaped plastids grow back to normal size after transfer into the target tissue.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

dbala@lpepi.org

AN-ND-E



## U.S. & Section 230

Why are Democrats and Republicans opposed to the provision under the Communications Decency Act?

**SIRIM LAKSHMAN**

**The story so far:** In the U.S., Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) regulates online publication and liability. Specifically, the 1996 law states: "No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider." Author and cybersecurity lawyer Jeff Kosseff describes the law as 'the 26 words that created the internet'. But the legislation has come in the crosshairs of both Republicans and Democrats. U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly called for it to be repealed, including days ago, when he was suspended – first temporarily and then indefinitely – by social media sites, including Twitter and Facebook. President-elect Joe Biden has also called for the law's repeal.

**Why was the law passed?** The law grants Internet platforms immunity for almost all content posted by users – it is because of Section 230 of the CDA that Twitter is not normally liable for the content of tweets posted by its users, and Google is protected when a restaurant tries to sue it for a bad user review, for instance.

The law was passed in the aftermath of two court cases against Internet service providers, and different courts had ruled differently on the extent of liability for content hosting, and the extent of this liability itself.

The law grants Internet platforms immunity for almost all content posted by users. The tech industry has said any changes to the law must consider the impact on First Amendment rights (free speech), business and innovation

**Where do Republicans and Democrats stand on the law?** Republicans oppose Section 230 because for long, they have accused social media giants of silencing or stifling conservative voices. Democrats oppose it because they want greater policing of the Internet to tackle extremism, abuse and misinformation.

Mr. Biden called for Section 230 to be revoked in a 2019 interview to *The New York Times*. "[The NYT] can't write something you know to be false and be exempt from being sued. But he [Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg] can," he had said.

In 2019, Mr. Trump claimed that big tech was planning to rig the 2020 election. In May last year, he signed an executive order asking the Federal Communications Commission to propose regulations on the applicability of the law and review federal advertising spend on online platforms. After he lost the election, Mr. Trump vetoed the National Defense Authorization Act (Congress passed it overriding the veto). Among the stated reasons for the veto was a lack of "meaningful" changes to Section 230.

**How has the industry reacted to the opposition?** In general, the tech industry has said any changes to the law must consider the impact on First Amendment rights (free speech), business and innovation.

In June 2019, the Internet Association, whose members include Google, Facebook, Amazon, etc., came out in support of Section 230. Referring to reviews posted online, its head said, "Repealing or weakening CDA 230 would take away the parts of the internet that help Americans feel safe and make better decisions about where they eat, shop, and travel."

Repealing the law would lead to increased censoring of online content, Mr. Zuckerberg told a Senate committee (led by Republican lawmakers) in October last year, to which he was subpoenaed along with Twitter head Jack Dorsey and Alphabet Inc. CEO Sundar Pichai. The hearing was titled, "Does Section 230's Sweeping Immunity Enable Big Tech Bad Behavior?"

Mr. Zuckerberg, however, said he supported the need to update the law but did not provide details of which reforms he backed, as per a *Financial Times* report on the hearing. Mr. Pichai had said any changes should be thoughtfully considered bearing in mind the impact on consumers and business.

"Eroding the foundation of Section 230 could collapse how we communicate on the internet," said Mr. Dorsey, adding that it would mean only well-funded tech giants would survive.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference last February, Mr. Zuckerberg had said that the level of regulation for social media companies should fall somewhere between regulation levels for telecom companies and newspapers.

**What lies ahead?**

Following the attack on the Capitol on January 6, Facebook suspended Mr. Trump's account indefinitely. Twitter also did the same, on grounds of 'risk of further incitement of violence'. It also suspended more than 70,000 accounts related to QAnon, a right-wing conspiracy theory group.

Throughout the election, Twitter had labelled as 'misleading' numerous tweets in which Mr. Trump called the election fraudulent. With Mr. Biden stepping into the White House, Congress turning Democrat by a slim margin, and with a bitter election just fought, debates around Section 230 are likely to continue. The law may be modified, but it is not clear how.

## Can courts stay laws made by the legislature?

What do judicial precedents say and why is interim suspension of an Act frowned upon?

**K. VENKATARAMAN**

**The story so far:** The Supreme Court's recent order staying the implementation of three farm laws, while appointing a four-member committee (one member, Bhupinder Singh Mann, has recused himself), to thrash out issues between agitating farmers and the Union government, has been criticised in some quarters. In particular, many have questioned the suspension of action under the laws as such interim orders are extremely rare. The court did not accept the Attorney General's argument that laws made by the legislature should not be ordinarily stayed, as there is a presumption of constitutionality in favour of the laws.

**How did the SC justify its order on farm laws?**

"This court cannot be said to be completely powerless to grant stay of any executive action under a statutory enactment," the Bench observed in its order. This means that it was apparently making a distinction between staying a law and staying its implementation or any action under it. Some may argue, however, that the effect remains the same, as the order operates as a stay on the government invoking its provisions.

The court also cited an order passed by another Bench of the Supreme Court last September on the Maratha reservation issue. It directed that admissions to educational institutions for 2020-21 and appointments to posts under the government shall be made without reference to the reservation provided under the relevant legislation. The matter has been referred to a Constitution Bench.

However, in the Maratha reservation case, the Bench said interim orders could be passed if an enactment is *ex facie* unconstitutional or contrary to law laid down by the Supreme Court. It noted that the quota violated the 50% ceiling mentioned in the Indra Sawhney case (1992), and that the Maharashtra government had not shown any extraordinary situation to justify exceeding the limit.

Moreover, the Supreme Court observed that a stay on the farm laws' implementation may assuage the hurt feelings of farmers and encourage them to come to the negotiating table.

**What are the court's powers in regard to staying enacted law?**

Under the broad framework of judicial review under the Constitution, the Supreme Court and High Courts have the power to declare any law unconstitutional, either because it is *ultra vires* (or, contrary to any provision of the Constitution) or it violates any of the fundamental rights, or invalid because it is repugnant to a central law on the same subject or has been enacted without



The SC order staying the implementation of the three contentious farm laws has met with criticism from experts ■ AP

The main principle is that suspending a law made by the legislature goes against the concept of separation of powers. The validity of a law ought to be considered normally only at the time of final adjudication, and not at the initial stage

in question), a law ought not to be stayed.

**Why is it considered unusual for a court to suspend a law or its operation?**

The main principle is that suspending a law made by the legislature goes against the concept of separation of powers. Courts are expected to defer to the legislature's wisdom at the threshold of a legal challenge to the validity of a law. The validity of a law ought to be considered normally only at the time of final adjudication, and not at the initial stage.

The second principle is that there is a presumption that every law enacted by any legislature is constitutional and valid. The onus is on those challenging it to prove that it is not. Therefore, courts are circumspect when hearing petitions seeking suspension of a law pending a detailed adjudication.

**What precedents are cited against judicial interference at an interim stage?**

Case law suggests that in some cases, High Courts indeed stayed the operation of some laws. However, the Supreme Court took a dim view.

In 1984, the top court set aside an interim stay granted against the operation of a municipal tax (*Siliguri Municipality & Others vs Amalendu Das & Others*); in 2013, it removed the stay on some provisions of and regulations under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (*Health for Millions Trust vs Union of India*).

In the latter case, the court observed that "the operation of statutory provisions cannot be stilted by granting an interim order except when the Court is fully convinced that the particular enactment or the rules are *ex facie* unconstitutional and the factors, like, balance of convenience, irreparable injury and public interest are in favour of passing an interim order".

While upholding the validity of Section 45S of the Reserve Bank of India Act, which imposed restrictions on unincorporated bodies accepting public deposits, the Supreme Court criticised interim orders by some High Courts that stayed the provision. "When considering an application for staying the operation of a piece of legislation, and that too pertaining to economic reform or change, then the courts must bear in mind that unless the provision is manifestly unjust or glaringly unconstitutional, the court must show judicial restraint in staying the applicability of the same," the court said in *Bhavesh D. Parish & Others vs Union of India*, 2000.

## Stock market highs and economic lows

What has the Reserve Bank of India cautioned against in its latest Financial Stability Report?

**SURESH SESHADRI**

**The story so far:** On Monday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the 22<sup>nd</sup> issue of its biannual Financial Stability Report outlining the risks to financial stability as well as the resilience of the financial system in the contemporary context. In his foreword, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das flagged the many risks ahead, including the recent, accentuating "disconnect between certain segments of financial markets and the real economy". Mr. Das warned, "Stretched valuations of financial assets pose risks to financial stability," adding, "banks and financial intermediaries need to be cognisant of these risks and spillovers in an interconnected financial system."

**What prompted the RBI Governor's warning?**

While Mr. Das did not explicitly name the stock markets, the RBI is unequivocal in the report's chapter titled 'Macrofinancial Risks' in identifying the asset class triggering major concern among central bankers. The RBI noted that measures taken to support the economy and safeguard the financial system during the COVID-19 pandemic "may have unintended consequences as reflected, for instance, in the soaring equity valuations disconnected from economic performance".

The backdrop to the RBI's comments is this: while the imposition in March of the initial nationwide lockdown to curb the pandemic and subsequent State-level restrictions pushed the economy into one of its deepest contractions in the April-June quarter (initial estimates

show GDP shrank 23.9% in the period), which then extended into a technical recession as GDP contracted 7.5% in the July-September period, India's equity markets rallied sharply after plunging to more than three-year lows on March 23. As of the close of trading on January 11 (the day the RBI released its report), the benchmark S&P BSE Sensex had appreciated almost 90% from its closing level on March 23, 2020. So, while the country's economic output as a whole has been contracting – the government's official advance estimates show GDP shrinking by 7.7% in the 2020-21 financial year – the stock markets have been seemingly disconnected and soaring to record highs.



**How did this situation arise?**

The onset of the pandemic saw monetary and fiscal authorities worldwide, including in India, introducing a slew of support measures to ensure that the restrictions imposed on economic activity did not completely devastate national economies and household incomes. The measures, which included interest rate cuts and infusion of liquidity, have driven a substantial surge in funds in the financial system, including in India's case from overseas investors. The RBI noted in the report, "surges of capital flows are being experienced, with the return of risk appetite and a renewed search for yield. Financial markets and asset prices have been lifted by this resurgence of foreign portfolio investment to India."

Latest data from the National Securities Depository Ltd. show that net foreign portfolio investments into equities in the current fiscal year had surged more than 38-fold to ₹2,36,781 crore (as on January 16), from the meagre ₹6,153-crore inflow in the preceding year. Worldwide, easy money conditions have in the past invariably spurred stock market rallies as investors seek higher returns at a time when interest rates on fixed income assets such as deposits and bonds decline. Expectations of an economic recovery underpinned by supportive measures and the availability of lower-cost borrowings also spur people to borrow money to invest in stocks.

**Why is the RBI concerned?**

The central bank is wary of the risk that a sudden sharp reversal in the trend could cause the asset bubble to pop, triggering wider contagion effects. The 2001 recession in the U.S., for instance, was sparked by the bursting of the dotcom bubble, which, coupled with the September 11 terrorist attacks and a series of accounting scandals at major companies, including energy firm Enron Corporation, pushed the economy into a contraction. In RBI's own words, "active intervention by central banks and fiscal authorities has been able to stabilise financial markets but there are risks of spillovers ... In a period of continued uncertainty, this has implications for the banking sector as its balance sheet is linked with corporate and household sector vulnerabilities."

## The sustained fight against trans fats

Why did the FSSAI introduce new caps and what more needs to be done for global elimination?

**JAGRITI CHANDRA**

**The story so far:** On December 29, 2020, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) reduced the permissible limit of trans fatty acids (TFA) in oils and fats to 3% for 2021 and 2% by 2022, against the earlier cap of 5%. The decision was effected by an amendment to the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulations. The new rules apply to edible refined oils, vanaspati (partially hydrogenated oils), margarine, bakery shortenings, and other cooking media like vegetable fat spreads and mixed fat spreads. In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) had called for a global elimination of industrially produced TFAs by 2023.

**What are trans fats and why are they harmful?**

All natural fats and oils are a combination of monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and saturated fatty acids or trans fatty acids. Our body needs the first two categories of 'healthy' fats as apart from being a major source of energy, they help absorb some vitamins and minerals and build cell membranes and the sheaths surrounding nerves. These fats are free-flowing, unlike saturated fatty acids or trans fats, which are considered harmful as they clog arteries and result in hypertension, heart attacks, and other cardiovascular issues.

There are two broad types of trans fats found in foods: naturally-occurring and artificial trans fats. Artificial trans fats, which are considered harmful, are created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable



oils to make them more solid, increase their shelf life, and for use as an adulterant as they are cheap. They are present in baked and fried foods as well as adulterated ghee, which becomes solid at room temperature.

Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally, causing over 1.8 crore deaths every year. The WHO estimates that over 5 lakh people with cardiovascular issues die globally every year due to the consumption of industrially produced TFAs. As per FSSAI, about 77,000 deaths take place annually in India due to TFAs.

**How did India and other nations start acting on it?**

In 2018, the WHO called for elimination of industrially produced TFAs by 2023, and brought out a step-by-step guide called 'REPLACE' to help countries frame policies. This prompted accelerated action by member states and other stakeholders. However, threats posed by non-communicable diseases started gaining attention much earlier in the 1980s, following which Denmark became

the first country to ban TFAs in 2003. In the next five years, Chile and Switzerland banned TFAs too. During the same period, several U.S. States, such as New York, implemented local bans. In its report in 2020, the WHO said that 58 countries had introduced laws that will protect 3.2 billion people from TFAs by the end of 2021. But more than 100 countries still needed to take action. Last year, 11 of the 15 countries that account for two-thirds of deaths linked to trans fats still needed to act. These were Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Iran, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Korea.

In India, action against trans fats coincided with the setting up of the FSSAI. Though it came into existence in 2006, civil society organisations say that its functioning picked up by 2011-12. It was in 2011 that it imposed a cap of 10% on trans fats in oils and fats in India, which was further revised to 5% in 2015.

**What next?**

Civil society organisations in India are pushing for a cap of 3% for 2021 and 2% for 2022 to be imposed not just on trans fats in oils and fats, but in "all" foods. According to those engaging with the government on the subject, a regulation for this is likely soon. But a bigger challenge will be implementation, which is a State subject. The FSSAI will need to pursue local governments to improve surveillance, inspection of food premises, sampling of food products, regular training of officers, upgradation of food labs, etc., which are also among concerns raised by a Parliamentary panel on the regulator's ineffectiveness.



## WHO

# Between public health and global politics

The international agency that has been at the forefront of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic saw both recognition and criticism

RAMYA KANNAN

**I**t is common knowledge that any international agency is only as powerful or important as its funding members want/allow it to be.

The World Health Organization (WHO), catapulted to centre stage by the COVID-19 pandemic, is no different. Its funding comes from countries or member states paying their assessed contributions (countries' membership dues), and voluntary contributions from member states and other partners. In its 72 years of existence, the WHO has seen a

lot of ups and downs, and faced a lot of criticism, more so in the past year, but it has always been called on to anchor and guide member nations in times of a global health crisis.

With its army of specialists and access to information and best practices across the world, it remains the world's best bet – not only to write out prescriptions, but also maintain a vigil over inequities and access to health care services.

Its avowed aim is "to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. Our goal is to ensure that

a billion more people have universal health coverage, to protect a billion more people from health emergencies, and provide a further billion people with better health and well-being." Universal health coverage and health emergencies continue to be its two-pronged focus areas.

It was on April 7, 1948, that the WHO came into being with 61 members on board. Its precursor was the Office of International Public Health that was formed in 1907 conceived with the idea of creating a pan-national outfit that would coordinate nations' responses to public

health crises. The WHO works through its country offices that report to six regional offices.

### Immunisation drive

The seeds for the organisation's arguably biggest success – the elimination of small pox – might have been sown with its efforts to intensify the immunisation campaign globally. Small pox, also caused by a virus, was one of the most devastating diseases known to humanity before it was eradicated. Edward Jenner had developed a vaccine way back in 1796, but vaccination received a boost with the WHO prioritising immunisation.

It was in 1980 that the WHO declared that the disease had been eliminated from the world, through sheer human effort. If one is looking at reasons for the pre-eminent, compelling need for an organisation such as the WHO, technically one need look no further than small pox. Its work on malaria, and neglected tropical diseases, among others, also are recognised.

It was as a result of the criticism that it failed to pick up rampaging Ebola in the

1990s, and delayed picking up HIV/AIDS early enough, that the WHO rolled out the Global Public Health Intelligence Network in 1997, to predict potential epidemics using information on the Internet, and function as an early warning alert. With the growing use of the Internet, such a system gains better traction, and in 2000, it was supplemented with the Global Outbreak Alert Response Network (GOARN).

And yet, criticism was laid at the door of the WHO, because of its initial measured response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On January 23, 2020, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's Director General, said it was early to declare "a public health emergency of international concern".

And yet, a week later, the WHO declared a public health emergency of international concern, the highest level of alarm. At that time, there were 98 cases and no deaths in 18 countries outside China. Four countries had evidence (eight cases) of human-to-human transmission outside China.

"For the moment," Dr. Tedros said, "the WHO does

not recommend any broader restrictions on travel or trade. We recommend exit screening at airports as part of a comprehensive set of containment measures." The Director General's lavish praise for China in handling the crisis also came in for criticism. "We would have seen many more cases outside China by now – and probably deaths – if it were not for the government's efforts, and the progress they have made to protect their own people and the people of the world."

"The speed with which China detected the outbreak,

**The seeds for the WHO's arguably biggest success – the elimination of small pox – might have been sown with its efforts to intensify the immunisation campaign globally**

isolated the virus, sequenced it with WHO and the world are very impressive, and beyond words. So is China's commitment to transparency and to supporting other countries." Clearly, he had spoken too soon. Outgoing American President Donald Trump tore into the WHO with being a China acolyte, cut funding and pulled the U.S. out of the organisation.

### Changing statements

Later, changing statements on the use of masks, hydroxychloroquine and even the mode of transmission, by the WHO, have raised eyebrows. But it is also necessary to understand the nature of the functioning of the WHO and the nature of the beast, or the virus, in this case. The WHO works with information shared with it by nations, China, in this case. It is bound by these limitations, as also its innate inability to police nations, or have them conform with recommendations. Representatives of the WHO also repeatedly mentioned, in their defence, that they were guided by scientific principles, backed by solid evidence, and in an evolving

epidemic, instructions must necessarily be dynamic.

Subsequently in March, the WHO issued a consolidated package of existing guidance covering the preparedness, readiness and response actions for four different transmission scenarios: no cases, sporadic cases, clusters of cases and community transmission. It unleashed its armamentarium to help the world handle its most unprecedented health crises of all time.

### SOLIDARITY trial

The WHO and its partners launched the SOLIDARITY trial, an international clinical trial that aims to generate robust data from around the world to find the most effective treatments for COVID-19. It was designed to accelerate the process of conducting randomised clinical trials which normally take years to design, conduct, and see the results of. The organisation also worked with the European Commission and multiple partners to launch the ACT Accelerator, to ensure that once a vaccine is available, it's available to everyone – especially those who are at the greatest risk.

The battle against COVID-19 is far from over. While vaccines are now available, and the administration of the vaccine has begun, challenges continue in monitoring this massive immunisation exercise, and ensuring that every one has access to the recommended doses.

The WHO also has a duty to counter the fatigue that has set in after prolonged efforts to test, quarantine and treat COVID-19. "This is a defining moment in the pandemic, health workers are stretched and we are seeing supplies of oxygen run dangerously low in some countries. We must act together as common humanity and roll out vaccines to health workers and those highest at risk," Dr. Tedros said recently.

The COVID-19 pandemic that has over 93 million cases and over 2 million deaths so far might just have sealed the WHO's place in the UN firmament, it's place in a world that lives in fear of pathogens, cemented its raison d'être and possibly, secured its funding component.

### In Focus

■ WHO came into being on April 7, 1948, with 61 members on board

■ Its avowed aim is "to promote health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable"

■ In its early decades, the organisation played a critical role in eliminating small pox from the world. Its work on malaria and neglected tropical diseases, among others, are also recognised

## NATIONAL GUARD

# Boots on the ground

About 20,000 troops have been deployed in DC ahead of Biden's inauguration

NARAYAN LAKSHMAN

**G**iven the ferocity of the pro-Trump mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol building on January 6, and intelligence from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that further attacks may be planned, authorities in Washington are taking no chances and deploying close to 20,000 National Guard troops to secure proceedings for President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on January 20. However, questions remain as to why the National Guard were not deployed in force on the day of the mob attack.

**Events of January 6**  
While the Guard in Washington was under the command of President Trump on the day of the Capitol attack, the orders to deploy are typically issued by the Secretary of the Army at the request of the Mayor. On that fateful day, other officials also weighed in on the use of the Guard, yet the details of how exactly that decision was made is the subject of debate.

The most controversial aspect of the action taken on January 6 is that despite pleas to the Pentagon from Washington DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund, for National Guard boots on the ground, officials were quoted as saying that Director of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Walter Piatt said he could not recommend his boss, Army



Secretary Ryan McCarthy, approve the request and that he did not like "the visual of a line of National Guard soldiers in front of the Capitol."

The manner in which these events played out warrants a closer look at the role of the National Guard as a protective force, the command-and-control structure that undergirds its operation, and the history of its deployment.

**State-level force**  
Under U.S. statute, what is known as the 'National Guard' comprises both the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. The former, however, is colloquially what is referred to as National Guard in the context of ground deployment, as in the case of the U.S. Capitol building attack. In this regard, the 'Army National Guard' refers to that part of the organised militia of the U.S. The terms of service of the National Guard varies

Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. This cohort includes active and inactive troops, which together make up a land force that is trained and has statutorily appointed officers. The force is organised, armed, and equipped wholly or partly at Federal expense, and it is federally recognised.

Defined broadly, the purpose of the National Guard is to serve as a unique element of the U.S. military, for both "community and country." It is, therefore, tasked with equal responsibility to respond to domestic emergencies as it is to overseas combat missions, anti-drug initiatives, rescue and reconstruction missions and beyond.

Typically, the authority to mobilise the National Guard rests with the Governor of the State in question or, in the case of Washington, with the President of the U.S. The terms of service of the National Guard varies

from that of Army enlistment because Guardsmen are permitted to hold civilian jobs or attend college while maintaining their military training as a part-time occupation. Guardsmen also primarily serve in their home States.

### History of deployment

The first militia regiments in North America were organised in Massachusetts in 1636. At the time the intent was that the colony's militia would be organised into three permanent regiments to better defend the colony. In the modern day, the descendants of those three comprise the oldest units in the U.S. military.

There have been 12 occasions since the enactment of the 1952 Armed Forces Reserve Act when the National Guard has been deployed under the control of the U.S. President, most of which were during the upheavals of the civil rights movement through the 1960s. Other than these incidents, the Guard was mobilised by the President for the New York City postal strike of 1970, the looting in the U.S. Virgin Islands after Hurricane Hugo struck in 1989, and to quell the riots after the Rodney King verdict in 1992.

Given the level of bitter polarisation in the U.S. and the periodic outbreak of violent attacks since Mr. Trump entered office, the possibility that Mr. Biden will have to deploy the National Guard during his term cannot be ruled out.

## XIAOMI

# Collateral damage

The U.S. has termed the start-up a 'Communist Chinese military company'

ANANTH KRISHNAN

**O**n January 14, the U.S. Department of Defense released its latest list of what it called "Communist Chinese military companies" operating in the U.S., as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. The aim was "to highlight and counter the People's Republic of China's Military-Civil Fusion development strategy, which supports the modernisation goals of the People's Liberation Army by ensuring its access to advanced technologies and expertise acquired and developed by even those PRC companies, universities, and research programs that appear to be civilian entities."

Since the first such list was released in June last year, the U.S. has named some of China's most well-known state-run firms, such as the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC) and Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) that manufacture aircraft, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), the China Nuclear Engineering and Construction Corporation (CNEEC), and the telecommunications giant Huawei.

The latest list, however, included a surprising name – Xiaomi, a 10-year-old smartphone and smart appliances manufacturer that has made a name for itself, both in China and abroad, for its cutting edge consumer products. The company



immediately issued a statement, saying it "is not owned, controlled or affiliated with the Chinese military".

The listing of Xiaomi sheds a spotlight on the unique space it occupies in China's private sector, as well as the broader challenge that firms in China that have sought to differentiate themselves from state-backed entities increasingly face overseas.

Founded in 2010, Xiaomi (pronounced 'sheow-me') was a start-up that entered an already highly competitive smartphone market. Their initial modus operandi was to sell phones close to manufacturing cost, while making money off accessories and other smart devices from smart bands to air purifiers and smart rice cookers, and avoiding investment into brick and mortar retail stores. They relied on the Internet and in creating a buzz about their young brand. One such method

was to create its own MIUI platform, an Android-based operating system that differentiated its products. This model allowed the company to make rapid inroads into its competitors' markets both at home and abroad. As of August last year, Huawei still enjoyed a dominating 45% smartphone market share, according to a report from market intelligence firm IDC, greater than its next three rivals, Oppo, Vivo and Xiaomi, whose share is a little over 10%.

**Overseas success**  
Xiaomi's great success has been overseas. Last year, the company said it ranks in the top five in 50 global smartphone markets, and with the largest market share in India and Spain, second in France and Russia, fourth in China, Germany, Indonesia and South Korea, and fifth in Brazil, Malaysia and Singapore. For Xiaomi, the listing in the U.S. could hurt its care-

fully built reputation as an upstart Chinese start-up. If Huawei was the all-powerful telecom firm that was loved by the state as a national champion even if it was a private company, Xiaomi has positioned itself as an outsider rival, a message conveyed even in its name, which means "millet". Its founder Lei Jun once said he was inspired by the humble crop and a Chinese saying that the Buddha, even in one grain of rice, could see a mountain.

The U.S. listing also highlights the broader global debate about how "private" Chinese companies can truly be, at a time when the Communist Party has increasingly made it clear entrepreneurs should be patriots first and serve the state, as underlined in recent actions against e-commerce giant Alibaba.

On the spectrum of Chinese private firms, Xiaomi has sought to position itself as far as it can from hardware manufacturing telecom firms such as Huawei, cultivating the image of a company that relies more on individual consumers than state contracts. If the U.S. description of Xiaomi as a "Communist Chinese military company" might appear a stretch, that will matter little for President Donald Trump, as he leaves behind a parting gift for China. The greater concern for Xiaomi is how much it will matter to its customers, from India and Indonesia to Brazil and beyond.

# Test hangs in the balance as rain ends play early

Young Indian attack manages to restrict Australia; Lyon edges closer to 400 forcing a lapse from an at-ease Rohit

## INDIA IN AUS

**AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE**  
BRISBANE

The deciding fourth Test between Australia and India hung in the balance on Saturday after a massive thunderstorm caused play to be abandoned after tea on the second day.

### Too wet

The Gabba was saturated during the storm, which began during the tea break, and while the ground drained quickly, the umpires decided the outfield was too wet for play to continue.

India will resume on Sunday at 62 for two.

Australia had earlier claimed the vital wicket of Rohit Sharma 20 minutes before tea to seize the momentum.

Rohit had been in full flow, striking 44 stylish runs off 74 balls with six 4s.

But, with the score on 60 for the loss of opener Shubman Gill (7), Rohit threw his wicket away when he



**Lock, stock and barrel:** Nathan Lyon is cleaned up by Washington Sundar. ■ GETTY IMAGES

charged off-spinner Nathan Lyon, only managing a skier to Mitchell Starc at deep mid-on.

The Australian off-spinner is playing his 100th Test and is closing in on 400 wickets – Rohit was his 397th.

Resuming at 274 for five, Tim Paine and Cameron Green looked to push the score beyond 400.

But, shortly after reaching his half-century, Paine chased a wide ball from Shardul Thakur (three for 94) and

edged to Rohit at third slip. Green survived a sharp chance on 45 off Washington Sundar but two runs later, the off-spinner got his revenge when he bowled the Australia No. 6 for 47.

Sundar, playing only his

## SCOREBOARD

### AUSTRALIA – 1ST INNINGS

David Warner c Rohit b Siraj 1 (4b), Marcus Harris c Washington b Shardul 5 (23b), Marnus Labuschagne c Pant b Natarajan 108 (204b, 9x4), Steve Smith c Rohit b Washington 36 (77b, 5x4), Matthew Wade c Shardul b Natarajan 45 (87b, 6x4), Cameron Green b Washington 47 (107b, 6x4), Tim Paine c Rohit b Shardul 50 (104b, 6x4), Pat Cummins lbw b Shardul 2 (8b), Mitchell Starc (not out) 20 (35b, 1x6), Nathan Lyon b Washington 24 (22b, 4x4), Josh Hazlewood b Natarajan 11 (27b, 2x4); Extras (b-4, lb-5, w-5, nb-6): 20; Total (in 115.2 overs): 369.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-4 (Warner, 0.6 ov), 2-17 (Harris, 8.1), 3-87 (Smith, 34.1), 4-200 (Wade, 63.4), 5-213 (Labuschagne, 65.5), 6-311 (Paine, 99.2), 7-313 (Green,

second Test, took his third wicket when he trapped Cummins leg-before for two to leave the hosts struggling at 315 for seven.

However, Lyon and Starc went on the attack and the score raced to 354 before

100.5), 8-315 (Cummins, 101.4), 9-354 (Lyon, 108.2).

### INDIA BOWLING

Siraj 28-10-77-1, Natarajan 24-2-3-78-3, Shardul 24-6-94-3, Saini 7.5-2-21-0, Washington 31-6-89-3, Rohit 0.1-0-1-0.

### INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

Rohit Sharma c Starc b Lyon 44 (74b, 6x4), Shubman Gill c Smith b Cummins 7 (15b, 1x4), Mitchell Starc (not out) 20 (35b, 1x6), Nathan Lyon b Washington 24 (22b, 4x4), Josh Hazlewood b Natarajan 11 (27b, 2x4); Extras (b-4, lb-5, w-5, nb-6): 20; Total (in 26 overs): 62.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-11 (Gill, 6.2), 2-60 (Rohit, 19.5).

### AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Starc 3-1-8-0, Hazlewood 8-4-11-0, Cummins 6-1-22-1, Green 3-0-11-0, Lyon 6-2-10-1.

Washington bowled Lyon around his legs after his quickfire 24 off 22 deliveries.

When T. Natarajan bowled Joshi Hazlewood to end the innings, the inexperienced Indian attack had completed an impressive comeback.

# Rohit defends decision to go after the bowlers

S. DIPAK RAGAV

Rohit Sharma defended his shot selection that led to his dismissal for a well-made 44 – trying to take on Nathan Lyon and being caught in the deep.

### Role in team

"It is a shot that I play and have played very well in the past as well. So it is something that I back myself to do all the time," said Rohit on Saturday. "That is the kind of role that I play in this team."

He admitted it looked bad, but didn't want to think too much about it. "I want to make it big, but having said that, there is a process I like to follow and the process is to make sure that once I am in, I'm on top of the bowlers. I am trying to keep the pressure on the bowling unit of the opposition," he said.

Rohit revealed he had started working on tackling the Australian bowlers the day he landed and while he was in quarantine during the first two Tests.



Rohit Sharma. ■ AFP

Commenting on the state of the match, Rohit complimented the inexperienced bowling attack for restricting Australia to less than 400, though, he said, 30-40 runs fewer would have been better.

"We have solid batters to come, and two of the most experienced players are still out there in the middle. The pitch is good and, I don't see any reason why we can't get to 'that' score," he added.

## BRIEFLY

### Giannis propels Bucks

LOS ANGELES

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points and had nine rebounds to power Milwaukee Bucks to a 112-109 victory over Luke Doncic's Dallas Mavericks in a battle between the two early frontrunners for NBA Most Valuable Player honours. Other results: Boston Celtics bt Orlando Magic 124-97; Cleveland Cavaliers bt NY Knicks 106-103; Los Angeles Lakers bt New Orleans Pelicans 112-95; Utah Jazz bt Atlanta Hawks 116-92; Oklahoma City Thunder bt Chicago Bulls 127-125.

### Pandya brothers' father passes away

VADODARA

India cricketers Hardik and Krunal Pandya lost their father Himanshu, who passed away on Saturday due to a heart attack. He was 71. Krunal, who was leading Baroda in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, left the bio-bubble to be with his family. Hardik also left Mumbai, where he was training, for Vadodara. PTI

## Kavi overcomes conditions to beat champions

Madurai girl outperformed the field which had the likes of Elavenil, Apurvi, Anjum

### SHOOTING

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI



**Third eye:** Kavi has credited coach Ramachandran for her progress. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sailing past Elavenil Valarivan, the World No. 1 in air rifle, and topping the trials when the Olympic quota winners Apurvi Chandela and Anjum Moudgil had failed to make the final, was a personal triumph for Kavi Raksha from Madurai.

Coached by Purushottaman Ramachandran, the second year MBBS student of the Government Sivangangai Medical College, Kavi had to overcome the cold conditions of Delhi and the disappointment of not having performed well in the first event.

"This match was very special for me as it was held after about a year's break. The excitement drove my spirits higher. One more reason was the frustrating end of my first trial a day earlier. It

was difficult to handle the intense cold. I was tired both physically and mentally," recalled the 20-year-old Kavi, a bright student who had secured her medical seat with a high score.

With her mother Rani Chakravarthi, a psychologist, playing a significant role, Kavi handled the tricky

situation with poise. "Together with my mom, we found ways to deal with the cold. We had hot packs, and I had woollen gloves to warm my hands. I even cut down on coffee as it helps in dealing with the cold," said Kavi, recalling her drill to deal with the conditions and emerge on top in a classy

situation with poise. "Together with my mom, we found ways to deal with the cold. We had hot packs, and I had woollen gloves to warm my hands. I even cut down on coffee as it helps in dealing with the cold," said Kavi, recalling her drill to deal with the conditions and emerge on top in a classy

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