

'FINDINGS' IN KERALA
GOLD SMUGGLING
CASE KICK UP STORM

P4



'STATES MUST
BATTLE DRUGS
JOINTLY'

P7



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

POPE ARRIVES IN
IRAQ TO RALLY
CHRISTIANS

P10



CLUB V COUNTRY
AS PANDEMIC
PLAYS HAVOC

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 32 and 14 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 93%	Min: 42%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 31.6°C (+5)	Min: 14.4°C (1)
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
06:40 hrs	18:24 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
02:05 hrs	11:39 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Union defence minister Rajnath Singh with the Tri-service Commanders, at the Combined Commanders' Conference, at Kevadia, Narmada district of Gujarat on Friday.

PIB

NCB chargesheet in Sushant death case: The Narcotics Control Bureau on Friday filed a charge sheet before a special court in Mumbai in the drugs case related to actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, naming 33 accused including his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty. The charge sheet accuses Chakraborty of being part of a "drug syndicate" and claims she was part of a conspiracy to procure and supply drugs. Of the 33 accused, eight are still in judicial custody while the rest including Rhea and her brother are out on bail.

ED summons Mehbooba in PMLA case: The Enforcement Directorate summoned former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti on Friday for questioning on 15 March in a money laundering case, officials said. The 60-year-old PDP leader, who was released last year after more than a year in detention, has been served notice to appear at the ED headquarters in New Delhi. The case has been filed under Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Digital media guidelines lack teeth: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Friday said the Centre's guidelines on regulating social media lacks teeth and do not have any provision for taking appropriate action for prosecution or punishment against digital platforms which show inappropriate content or violate the norms.

The top court also granted interim protection from arrest to Amazon Prime Video's India head Aparna Purohit in FIRs lodged over web series *Tandav*.

It asked her to co-operate with the investigation and appear before the investigating Officer as and when required.

A bench comprising justices Ashok Bhushan and R S Reddy also issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh government on Purohit's plea for anticipatory

The court said there is nothing in the rules to control the inappropriate content on these platforms and without legislation it may not be possible to control it. It granted interim cover to Amazon Prime's India head in the *Tandav* case

bail in FIRs on *Tandav* series.

The top court said that there is nothing in the rules to control the inappropriate content on these platforms and without legislation it may not be possible to control it.

A perusal of the Rules indicate that the Rules are more and more in the form of guidelines and have no effective mechanism for either screening or taking appropriate action for those

who violate the guidelines, the bench said in its order.

The top court said that one of the issues, which have been cropped up in the facts of the present case, is regarding control and regulation of platforms on which web-series are released. During the hearing, the bench perused the recently notified rules, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, placed before it by Mehta.

Advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Purohit said that the government has notified the rules on 25 February. These rules lack teeth, these are mere guidelines. They don't have any provision for prosecution or punishment. It is mostly a guideline thing, the bench told

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for Centre.

India rejects 'partly-free' status in Freedom report

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

The government on Friday rejected a Freedom House report downgrading India's status to a "partly free" country as "misleading, incorrect and misplaced", and said it treats all citizens equally without discrimination and asserted that discussion, debate and dissent are part of Indian democracy.

"The Freedom House report, titled *Democracy Under Siege*, in which it has been claimed that India's status as a free country has declined to 'partly free' is misleading, incorrect and misplaced, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

The report by the US-based organisation had claimed that the decline in India's status was

"due to a multiyear pattern in which the Hindu nationalist government and its allies have presided over rising violence and discriminatory policies affecting the Muslim population and pursued a crackdown on expressions of dissent by the media, academics, civil society groups, and protesters."

The Ministry said, "GoI treats all its citizens with equality." With specific reference to the North East Delhi riots in January 2019, the law enforcement machinery acted swiftly in an impartial and fair manner. Proportionate and appropriate actions were taken to control the situation."

Nearly 14L inoculated in a day

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

have received anti-coronavirus vaccine dose, it stated.

On Thursday, day 48 of the nationwide Covid-19 vaccination drive, 13,88,170 people were inoculated. This was the highest number of vaccination recorded in a day so far, an official said.

The country's Covid-19 tally has climbed to 1,11,73,761 with 16,838 fresh cases reported in a day. Maharashtra continued to report the highest daily new cases at 8,998.

Delhi sees spike of 312 cases: Delhi today recorded 312 fresh coronavirus infections — the highest single-day figure in nearly one-and-a-half months — and three more fatalities which pushed its Covid death toll to 10,918, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (SEE P2)



the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. (SEE P2)

China's defence spending hiked to \$209 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, 5 MARCH

China on Friday hiked its defence budget for the first time to more than \$200 billion, over three times higher than that of India, maintaining a single-digit growth for the sixth consecutive year with a 6.8 per cent increase in 2021.

The hike in defence spending was announced by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on the opening day of China's Parliament, amidst a military standoff with India in eastern Ladakh and growing political and military tensions with the United States.

This year's planned defence spending will be about 1.35 trillion yuan (about \$209 billion), state-run Xinhua news agency reported, adding that

AMBITION BUDGET

► The hike in defence spending was announced by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on the opening day of China's Parliament, amidst a military standoff with India in eastern Ladakh and growing political and military tensions with the USA.

► The annual defence budget maintains a single-digit growth for a sixth consecutive year. Friday's increase is over three times higher than India's defence budget of about \$65.7 billion.

the annual defence budget maintains a single-digit growth for a sixth consecutive year. China's defence budget is about one quarter of the US figure, which is \$740.5 billion for the 2021 fiscal year, it said.

Friday's increase is over three times higher than India's defence budget of about \$65.7 billion (including pensions). Last year, China allocated 1,268 trillion yuan (about

\$196.44 billion), according to the state-run *Global Times*.

In his 35-page work report outlining China's achievements in 2020 and tasks for 2021, premier Li described last year as a major success for the armed forces without mentioning China moving over 60,000 well-armed troops who were mobilised for annual exercises, to contentious areas like Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, prompting

Xi Jinping who heads the all-powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the PLA.

The increase of the defence budget, amid massive expansion of the military hardware, including building of more aircraft carriers in addition to the two newly-built ones, also comes amidst the increasing tensions between China and the US over Taiwan and the South China Sea (SCS) besides growing discord between the two over Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong.

China is the second biggest spender of defence after the United States.

Defending the increase in defence budget, Zhang Yesui, spokesperson for the NPC, told the media here that China's efforts to strengthen the national defence do not target or threaten any country.

'Expect China to work with us to complete disengagement'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

India today said it expected China to work with New Delhi through diplomatic and military level talks to complete at the earliest the disengagement process in Eastern Ladakh.

"It is our expectation that the Chinese side will work with us, both through the WMCC (Working Mechanism for Coordination and Consultation) and Senior Commanders' meetings, to ensure that disengagement in the remaining areas is completed at the earliest," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said in a media briefing.

He said the disengagement would allow the two countries to consider de-

escalation of forces in Eastern Ladakh as that alone would lead to the restoration of peace and tranquility and provide conditions for progress in the bilateral ties.

The spokesperson pointed out that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, during his telephonic conversation with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi last week, had emphasised that with the completion of disengagement in the Pangong Lake area, the two sides should now move quickly to resolve the remaining issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh.

He said senior commanders in their last meeting, on 20 February, had noted the disengagement in Pangong Lake provided a good basis for resolution of other remaining issues along the LAC.

Bombs-laden SUV owner found dead

MUMBAI, 5 MARCH

Hiren Mansukh, owner of the vehicle with explosives which had been found parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence last week, was found dead in a creek in neighboring Thane today, police said.

In another twist in the case, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said the deceased was not the real owner of the vehicle. Mansukh, around 45 years old, went missing on Thursday night, as per his family. The body was found on the banks of the creek along the Mumbra Reti Bunder road. Mansukh's Scorpio with gelatin sticks inside was found near Ambani's multi-storey house in South Mumbai, on 25 February. Police had said it had been stolen from Airoli-Mulund Bridge on 18 Feb. PTI





The fight will be on principles

GAUTAM DEB, TOURISM MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

AFTER BEING SELECTED AS THE POLL CANDIDATE FOR THE DABGRAM-FULBARI CONSTITUENCY

Capital sees fresh spike of 312 Covid-19 cases

It is Delhi's highest single-day coronavirus figure in about 1.5 months; 3 fatalities logged

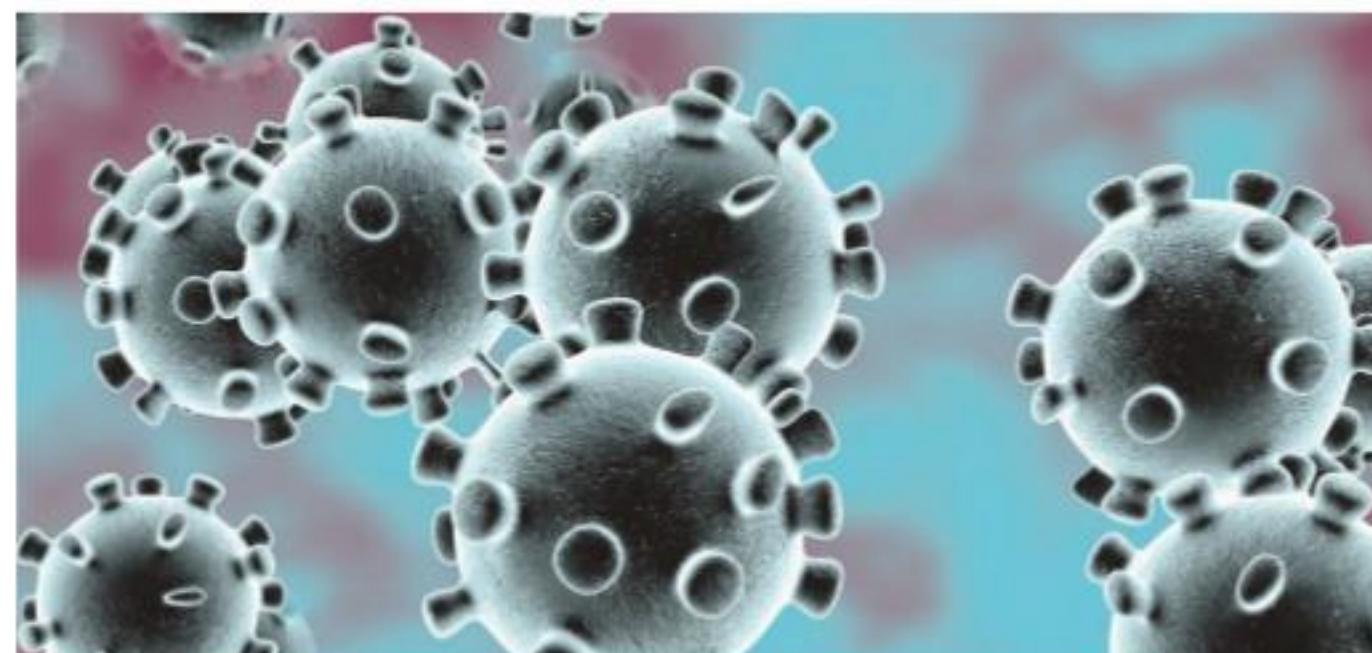
SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

Delhi today recorded 312 fresh coronavirus infections (Covid-19) ~ the highest single-day figure in nearly one-and-a-half months ~ and three more fatalities which pushed its Covid death toll to 10,918, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The national capital has continued to witness an uptick in new coronavirus cases over the last several days. It had yesterday recorded 261 fresh Covid cases and one coronavirus-linked fatality. Today's tally of fresh cases thus marked a significant jump.

A total of 585 cases were reported in the city on 1 Jan-



uary and 384 on 4 January. The daily count had dropped to 306 on 11 January and risen again to 386 on 12 January, according to official figures.

The infection numbers had started to come down in

Delhi in February. During 1-23 February, the count of daily Covid cases had been recorded below 200. The city had reported 94 Covid cases on 16 February, which was the lowest in more than nine months.

However, Delhi has been logging more than 200 fresh Covid cases for the past four consecutive days. It had reported 240 cases and 3 deaths on 3 March. On 26 February, it had reported 256 cases — the

highest single-day count in that month.

On 2 March, the count of fresh coronavirus infection-linked fatality in Delhi was nil. The city had then logged 217 new cases

According to today's health bulletin, Delhi's Covid case-load mounted to 6,40,494 now. The number of active cases of the disease in the city increased to 1,779 from yesterday's 1,701, while the positivity rate rose to 0.53 from 0.39 per cent the previous day, the health bulletin stated.

Over the last 24 hours, 312 Covid patients recovered in the national capital, with its cumulative tally of such recoveries going up to 6,27,797, the bulletin said. The recovery rate stood at 98.01 per cent.

Continue with existing Covid-19 strategy in Delhi: LG to authorities

PTI

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal has directed authorities to continue with the existing strategy against COVID-19, including cluster-based surveillance, testing and genome sequencing owing to the rise in the number of cases in the country, an official said on Friday.

Baijal, who chaired a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority, told officials that there is no need to lower the guard against the virus as the COVID-19 situation is under control with a "marginal increase", the official said.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Health Minister Satyendar Jain, Chief Secretary Vijay Dev, Niti Aayog member VK Paul among others.

"In view of the yet rising national trends in terms of new



infections, it was decided to continue with the existing strategy of cluster based surveillance, testing and genome sequencing," an official said.

Earlier this week, the Union Health Ministry had said Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have shown a surge in new COVID-19 cases.

Baijal, who is also the DDMA's chairperson, reiterated the need to enhance vaccine coverage by specifically including digitally deficient and poorer sections, official added.

Delhi recorded 261 new coronavirus cases and one more fatality on Thursday which pushed the death toll in the city to 10,915.

This was also the highest number of daily cases reported in the city, at least since February beginning.

On February 26, a total of 256 cases were recorded, the highest daily count in the previous month.

Taxi driver associations hold protest in city against rising fuel prices

PTI

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

Taxi driver associations held a protest against soaring fuel prices at the Barakhamba Road area of the national capital on Friday.

Kamaljit Gill, Sarvodaya Drivers Association president, said taxi drivers tied black ribbons on their faces and held a peaceful protest from 10 am to 11 am.

"The permission was for 80 people. However, around 200 reached Barakhamba Road, parked their vehicles and joined the protest peacefully without saying anything. We will hold another protest across the nation on March 22 and 23," he said.

Other than Sarvodaya Drivers Association, Expert Driver Solution, Rajdhani Parivahan and other similar outfits participated in the protest,

Gill said. Carrying placards, the protesters demanded that app-based taxis should be brought under city taxi permit as per a 2017 order of the Supreme Court.

"App-based taxi drivers charge Rs 6 per kilometre. They give 25 per cent to the company as commission, and as the prices of petrol are increasing day by day, it is becoming difficult for them," Gill said.

Mayor meets kin of sanitation worker who died of health complications

PTI

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash on Friday met the family members of a 54-year-old sanitation worker who had died from health complications on February 22.

The son of Ramesh Kumar, employed with the area's civic body, had claimed that his father had died days after he was administered the anti-coronavirus vaccine.

"I met the family of Ramesh, who had died after suffering health complications, while on



report is awaited, the cause of the death is yet to be ascertained," he said.

The mayor said the post-mortem was done at Safdarjung Hospital.

Kumar was rushed to Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital on February 22 morning and died there in the afternoon, his son had earlier said.

Dheeraj had said his father was employed in the Keshavpura Ram Zone of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation.

"My father had received his first shot of Covishield vaccine on February 17. That day,

about offering compensation and a job to the next of kin.

Dheeraj had said he has an elder sister and a younger brother and his father was the "sole breadwinner" of the family.

Nearly 28,000 beneficiaries, including 14,328 senior citizens, received shots of the COVID-19 vaccine in the national capital on Thursday, according to data shared by officials. Six minor cases of AEFI (adverse events following immunisation) were reported on Thursday, as per the data.

Classified

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of Jan Sewak, Kranti Party. The office of the party is located at 772, Bhim Nagar, New Railway Road, Gurugram-122001. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 – Name/address of the office-bearers of the party are as follows:

President/Chairman : Ankit Alagh

General Secretary/Secretary : Vikrant

Treasurer : Yogesh Kataria

If any has any objection to the registration of Jan Sewak Kranti Party they may send their objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party), Election Commission of India, Nirman Bhawan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

SECRETARY (POLITICAL PARTY)

REGISTRATION OF POLITICAL PARTY

*I will do whatever the local people want me to do.*

FORMER TMC MLA ARABUL ISLAM

ABOUT HIS FUTURE PLANS AFTER HE WAS DROPPED FROM TMC CANDIDATES' LIST

Cong states not rejecting Covaxin: Punjab CM

Hitting back at BJP, Capt Amarinder dismisses its charge as 'false, politically-motivated propaganda'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MOHALI/CHANDIGARH, 5 MARCH

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday trashed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s allegation of Congress-ruled states rejecting Covaxin as a "complete lie" and part of the ruling party's "false and politically motivated propaganda".

Responding to a question during an informal interaction with reporters after taking the first shot of the Covid vaccine at Civil Hospital Mohali, the CM categorically denied the charge on Covaxin and slammed BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra's claim that Punjab, along with other Opposition-ruled states, had expressed doubts and refused to accept the vaccination. It was not at all true, he added.

An official of the Punjab health ministry later disclosed that the state had received 1.34 lakh Covaxin doses, of which 2500 had already been administered.

The CM, in response to another question on slow pace of vaccination in the state, said



the media was contributing to scaring the people. He urged the media to spread awareness about the importance and efficacy of the vaccines.

Admitting that cases of Covid in Punjab were on the rise, having crossed the per day figure of 1000 after more than a month, Capt Amarinder said it was a matter of concern. The Punjab government was keeping a close watch on the situation, he said, blaming the casual and carefree attitude of Punjabis for the resurgence in cases. He appealed to the people to strictly adhere to all Covid safety norms, including wearing of masks and social distancing, and not let their guard down, as the Coronavirus had not gone yet.

Meanwhile, underlining the need to continue Covid appropriate behaviour in the Punjab Assembly, the CM made it clear that safety restrictions and norms in the state shall continue, while ensuring minimum, if any, loss of livelihood to the citizens of the state. Punjab was thought to be potentially a high-risk state, given its international airports and a large diaspora, but despite being over 2.5 per cent of India's population, the cases reported in Punjab have been relatively much less (1.6 per cent) of the country's 1.1 Crore cases, said the CM.

He said 5887 persons have unfortunately lost their lives in Punjab, with a current positivity rate of 2.3 per cent percent, "which is otherwise low but should give us no cause for complacency." "It appears that India is experiencing a second wave so we have to be prepared for it," he warned.

Punjab Assembly passes resolution seeking repeal of Centre's farm laws

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 5 MARCH

Even as the Punjab Assembly is seeking unconditional withdrawal of the Narendra Modi government's controversial farm laws, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday said farmers and farm workers of the state are not anti-national.

Calling for an immediate end to attempts to defame the dynamic Punjabi farmers by branding them miscreants or ultras, the CM said "they are patriotic and nationalistic – while one son

Farmers and Farm workers are not anti-nationals, asserts Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh, demanding unconditional withdrawal of the Modi government's controversial agri laws

ploughs the fields in the village, the other brother is busy guarding the country's borders". "These (Punjabis) are the same people who gave their lives for the country, along with soldiers from other states too, in Galwan last year protecting the sovereignty of our country," said the CM, urging the Centre to ensure that this defamation campaign against farmers is immediate-

ly ended. Pointing out that despite 11 rounds of discussions, the Government of India was unmoved and unconcerned about the protests of the farmers across the country, and had not taken any positive step to meet their demands, the CM said that "Instead, the statements and allegations of some of the leaders who are not familiar with the

ground realities have aggravated the situation and have further anguished the farmers." Drawing the attention of the House to some of the most reprehensible statements of the BJP leaders, at the Centre and in Haryana, the CM said it was shameful that they were heading the governments at the national level and in the neighbouring states.

Their statements raised the worries and apprehensions not only of the farmers and farm workers but also of our government as these do not augur well for our future, said the

Chief Minister, strongly condemning the use of terms "anti-national and Khalistani" against the farmers.

Terming the Haryana CM's conduct "most regrettable", Amarinder lashed out at Manohar Lal Khattar's claim on his government (Haryana) having "inputs" on presence of Khalistani separatists in the ongoing farmers' agitation. "If the Haryana CM has any firm information on separatist, why does he not give such information to his party's government in Delhi, instead of defaming the Punjabi farmers," asked Amarinder.

Haryana govt tackled Covid pandemic efficiently: Guv

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 5 MARCH

Haryana Governor, Satyadeo Narain Arya, on Friday lauded the efforts of the state government for efficiently tackling the Covid-19 pandemic. Delivering his address on the first day of Budget Session of Haryana Legislative Assembly which commenced today, Arya said because of the decisive strategy adopted by the Haryana govt

overnment, the positivity rate of the Covid-19 samples has been drastically reduced to 4.8 per cent.

He said the state's mortality rate is 1.1 per cent whereas recovery rate is 98.4 per cent. "So as to ameliorate the distress caused during the Covid-19 pandemic, the state government distributed essential commodities free of cost in the public distribution system basket from April to June, 2020," the Govt

eror said. He said additional wheat and pulses distributed under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) was distributed free of cost to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AYY), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Other Priority Household (OPH) beneficiaries.

The Governor said Haryana is the first state to implement a distress ration token scheme targeted to help those persons who were economically dis-

tressed because of the Covid-19 pandemic and were not covered under the umbrella of any of the schemes of the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Besides this, the state government also provided Rs 131.85 Crore to the departments of medical education and research, urban local bodies, home and health and family welfare from the state disaster response fund for containment of Covid-19 pandemic.

HP Assembly impasse ends as it revokes Cong MLAs' suspension

ARCHANA PHULL
SHIMLA, 5 MARCH

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly's six-day-long stalemate ended on Friday with the House revoking the suspension of five Congress MLAs, including Leader of the Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri, following talks with the Opposition members in the Speaker's chamber.

The development comes just a day before Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur is to present the budget proposals for 2021-22 in the Assembly.

Parliamentary Affairs minister Suresh Bhardwaj moved a resolution in the Assembly to revoke the suspension of MLAs, holding that the presence of both the ruling and opposition members is important in the House for debate on issues in public interest. "We have had discussions with the Congress members Asha Kumari, Thakur Ram Lal, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Dhan Ram Shandil and some other members. Jal Shakti minister Mahinder Singh Thakur was also present. Everybody wants that the House should run

peacefully. Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur also wanted it and the Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar also played a role in it," he said.

Senior member of the Congress, Asha Kumari thanked the Parliamentary Affairs minister and Jal Shakti minister Mahinder Singh Thakur for sorting it out to keep the tradition of the House to have the ruling and opposition both for discussion alive.

Another senior Congress member, Thakur Ram Lal said it was a good step in the interest of dignity of the House. He

said the incident of 26 February should not be referred again in the House so that a peaceful environment can be maintained.

Congress member Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the dialogue cannot be held on conditions. He thanked the Speaker for efforts to end the impasse by calling up the Congress members in the morning for dialogue. "We did not want to write history that CM presented a budget in the House and the opposition takes to roads to speak on budget," he said.

Woman employee on contract entitled to maternity leave even if baby is through surrogacy: HP HC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 5 MARCH

The Himachal Pradesh High Court has ruled that a woman employee on contract basis is entitled to avail maternity leave even in case where she gets the child through the surrogacy arrangement.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Justice Sandeep Sharma passed these orders yesterday on a petition filed by a woman language teacher from Kullu district, who is working on contract basis and who was blessed with a baby on 10 September through surrogacy.

She applied for maternity leave, but no action was taken on her application.

While hearing the petition, the Court observed that it is no longer res integra that a female

contractual employee/adhoc employee is entitled to maternity leave at par with female regular employee on the grounds of fair play and social justice and there cannot be any discrimination.

The Court further observed that once the respondents admit that the minor child is that of petitioner, then she is entitled to leave akin to the persons, who are granted leave in terms of the leave rules. The Court said that even in the case of adoption the adoptive mother does not give birth to the child, yet the necessity of bonding of the mother with the adopted child has been recognized by the Central government.

The Court also observed that Article 42 of the Constitution of India provides that the State shall make provision for securing just and humane con-

ditions of work and for maternity relief and it was long felt that the working women were unable to depute their time towards their children due to exigencies of service. Hence, the concept of grant of child care leave was introduced to ensure the welfare of the child so as to enable the mother to avail child care leave whenever she feels that the child needs the care.

The bench also observed that not only the health issues of the mother and the child are considered while providing for maternity leave, but the leave is provided for creating a bond of affection between the two. To distinguish between a mother who begets a child through surrogacy and a natural mother, who gives birth to a child, would result in insulting womanhood and the intention of a woman to bring up a child

begotten through surrogacy. "Motherhood never ends on the birth of the child and a commissioning mother cannot be refused paid maternity leave. A woman cannot be discriminated against, as far as maternity benefits are concerned, only on the ground that she has obtained the baby through surrogacy. A newly born child cannot be left at the mercy of others as it needs rearing and that is the most crucial period during which the child requires care and attention of his mother. The tremendous amount of learning takes place in the first year of the baby's life and a bond of affection has also to be developed," the bench said.

Disposing of the petition, the Court directed the State to sanction maternity leave to the petitioner in terms of Rule 43(1) of the CCS(Leave) Rules, 1972.

Covid-hit HP expects negative growth of 6.2 pc in 2020-21

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 5 MARCH

The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the Himachal Pradesh economy hard, with the state expecting a negative growth of 6.2 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21. The growth rate has declined from 8.9 per cent in 2019-20 to minus 6.2 per cent in the current year.

The per capita income of Himachal Pradesh is estimated to drop by 3.7 per cent from Rs 1,90,407 in 2019-20 to Rs 1,83,286 for the fiscal year 2020-21, as per the Economic Survey 2020-21, which was tabled in the state Assembly by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, who also holds the finance portfolio.

"The Himachal economy suffered serious effects on approximately all of its sectors, ranging from acute to minor. The economy received two major shocks on both demand and supply. The state witnessed shocks in transport, mining and quarrying, forestry and in logging and construction. Tourism plays an important role in revenue generation and livelihood of people of the state. This was hit the worst due to Covid-19 pandemic. The government played a proactive role and took many steps to mitigate the Covid-19 effect," the chief minister said.

According to the Economic Survey, the transport sector shrunk by registering a negative growth of 28 per cent, which includes road, rail, water and air transport. This is in sharp contrast to 5.6 per cent growth in the previous financial year, the survey pointed out.

The trends in the industrial sector during the Covid pandemic too indicated a



grim scenario with a contraction of 14.2 per cent in the manufacturing sector.

The mining and quarrying sector registered a negative growth of 18.4 per cent as against a growth of 4.3 per cent in 2019-20.

The setback on account of Covid was however relatively less in the agriculture and allied sectors. The agriculture and livestock sector, which registered a positive growth of 18.3 per cent in 2019-20 at constant 2011-12 prices, witnessed contraction of 3.1 per cent in 2020-21 due to decrease of 43 per cent in horticulture production.

The agriculture sector which supports 60 per cent of the population in Gross Value Added (GVA) of the state at current prices has declined from 15.89 per cent in 2015-16 to 13.62 per cent in 2020-21.

In the current financial year, during the months of April-December, 2020, Consumer Price Index-combined (CPI-C) inflation was 5.3 per cent as compared to 2.5 per cent for the same period in 2019-20.

We are taking all necessary COVID 19 Precautionary Measures.

SHIRT TROUSER & JEANS SALE

Wedding Collection

ARROW ColorPlus PARK AVENUE LOUIS PHILIPPE

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 • WAZIRPUR A-5, Near Richi Rich Banquet (Opp. Shalimar Bagh)
 • JANAKPURI B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
 • NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
 • LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing



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26th February - 14th March 2021

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STATISTICS

Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

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Photo: 351011300062021



I never made any announcement other than saying that the people of Kerala want the leadership of Sreedharan

CLARIFYING THAT HE HAD NOT MADE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT ON BJP'S CM CANDIDATE FOR KERALA ASSEMBLY POLLS

i
ndia

THUMBNAILS



Senior citizens stand in a queue on a hot day, as they wait for their turn to receive the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, during the second phase of a countrywide inoculation drive, in Patna. AGENCIES

Rape survivor attacked: A 33-year-old rape survivor was set afire in Rajasthan's Hanumangarh district. The woman has been admitted to a hospital in Bikaner. PTI

Road accident: Four persons were killed and seven others injured after their van was hit by an unidentified vehicle near Gyanendrapura village in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district. PTI

Life term for rape: A POCSO court in Rajasthan's Kota has sentenced a man to life imprisonment for raping a 15-year-old girl. PTI

'Revelations' against Kerala CM kick up storm

Smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh made allegations against Vijayan: Customs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOCHI, 5 MARCH



The Customs, probing the Kerala gold and dollar smuggling case on Friday informed the Kerala High Court that Swapna Suresh, the prime accused in the case, has stated that smuggling of the US currency was done at the instance of Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Assembly Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan with the help of the UAE Consul General.

Kicking up a political storm in the election-bound state, Sumit Kumar, Commissioner of Customs (preventive), Kochi, in an affidavit filed before the Kerala High Court has stated that Swapna Suresh has made "shocking revelations" against chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on his close connections with the previous Consul General of UAE Thiruvananthapuram.

Swapna had further mentioned about the improper and illegal activities of three state Cabinet ministers and the Speaker, he claimed.

Swapna's close connection with the CM, his former Principal Secretary and a personal staff was also disclosed in her statement. She was aware of all the transactions and was a wit-

ness to it as she was well versed in the Arabic language and had acted as a translator in these crucial deals, the affidavit said.

The statement was filed by the Customs Commissioner in response to a petition filed by the Director-General of Prisons and Correctional Services, Kerala, against certain remarks in the order of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (Economic Offences) Court providing security to Swapna, now housed at the Women's Prison and Correctional Home, Attukalangara, Thiruvananthapuram.

The Customs Commissioner in the statement further said that the role of M. Sivasankar, former principal secretary to chief minister, in acting as a link between high-profile politicians of Kerala and UAE Consulate officials and in coordinating the illegal financial dealing under the cover of various activities and projects of the government was also revealed by

ED's case against Kerala entity a violation of federal principle: CPI-M

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

The Enforcement Directorate's action of registering a case against the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) is a blatant misuse of the agency as a political tool by the BJP government at the Centre, the CPI-M said today.

In a statement, the CPI (M) polbithro said finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, while addressing a BJP election meeting in Kerala had made unfounded allegations against the KIIFB and the LDF government. Following this, the ED had taken this "totally unwarranted action."

The ED had registered a case of violation of FEMA norms and summoned the CEO and the Deputy Managing Director of KIIFB for

her. The Customs also said that

questioning.

"This is a serious assault on a state government-sponsored entity. As a corporate entity, the KIIFB has the right to raise commercial borrowings. It had issued masala bonds abroad as per Reserve Bank of India's approval," the party said.

The ED action, coming after the announcement of elections, was all the more reprehensible as it was a blatant effort to try to discredit the LDF government and the extensive development work undertaken under the auspices of the KIIFB. It was a serious violation of the federal principle, the party said.

The CPI (M) has demanded that the Finance Minister and the ED immediately rescind the case against KIIFB and stop harassment of its senior officers.

the agency is prepared to pro-

duce in a sealed cover before the court the copies of the statement of Swapna recorded under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure and under section 108 of the Customs Act.

Responding to the development, Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala has said that the Customs' affidavit revealing the involvement of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the dollar smuggling case is shocking.

Speaking at a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday, Chennithala said that the chief minister has no right to continue in office as sedition charges were levelled against him in the affidavit submitted in the High Court. He asked why the investigative agency was dragging its feet even after it received a crucial statement against the chief minister and other ministers two months ago.

"This shows there was a clear understanding between the BJP and the CPI-M," Chennithala claimed.

Former CM Oommen Chandy said that the allegation against chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the dollar smuggling case was serious and he sought further actions in the case, including registering an FIR.

Tamil Nadu polls: AIADMK releases first list of candidates

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHENNAI, 5 MARCH



Well ahead of opponents, the ruling AIADMK on Friday announced the first list of its candidates for the Assembly elections slated for 6 April.

The list has been

announced just a day after the AIADMK aspirants were interviewed. It comprises names including chief minister Edappadi Palaniswami and deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam who are also the joint coordinator and coordinator of the AIADMK respectively and ministers D Jayakumar and CV Shanmugam.

Panneerselvam will contest from Bodinayakanur, Palaniswami from Edappadi, his home town, Jayakumar from Royapuram, in Chennai and Shanmugam from Villupuram, a party release said.

Meanwhile, senior BJP members today held a meeting regarding the seat sharing talks with the AIADMK.

The AIADMK could only make seat sharing with the PMK by allotting 23 seats to them. Meanwhile, senior BJP members today held a meeting regarding the seat sharing talks with the AIADMK.

There were speculations about a possible merger of TTV Dinakaran's AMMK with AIADMK after Sasikala decided to quit politics. It is learned that home minister Amit Shah held talks with senior AIADMK leaders in Chennai regarding this when he visited city a few days back.

Meanwhile, sources said that the BJP had sought to contest around 25 to 30 seats in Tamil Nadu but was being offered around 20 by the AIADMK.

TENDER

H.P.P.W.D.TENDER
Notice Inviting Tender

Sealed item rate tender on PWD form Number 6 & 8 are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Jawali Division H.P.P.W.D. Jawali on behalf of the Governor of H.P. for the following work from the approved and eligible contractors C&D enlisted in H.P.P.W.D. so as to reach in this office in the waxed sealed cover on or before 06.04.2021 up to 11:00 (AM) and will be opened on the same day at 11:30 (AM.) in the presence of the intending contractors or their authorized representative who may like to be present. The application for purchase of tender will be received up to 4.00 P.M on dated 03.04.2021. The tender form can be obtained from this office 11.00 A.M to 4.30 P.M on dated 05.04.2021.

The amount of earnest money in the shape of NSC's / FDR / Time Deposit accounts / Deposit at call of any of post Office/Bank in HP duly pledged in the name of the Executive Engineer, Jawali Division H.P.P.W.D. Jawali should be deposited first with the application then the tender documents will be issued. Conditional tender and tender application without earnest money will be rejected. The offer of the tender shall be kept open for 120 days. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason.

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Cost Rs.	Earnest Money Rs.	Time Limit	Cost of Form Rs.
1	Construction of link road from Bhameli to Malira via Kut and Bholi Km. 0/0 to 3/500 including Bridge over Buhai Khad under SCSP(SH:- C/O Excavation and concreting in bed of abutments and pier of 53.41 mtr span (5 span x 10.37 mtr each) over Buhai Khad(Naad khad) at Rd. 0/257).	4,58,733/-	9200/-	Two months	350/-

Conditions:-
1. The contractor should be registered as a dealer under HPST Act 1968 (GST number) from the Excise and Taxation Department.
2. The Cess charge @ 1% (One percent) will be deducted from gross amount of work done by the contractor.
3. The contractors are required to produce copy of their PAN No. at time of application.
4. The contractor should produce a copy of enlistment/ renewal letter at time of application.
5. The Executive Engineer reserves the right to accept/cancel/tender without assigning any reason at any stage.
6. Telegraphically/ Fax tenders are not acceptable.
7. Special care should be taken to write the rates both in figures and in words, failing which tender likely to be rejected to be circumstances.
8. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of the tenders as specified, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Jawali Divn. HP PWD,
Jawali,
For on behalf of Governor of H.P.

6324/2020-2021 HIM SUCHNA AVAM JAN SAMPAK

HIMACHAL PRADESH
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed item rate tenders are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Hamirpur Division H.P.P.W.D., Hamirpur in form No. 6 & 8 on behalf of Governor of H.P. for the following works from the contractors of appropriate class enlisted with H.P.P.W.D. The tender shall be opened in the presence of the contractors / firms or their representatives who wish to be present.

TIME SCHEDULE OF TENDER:-

- 1. Date and time of receipt of application for tender form:- 24.03.2021 up to 4.00 P.M.
- 2. Date and time of issue of tender form :- 26.03.2021 up to 3.00 P.M.
- 3. Date and time of receipt of tenders:- 27.03.2021 up to 10.30 A.M.
- 4. Date and time of opening of tenders:- 27.03.2021 at 11.30 A.M.

The request for issue of tenders should be on the PRESCRIBED APPLICATION FORM which can be obtained from the office of undersigned and tenders will be issued to only those contractors who qualify the criteria after the scrutiny of application forms by the Committee constituted for this purpose.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated cost	EMD	Time Limit	Cost of tender	Eligible class of contractor
1.	Repair of link road to I.T.O office Sham Nagar & Distt. Hamirpur. (HP). (SH:- C/O interlocking Paver Pavement at RD. 0/0 to 0/0 to 0/075).	98143.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
2.	Missing C.O on Daruhi Burnwar road Km. 0/0 to 02/090. (SH:- C/O 900mm R.C.C. Hume Pipe culvert at RD. 01870 to 01870.	98984.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
3.	A/R & M/O various road in Kale Amb section under Lambaa Sub-Division. (SH:- Cutting of Bushes on Harsan Lugwan via Gudvi road Km. 0/0 to 2/0, Gahaj road Km. 0/0 to 01/156 and Mulana Cheorin road Km. 0/0 to 01/400).	99900.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
4.	Restoration of rain damages on link road to village Baral Km. 0/0 to 0/520. (SH:- C/O R/Wall at RD. 0/500 to 0/500).	90748.00	1900.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
5.	A/R & M/O link road to vill.Baloh Km 0/0 to 1/600. (SH:- Prov. & laying 80mm thick cement concrete interlocking paver block (NTC) make) at RD. 01/325 to 01/350).	89190.00	1800.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
6.	S/R to link road to Housing Board Colony at Hamirpur. (SH:- Prov. And laying 80mm thick interlocking concrete block pavement Qtr. No.-21 to Qtr. No.- 42-20,00 meters)	62814.00	1300.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
7.	Repair of Retaining wall to protect building road and house of Sh. Rajesh Kumar and Sh. Ravinder Kumar at Vikas Nagar in G.P. Daruhi km 0/0 to 2/0. (SH:- Construction of PCC Retaining wall at RD. 0/772 to 0/780).	90,533.00	1800.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
8.	Repair and maintenance of Type-II Qtr. No. 37 at Police Line Hamirpur. (SH:- Repair of door & windows, dis-tempering, bath room leakage repair and other minor repair work).	71,913.00	1,500.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
9.	Restoration of rain damages on Baru Tapre road Km. 0/0 to 8/705. (SH:- C/O V-Shape drain at RD. 0/910 to 0/806.00	8306.00	1,500.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
10.	S/R to Dr. Radha Krishnan Medical College and Hospital Hamirpur. (SH:- Prov. 12mm thick prelaminated board for covering passage in between OPD Block and Eye OPD Block)	70836.00	1,400.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
11.	S/R to Dr. Radha Krishnan Govt. Medical College @ Hamirpur. (SH:- Prov. 12mm thick prelaminated board for shutter and other glazing for newly created COVID Centre in Twenty Bedded Ayurvedic Hospital at Hamirpur)	89305.00	1,800.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
12.	Repair and maintenance of Type-IV Quarter of DSP Residence at Police line Hamirpur.	18513.00	400.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D
13.	A/R & M/O stock storage HPPWD Division Store Hamirpur. (SH:- Supplying M.S. Solar delineator) (Height 1000mm)	44160.00	900.00	One Month	350/-	Class - D

1. The earnest money in the shape of National Saving Certificate, Time deposit account in any of the post office in HP / FDR of any Bank duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, Hamirpur Division, HPPWD., Hamirpur must be accompanied with the application for receipt of tender form along with cost of form .Tender application received without earnest money will be rejected.

2. The contractors / firms should possess the following documents (photo copy to be attached with application for obtaining the tenders documents):-

(i) Latest enlistment / renewal orders with application for obtaining the tenders documents.

(ii) GST Number issued by the State Tax Department.

Shall contain scanned copies of EPF issued from competent authority.

3. The Executive Engineer, Hamirpur Division HPPWD., Hamirpur reserves the right to reject any tender without assigning any reason(s).

4. The Cess Charges @ 1% will be deducted from the gross amount of work done by the Contractor.

5. The work will be completed by the contractor with the stipulated period.

6. The contractor / firms are required to insert the rate of each item in wards as well as in figures failing which Executive Engineer reserves the right to accept/rejects any over all tender.

7. The tender shall be issued to only those contractor / firms who are eligible, suitable and competent.

8. The tender forms shall be issued to eligible contractors depending upon their past performance and work experience which shall be duly evaluated by the technical evaluation committee.

9. The Contractor/firm having necessary documents and past adequate experience shall be preferred.

10. The Contractor who have failed to start/Complete the work in hand with in reasonable time shall not be issued tender Forms.

Government is treating farmers as enemies but doesn't realise that these humble farmers also have the power to oust arrogant rulers



AT A KISAN MAHAPANCHAYAT IN ALIGARH SUPPORTING THE FARMERS PROTEST

SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT AKHILESH YADAV

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 06 MARCH 2021

05

Farmers protest enters 100th day

Marathon movement has sent out a message of unity: Farmers leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

As the farmer agitation against the Centre's three farm laws enters its hundredth day on Saturday, union leaders have asserted that their movement is far from over and they are "going strong".

The marathon movement has sent out a message of unity, made "farmers visible once again" and brought them back on the political landscape of the country, they said on Friday. For over three months, the three Delhi border points at Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur have transformed into townships occupied by thousands of farmers from different parts of the country, mainly Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.

Rakesh Tikait of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKV) said they are prepared to continue the protest as long as it

Farmers not anti-national, says Capt:

Even as he led the Punjab Assembly in seeking unconditional withdrawal of the farm laws, Punjab CM Captain Amarinder Singh on Friday said farmers and farm workers of the state are not anti-nationalists. Calling for an immediate end to attempts to defame the dynamic Punjabi farmers by branding them miscreants or ultras, the CM said "they are patriotic and nationalistic—while one son ploughs the fields in the village, the other brother is busy guarding the country's borders".

SNS
is required. "We are completely prepared. Unless and until the government listens to us and meets our demands, we will not move from here," Tikait, who is among the leaders at the forefront of the movement, said. Despite several rounds of talks between

the government and the farmer unions, the two sides have failed to reach an agreement, and the farmers have refused to budge until the three laws are repealed.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country. However, according to the farmer leaders, the movement, which will complete its 100th day on Saturday, has achieved much beyond the immediate scope of the protest. It has recognised the contribution of women in farming.

Yogendra Yadav of Swaraj India said, "It has united farmers like never before. Despite deep attempts at communal mobilisation in UP, Hindu and Muslim farmers are united. Gujjars and Meenas are united in Rajasthan."

Sharjeel moves HC, seeks quashing of FIR

MUMBAI, 5 MARCH

Activist Sharjeel Usmani has approached the Bombay High Court seeking to quash an FIR registered against him by the Pune police for allegedly promoting enmity among different groups in his speech made at the Elgar Parishad event held in January this year. In the petition filed earlier this week, Usmani termed the FIR as "frivolous and baseless", and said it has been registered "on the basis of certain select statements taken out of context".

The FIR was registered on 2 February, 2021 against Usmani (23), an alumnus of the Aligarh Muslim University, by the Swargate police station in Pune under Sec 153 (A) of the IPC (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth).

Usmani has sought for the FIR to be quashed and a direction to the police to not take any coercive action against him pending hearing of his petition.

With eye on China, Quad leaders to hold first meet



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

In the backdrop of China's aggressive posturing on maritime issues, the four 'Quad' nations—India, Japan, Australia and the US—will soon have the first-ever meeting of their top leaders to deepen their engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.

This confirmation came from Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison who said he has already discussed the matter with US President Joe Biden, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga. "This (meeting) will become a feature of our Indo-Pacific engagement," he said.

Morrison pointed that "we are looking forward to those discussions and follow-up face-to-face meetings as well".

The US had already pro-

posed to other 'Quad' countries the idea of holding an online meeting of the four leaders.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan had recently called the 'Quad' a "foundation upon which to build substantial American policy in the Indo-Pacific".

The four ministers had called for freedom of navigation and concurred to strongly oppose unilateral and forceful attempts to change the status quo in the context of the East and South China Sea.

place later this month itself in the virtual format.

New Delhi has invariably adopted a cautious stance on the 'Quad' framework since Beijing sees it as a grouping out to contain China's rise.

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Mamata's key aides get vital seats



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 5 MARCH

Trinamul supremo Mamata Banerjee today declared the list of candidates in 291 seats sparing three seats—Kurseong, Kalimpong and Darjeeling—to Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM).

In Kolkata, three ministers were given tickets to contest from important Kolkata seats and Jadavpur. Sovan-deb Chattopadhyay would contest from the Miss Banerjee's bastion, Bhawanipore, and minister Debasish Kumar would contest from Chatopadhyay's erstwhile Rashbehari seat.

In Baligunj, Kasba, sitting MLAs and state ministers Subrata Mukherjee and Javed Ahmed Khan were given tickets. Aroop Biswas, sitting MLA and state minister will contest from Tollygunge but in Jadavpur where in last election, former power minister Manish Gupta was defeated by the CPI-M's Sujan Chakraborty. Miss Banerjee has fielded minister Debabrata (Moloy) Majumdar.

Atin Ghosh will contest from Cossipore-Belghoria replacing Mala Saha, the sitting MLA.

Jorasanko sitting MLA Smita

Many dropped TMC MLAs sulk

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 5 MARCH

A large number of TMC MLAs and leaders are disgruntled after party supremo Mamata Banerjee announced poll candidates for 291 seats.

TMC supporters blocked roads in various areas against the leadership's decision of excluding many sitting MLAs and leaders from contesting poll. For instance, veteran sitting MLAs like Jagu Lahiri, Rabindranath Bhattacharya, Sonali Guha, Rafikur Rahman and many others were not considered this time, prompting them to express their resentment against leadership.

Arabul Islam, a TMC strongman and former MLA from Bhangar, has come down harshly on the party leadership after Dr Rezaul Karim had given ticket.

Arabul had won the Assembly polls in 2006 and was also a strong contender to contest from Bhangar. He

goan (North) and Bongoan (South) respectively. In Bagda, where TMC lost the last election to Congress, it has fielded Paritosh Kumar Saha.

But then old faces like Madan Mitra, Tapas Ray, Nirmal Ghosh, Jyoti Priya Mullick, Partha Bhownik, Rathin Ghosh, Bratya Basu and Chandrima Bhattacharya will contest from Kamarhati, Baranagar, Panjhati, Habra, Naihati, Madhyamgram, Dum Dum (South) and Dum Dum (North) respectively.

Manju Basu will contesting from Noapara, and in Arjun Singh's Bhatpara, Miss Banerjee has fielded Jitendra Shaw.

The major changes have taken place in Basirhat and

was defeated by the then CPI-M candidate Badal Zamadar in Bhangar in 2011 Assembly polls when TMC came to power. In 2016, TMC had fielded Rezzak Mollah, former CPI-M MLA and minister in the Left Front Cabinet, in Bhangar instead of Arabul. Mollah had joined TMC during 2014 quitting CPI-M. Arabul expressed his grouse on his Facebook wall. His followers blocked roads in different areas of Bhangar to protest party's decision.

Sonali Guha, TMC Satgachia MLA from South 24 Parganas and close lieutenant of Miss Banerjee since the inception of TMC in 1998, was visibly upset after being denied ticket. "I had never imagined such a 'reward' from Didi was on the cards for me today. She should have discussed with me before striking me off the list of candidates this time. It's very unfortunate and upsetting," Guha, former deputy speaker of the Assem-

bly, said.

Rabindranath Bhattacharya, Singur MLA, had played a significant role to catapult TMC to power in Bengal through anti-Nano car project movement, slammed his party leadership today. Becharam Manna, his arch-rival, has been fielded from Singur seat.

"People who are making

money through extortions and 'cut money' get priority to get party tickets to fight polls. These people are making the party stronger," Bhattacharya said while reacting to his party leadership's decision.

Another sitting MLA Rafikur Rahman from Amdanga constituency in North 24 Parganas was also upset with the party's decision. Local TMC workers and his followers blocked Santoshpur crossing on National Highway 34 demanding the leadership to field him again. Central forces rushed to the spot to bring the situation under control.

Dr Saptarshi Banerjee will contest from Basirhat (South) and Rafiqul Islam Mondal, who defected to TMC from CPI-M, was made the candidate.

In Howrah, TMC has responded to defections with new faces. Dr Rana Chatterjee will contest from Bali; Gautam Chowdhury from Howrah (North); Manoj Tiwari from Shibpur; Nandita Chowdhury from Howrah (South); Priya Paul from Sankrail; Bidesh Bose from Uluberia (East); Sukanta Paul from Amrta; Sitansu Ghosh from Jaggatballavpur; Kalyanendu Ghosh from Domjur, and the sitting MLAs in the rest of the seats remain unchanged.

Bongoan parliamentary constituencies. In Baduria, Kazi Abdur Rehman who switched to TMC from Congress was made the candidate. Mustaque Mortaza will contest from Amdanga. In Belpur, where Mukul Roy's son defected to BJP, TMC has selected Subodh Adhikary.

Another change was seen in Jagaddal where Somnath Shyam was made the candidate instead of Parash Dutta.

Kajal Sinha was fielded in Kharda replacing Amit Mitra. Both Rajarhat (New Town) and Rajarhat (Gopalpur) will see new faces like Tapas Chatterjee and Aditi Munshi respectively. Sujit Bose will contest from Bidhannagar.

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Bihar minister's brother inaugurates govt event, CM annoyed, Opp demands ouster

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PATNA, 5 MARCH

The ruling NDA faced severe embarrassment after a minister was accused of turning a government function into a "family event". The issue created noisy scenes in both Houses of the state legislature as a united Opposition demanded dismissal of the minister from the cabinet.

As per the report, the minister for animal husbandry and fisheries Mukesh Sahani was scheduled to attend a function and distribute ice-boxes, bikes and small vehicles among the fishermen at a function organised in Hajipur yesterday. The department concerned had publicised the event in the areas and put up banners and posters carrying photographs of the minister concerned.

However, the minister did not turn up at the function. Instead, he deputed his younger brother Santosh Sahani to inaugurate the function.

The minister's brother not only reached the venue in an official car but was also accorded the same treatment which a minister is entitled to.

Later, he inaugurated the function in the presence of the officials and also distributed ice boxes and vehicles among the fishermen in total violation of the norms.

The matter figured prominently in the Bihar House today as the angry Opposition members demanded dismissal of the minister from the Cabinet, charging him with treating the depart-

ment as his "family property".

"It's ridiculous that the government functions are being inaugurated by the minister's family members. This is maha jungle raj," shouted Congress MLA Prem Chandra Mishra. Even the ruling BJP members condemned the minister's action in the strongest possible words.

"This is a stigma on a democratic institution. Democracy runs with decorum; we strongly condemn it," commented BJP legislator Nitish Kumar.

Congress' Nitish Kumar expressed annoyance over the issue as the minister apologised for his conduct.

Sahani who happens to be the Vikash Selina Party (VIP) had himself lost the recent elections to the state Assembly. However, he was made a minister in the NDA government much before he was nominated to the Bihar Legislative Council.

Andhra observes bandh against steel plant privatisation move

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 5 MARCH

The state supported bandh in Andhra Pradesh against the privatisation of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited turned out to be a success, particularly at the epicentre Vizag where educational institutions, commercial establishments, banks and even theatres were shut down and huge protest rallies took the centre stage.

Meanwhile, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on his way to campaign for municipal elections at Adoni joined the protests at Kodumur in Kurnool and promised to raise the privatisation of the steel plant on the floor of the Parliament. "This is wrong. The Modi government is indulging in crony capitalism in the name of privatisation," said Owaisi extending his support to the protesters.

With the ruling YSRCP endorsing the bandh along



with TDP, Left parties and Congress' success was assured, particularly as the state run buses did not ply till 1 p.m.

However, in addition to Road Transport Corporation employees who struck work lorry owners even autorickshaw stopped plying extending support to the trade unions and employees unions who had called the bandh.

BJP and its ally Jana Sena stayed away from the bandh. Vizag saw a complete shut-

down and a massive human chain was organised at Madilapalem junction in the city to protest against the Centre's move. YSRCP's Rajya Sabha MP Vijaya Sai Reddy and local MP participated in the protest which saw banners of both Left parties and Left trade unions besides those of the ruling YSRCP.

However, minor clashes were reported from Krishna and Prakasam districts between TDP and YSRCP supporters over the privatisation of the steel plant. TDP workers alleged that YSRCP was hand in glove with the Centre in privatisation as the party wants South Korean steel manufacturing company POSCO to buy RINL though the VS Jagannath Mohan Reddy has dismissed the allegations.

However, tempers flared as allegations flew leading to the clashes between the supporters. Tempers are running high due to the upcoming municipal elections across the state.

Interim relief to Arnab till 16 Mar

MUMBAI, 5 MARCH

The Mumbai police on Friday told the Bombay High Court that its assurance of not taking any coercive action against journalist Arnab Goswami and other employees of ARG Outlier Media that runs Republic TV channels, in the TRP scam case, shall continue till 16 March.

Senior counsel Kapil Sibal, appearing for the Mumbai police, told a division bench of justices SS Shinde and Manish Pithale that the police's earlier statement of no coercive action against Goswami and other employees shall be extended till 16 March.

The court was hearing a petition filed by ARG Outlier Media, challenging the FIR and the charge sheet filed by the city police for alleged manipulation of TRP. The court accepted Sibal's statement and posted the matter for final hearing on March 16. ARG media and Goswami approached the HC last year filing a bunch of petitions seeking several reliefs in the TRP scam.

by order of this Tribunal for Registrar
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry.
Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Phone: 011-23748473
E-mail: drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 02nd February, 2021.
by order of this Tribunal for Registrar
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry.
Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Phone: 011-23748473
E-mail: drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 03rd January, 2021.
by order of this Tribunal for Registrar
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry.
Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Phone: 011-23748473
E-mail: drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 04th January, 2021.
by order of this Tribunal for Registrar
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry.
Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Phone: 011-23748473
E-mail: drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 05th January, 2021.
by order of this Tribunal for Registrar
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry.
Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi, Phone: 011-23748473
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Navalny sanctions

The Russo-American tension over the arrest of the dissident, Alexei Navalny, can scarcely be likened to the frost during the Cold War that dominated the 20th century narrative... till the Soviet Union disintegrated in August 1991. Yet it is profoundly significant that the Joe Biden administration on Tuesday announced its first cache of sanctions against the Kremlin. It would be no exaggeration to suggest that the tension between the two nuclear powers has deepened since Tuesday. The penalties, like those adopted by the European Union, target senior Russian law enforcement officials, as well as match sanctions the EU and the UK had imposed earlier on other Russians allied with President Vladimir Putin in response to the attempted murder of Navalny. There is little doubt that the sanctions will help set the tone for Biden's relationship with Putin. The present occupant of the White House has said he will treat the Russian President as more of an adversary than his predecessor, Donald Trump, did. The rouble recovered sharply after Bloomberg News reported the actions, reversing earlier losses as investors were encouraged by the sanctions' relatively narrow scope. "The Kremlin's use of chemical weapons to silence a political opponent and intimidate others demonstrates its flagrant disregard for international norms," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement. "We join the EU in condemning Alexei Navalny's poisoning as well as his arrest and imprisonment by the Russian government." The U.S. has demanded the release of Navalny, his allies and others wrongfully detained in Russia and an end to the persecution of his supporters, according to a senior administration official. Viktor Zolotov, the head of Russia's National Guard; Igor Krasnov, the country's prosecutor general; Alexander Kalashnikov, the Federal Penitentiary Service chief; and Alexander Bastrykin, who leads the country's Investigative Committee, are the targets of the EU's latest penalties, according to Peter Stano, foreign affairs spokesman for the EU.

It bears recall that Navalny returned to Russia in January after being treated in Germany for a nerve agent attack. He was detained shortly after landing at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport. Western governments and Navalny have accused the Kremlin of being behind the attempted assassination. Russia denies this and has said that Navalny's imprisonment is an internal matter. Last month, Biden called for Navalny's release, saying he was "targeted for exposing corruption and should be released immediately and without condition." It is pretty obvious that Russia paid no heed to the appeal, embedded in the imperatives of human rights. Since then, Navalny has been sentenced and he has begun serving a two-and-a-half-year term. Last week, he was moved to a notorious penal camp in the Vladimir region about 60 miles east of the Russian capital. The Kremlin is palpably reacting with far greater indignation than it is entitled to.

Heritage Corridor

The importance of Puri as a destination of pilgrimage has been profoundly enhanced since last weekend with the Odisha Assembly approving a resolution on the Rs 3,200-crore Jagannath Heritage Corridor project. And when Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik glorified Lord Jagannath as the "greatest identity of the state of Odisha and its people", he was fairly explicit during the video presentation that quite apart from underlining Puri's religious connotation, "all our traditions, beliefs and culture are centred around him and he is a symbol of Odia esteem and pride". Jagannath temple has had its quota of ugly controversies and discord within the religious class, as often as not resulting in temporary closure. All this ought now to lapse in the limbo of history not the least because of the immense value addition, symbolised by the heritage corridor project.

Hence the proposal to take a vow to complete the plan for what they call "Srimandir Parikrama". The other proposal is to give Odias and devotees an opportunity to contribute to the heritage project. "Every Odia, every Jagannath lover has a desire to participate in this project and contribute in their own way. I firmly believe that this plan is not only for the government or for the temple administration. It is the plan of 4.5 crore Odias". Thus did the Chief Minister seek to involve the people without handing over the task to the servitor class and those connected with the day-to-day running of the temple, not to forget the pandas or those who facilitate entry to the sanctum sanctorum, worship, and the distribution of bhog, with one's entitlement dependent on the amount that he/she is prepared to shell out. Yet another proposal, according to Mr Patnaik, is to be grateful to the people of the temple town who have sacrificed considerably for the Shrimandira Parikrama plan. It is fervently to be hoped that the Odisha government will abide by the three recommendations on the Heritage Corridor, specifically the security of Jagannath Mandir, the safety of devotees, and creation of a spiritual ambience. As often as not, the ambience has been vitiated by pandas who are ever so eager to make a fast buck.

It is an ambitious project that will boast multiple thrust areas ~ notably the building of the Sri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), redevelopment, Jagannath Cultural Centre, and improvement of the beach front. The project is important for the state and its people, and hopefully there will be no impediments set by the political class. It is imperative, therefore, for the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress to cooperate with the ruling Biju Janata Dal in putting this noble project in place. If another kerfuffle is to be avoided, as it must, the grand project, so close to the sea, must be in conformity with conditions of a heritage zone.

Wayward Ways

The bureaucracy definitely needs to introspect, because throughout his political career the PM had reposed immense trust in IAS officers, tasking them with the job of running their departments, with minimal supervision by ministers. Mr Modi's public dressing down of IAS officers could only have been prompted by a deep-rooted feeling of disillusionment



The PM's speech in Parliament on 10 February has sent shockwaves through the bureaucracy. In a longish speech, the PM had questioned the capability of IAS officers to do justice to their jobs, and for added effect, the PM had disdainfully referred to IAS officers as 'Babus.' Significantly, as far back as 2016, the IAS Association had felt aggrieved by the increasing use of the word 'Babu' for IAS officers and had passed a resolution denigrating this practice. Many interpretations have been given to the PM's speech. Since the aforesaid speech was in connection with the promotion of private enterprise, it would appear that Mr Modi was praising private entrepreneurship in contradistinction to State run businesses. However, the IAS community took the PM's remarks as an affront, a direct attack on their capabilities: in a newspaper article, a retired IAS officer advised Mr Modi not to judge the entire IAS cadre by the non-performance of few officers close to him. The bureaucracy definitely needs to introspect, because throughout his political career the PM had reposed immense trust in IAS officers, tasking them with the job of running their departments, with minimal supervision by ministers. Most of Mr Modi's advisors and key functionaries are IAS officers, serving or retired, yet the quantum change promised by Mr Modi is yet to be seen.

In the almost seven years that Mr Modi has been at the helm, the changes have been, at best, incremental, and in some cases negative also, despite the carte blanche given to the bureaucracy. Thus, Mr Modi's public dressing down of IAS officers could only have been prompted by a deep-rooted feeling of disillusionment. Indeed, good bureaucratic leadership is very important to further the Government's agenda. Conversely, corruption and incompetence at the top can put paid to the efforts of the entire department. The existence of bad eggs at the top levels of the Government is hard to comprehend because appointments to all posts above Joint Secretary level are made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), a committee chaired by the Prime Minister and having the Home Minister as a member. More sensitive appointments have to be okayed by the Central Vigilance Commission; in some cases, approval of a committee having the Leader of Opposition as a member is necessary. Proba-

bly, the lack of trust of the political leadership in the bureaucracy has led to a situation where top posts are manned solely by persons close to political leaders, who may not be best suited for the job at hand. Consequences of this flawed selection process are now manifest, doing immeasurable harm to the credibility of the Government and bureaucracy.

Providing clean and effective administration is not easy, given the widespread corruption that permeates the bureaucratic monolith. In a famous speech, Rajiv Gandhi had said that only 15 per cent of the Government's funds were used productively while the rest were eaten away. Things have not really changed since then; Transparency International ranked India at 86 out of 180 countries in terms of honesty, with a score of 40 out of 100. The Government has tried to leverage technology to rein in corruption by eliminating discretion, but with little success. Rather, technological solutions have promoted centralisation which has hamstrung bureaucratic initiative at the operational level. A rigid, centralised, 'one size fits all' approach, currently in favour, blunts the initiative of people at the operational level, leading to delays and worse.

A better approach to curb corruption could be to streamline the procedures to book delinquent officers, getting rid of the convoluted rigmarole that makes action against bureaucrats virtually impossible. This is particularly true of lower-level functionaries, who in addition to service rules are protected by their unions, which come out with all guns blazing to shield their members.

An even bigger problem is the failure of senior officers to make their juniors perform that has forced the Government to outsource governance functions or to shift responsibility for lower-level functions to senior officers. Most Government schemes fail because they are not implemented on the ground by lower-level functionaries who treat Government employment as a sinecure. Here also, the Government has tried to use technology, but with little success because employees who do not do Job A would not do Job B also.

Additionally, the untried and

untested Version 1 computer programmes operated by outsourced workers, often lead to incongruous results. The death of subsidised ration beneficiaries who could not purchase subsidised food grains because of Aadhaar mismatch highlights the ill effects of such badly implemented technological solutions. In many cases, technology has compounded operational problems because most Government departments have failed to formulate SOPs for the new technology enabled environment. Governments come and go but the public, which deals with grass-root level officials, hardly perceives any change in governance. The much-reviled Emergency was the last occasion when the bureaucracy performed its assigned role e.g., of running trains on time and of being on time in office, leading to the conclusion that one needs to wield the stick to make bureaucrats fall in line.

Lack of accountability of bureaucrats is of such a high order that no action is taken even after the most egregious failures. Non-performance of superordinates is quite often hidden by higher-ranking bureaucrats who gloss over failed schemes by preparing glowing reports for the Government. It is an open secret that even in notoriously corrupt departments, all Class I officers get perfect scores along with certificates of integrity in their Annual Performance Appraisal Reports. It seems that no one ever thought of having a realistic performance appraisal system, for example, by grading a Department's performance and distributing the Department's marks amongst its officers. At the political level, the staple is to blame previous Governments for the present Government's failures. Management practices at the top level in the Government of India are definitely archaic, a favourite one being laying down high numerical targets for various departments and/or initiating a competition between various units. Many a times, the consequences of setting unrealistic targets causes mayhem. For example, unreachable revenue collection targets lead to "tax terrorism" i.e., tax officials making a nuisance of themselves and behaving like the proverbial bull in the china shop. Of course, it would have been much better if revenue targets

were set by the Hindu philosophical belief that we are all bound in the cycle of life comprising births and deaths. We move from one life to another. Hence, death is a mere mishap in life. In this cycle of life, the soul is transcendental and indestructible. This philosophical thought is perfectly substantiated by Tagore in the song, *Jokhon Porbe Na More Payer Chinho Ei Bate* (When My Steps Will Fall on This Path No More). Tagore tells us that even if we fail to call up the person who has departed from this world it does not matter because his soul will always be here with us and life will continue as it always did. Tagore views death as his companion, his beloved. He has conquered the fear of death in the expectation of a happy and beautiful life after death. To him, death is the only way to a peaceful immortal life. There is a striking similarity between Rabindranath and Tennyson

had been fixed in consultation with revenue collectors, keeping in mind the revenue potential for the year. The same story of fixing unachievable targets is repeated in most Government departments, which leads to fudging of figures at the year end. Most bureaucrats are so obsessed with figures that they try to somehow achieve the numerical targets laid down by higher-ups with little attention to quality of their output.

A better bureaucratic leadership would have done a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of each unit reporting to them and would have advised all units in a way that the best possible result could be achieved for the organisation as a whole. Productivity in Government offices will increase dramatically if modern management practices replace the antediluvian procedures being followed presently.

The quality of governance has suffered inestimably because reporting has become more important for bureaucratic appraisals rather than actual performance. The District Collector who was supposed to tour his district for fifteen days in a month is mostly found in his office. Field-oriented positions like the Inspector in the Income-tax Department, have become desk jobs. Resultantly, almost all Government employees have become desk-bound file pushers, seldom bothering to work at the ground level.

The bureaucracy can perform better only after a thorough review and revamp of the public administrative system. All Governments have been found lacking on this score; the reports of the First and Second Administrative Reforms Commission (1966 and 2005) have been only partially implemented. Fearing job losses, optimisation and automation of work processes is perpetually on hold. Even routine measures like giving proper training to Government employees and formulating SOPs in light of recent technical advances and changed business practices are hardly attempted. Only a Hercules like Sardar Vallabhbabai Patel can clean the Augen stables of Indian bureaucracy, which epitomises Jerry Pournelle's Law of Bureaucracy: "In any bureaucracy, the people devoted to the benefit of the bureaucracy itself always get in control, and those dedicated to the goals the bureaucracy is supposed to accomplish have less and less influence, and sometimes are eliminated entirely."

The wait for Godot goes on.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN VOICES

Death in destination countries

A few days ago a news item carried by The Guardian, a UK daily, created a major stir in the national media of several Asian countries. The piece was an exposé of an ongoing tragedy involving deaths of migrant workers in Qatar.

It revealed that more than 6,500 migrant workers from South Asia have died since the country earned the right to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup. On average, every week, 12 migrant workers have died since December 2010 while working on various infrastructure projects including stadiums, an airport, roads, the public transport system, hotels and a new city. The report stated that 69 percent of deaths among Indian, Nepali and Bangladeshi workers were officially categorised as "natural". Other significant causes were road accidents (12 percent) workplace accidents (seven percent) and suicide (seven percent). Interestingly, the classification of natural death was usually made without an autopsy and thus failed "to provide legitimate medical explanation for the underlying cause of these deaths".

The Qatar government did not dispute the number of deaths. The figure includes white collar workers who have died naturally, and the government insists that "the mortality rate among these communities is within the expected range for the size and demographics of the population".

The Guardian report was revealing in many ways. Not only has it highlighted "the lack of transparency,

The Daily Star

rigour and detail in recording deaths in Qatar", it maintained that embassies in Doha and labour sending countries were "reluctant to share the data, possibly for political reasons". The reluctance of the labour sending countries in engaging with the issue is palpably demonstrated in the inconsistencies between figures furnished by various government agencies, largely due to the absence of a "standard format for recording causes of death".

In view of the massive infrastructure development that is taking place in preparation for the World Cup, The Guardian report has zeroed in on Qatar. While such a spotlight helps generate awareness about the ongoing tragedy in the country concerned, we must bear in mind that avoidable premature deaths of relatively young migrant workers is a pervasive phenomenon in all the Gulf states. The deaths in Qatar have given rise to some important insights.

Firstly, the unwillingness of both countries of destination and origin to share information and data on deceased workers is a major challenge. Further, lack of clarity and transparency impedes framing of appropriate policies and actions to address problems. It also works as a major barrier for the families of the deceased migrants to access justice and claim compensation.

Secondly, the propensity of receiving states in asserting that most workers die of "natural causes" is unacceptable. There is an urgent need for amending laws for ensuring "autopsies to require forensic investigations into all sudden or unexplained deaths".

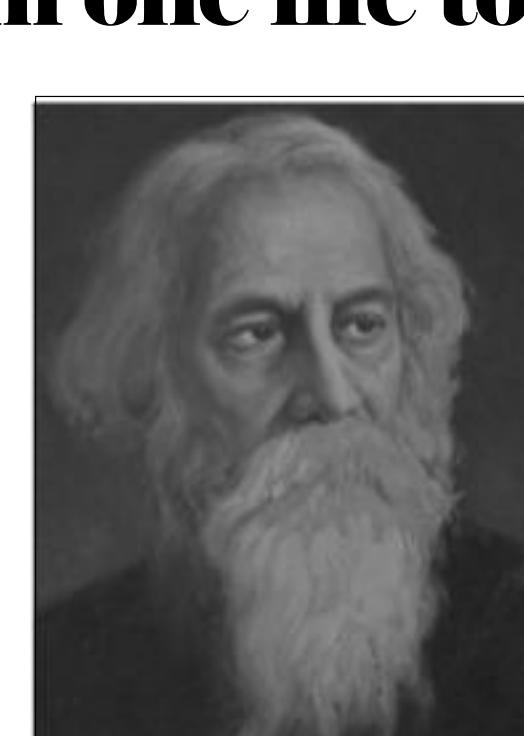
It is worthwhile to mention that as early as 2014, in a report, the Qatar government's own lawyers recommended commissioning an independent study into the deaths of migrant workers from cardiac arrest, and amend the law to "allow for autopsies...in all cases of unexpected or sudden death".

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Moving from one life to another

SIR, Compliments to *The Statesman* for having published Abhik Roy's brilliant article, "Tagore and Death" (2 March). It dwells on Tagore's attitude to death as reflected in his poems and songs. There is no denying that we are obsessed with Rabindranath Tagore. Like him, we too try to renew our realisation of death as well as life because he never viewed death separately from life. He described death as "the last fullness of life". He perceived life and death as connected; they complement each other in the cycle of life. Death unites the old and the new life, and through it flows an unbroken life stream. In this eternal undivided life stream man's birth and death are just two specific states of life. Life ends in death but the soul does not get abolished. It merges with the eternal life stream. Rabindranath witnessed a procession of deaths in his life. He did not break down



despite his immense grief over the deaths of his near and dear ones. Surprisingly enough, he discovered a great sense of fulfilment and joy in the bereavement. His thought of death revolved round the Upanishad. He was profoundly impres-

sed by the Hindu philosophical belief that we are all bound in the cycle of life comprising births and deaths. We move from one life to another. Hence, death is a mere mishap in life. In this cycle of life, the soul is transcendental and indestructible. This philosophical thought is perfectly substantiated by Tagore in the song, *Jokhon Porbe Na More Payer Chinho Ei Bate* (When My Steps Will Fall on This Path No More). Tagore tells us that even if we fail to call up the person who has departed from this world it does not matter because his soul will always be here with us and life will continue as it always did. Tagore views death as his companion, his beloved. He has conquered the fear of death in the expectation of a happy and beautiful life after death. To him, death is the only way to a peaceful immortal life. There is a striking similarity between Rabindranath and Tennyson

in respect of the attitude to death.

In the poem, "Crossing the Bar",

Tennyson compares death to the bar.

Once the bar is crossed, one can move into the wide ocean of

eternal life. So, there will be no

farewell, no lament during death.

After crossing death, one is sure to meet God in heavenly life.

I hope to see my Pilot face to face

When I have crossed the bar.

The same thought is beautifully captured in Tagore's poem, *Samukhe Santi Parabar*. Obviously, death elevated Tagore to the philosophical level.

Yours etc., Narayan Chandra Ghosh, Madanpur, 3 March.

YOGI'S HINDUTVA BUGLE

SIR, This is with reference to your report, "Ram Mandir, 'love jihad', Yogi talks it all in Malda". This is election time, and the BJP has done what it does best ~ indulge in communal politics. And who is better than the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, to sound the Hindutva bugle? Whether the issue is Ram mandir or 'love jihad', he knows how to play the Hindutva card. Standing on the soil of Bengal, he has vociferously criticised the state of affairs here and has proudly listed the so-called achievements made by his administration in Uttar Pradesh. He has stated that cattle-smuggling has been stopped and illegal cow slaughter-houses have been closed. At another remove, rape, atrocities on Dalits, murders, and the general deterioration of the law and order situation have been widely reported. The Yogi has not mentioned his party's agenda on socio-economic development, education, affordable healthcare, industrial investments and employment in the event of the BJP forming a government in West Bengal. He waxed eloquent on Hindutva and demeaned a particular community.

Yours etc. Anupam Neogi, Kolkata, 4 March.

ADITYA GOWDARA
SHIVAMURTHY

On 25 February, India and Pakistan issued a joint statement stressing the need to promote peace by abiding by the ceasefire agreements along their Line of Control and international borders. Although it might not be long before we witness a new ceasefire violation, it is important to assess what led to this unusual development; especially considering how India-Pakistan relations had reached rock bottom following the Pulwama attacks and abrogation of Article 370. Two key factors can substantiate this recent development: Pakistan's increasing isolation and India's strategic calculations.

Pakistan has been facing international isolation for the past few years now. First and foremost, Pakistan is losing its prominence in the Middle East. Historically, Pakistan has propagated close ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia; and has also used them for its Kashmir cause. But a new freeze was introduced in Saudi-Pakistan ties when Pakistan decided to stay neutral in Saudi's Yemen endeavours. This coincided with India's improving relationship with Saudi Arabia and UAE, as India's economic and demographic leverage in the region increased and India moved closer to the USA.

This persuaded Saudi Arabia and UAE to opt for a neutral stance on Kashmir, much to Pakistan's annoyance. Thus, when Pakistan pushed Kashmir as a distinct agenda for the November 2020 OIC (Organisation of Islamic Countries) summit, both UAE and Saudi rejected it. This caused a further crack in the relationship as the Pakistan's Foreign Minister criticised Saudi Arabia for not doing enough and the Saudis retaliated by recalling their \$3 billion loan. Besides, Pakistan is also losing its relevance in the region, as it refuses to recognize Israel - the new epicentre of Middle East politics - despite pressure from the Saudis and UAE.

In the West, Pakistan continues to be pressurised for harbouring and sponsoring terrorists. Consequently, even on 25 February, the Financial

Calculation behind thaw in India-Pakistan ties

Action Task Force (FATF) retained Pakistan on the grey list, indicating that Islamabad will face severe economic consequences and sanctions if it fails to curb terror funding.

Also, the US has developed closer ties with India. This is due to India's geopolitical and economic positioning against China, and Pakistan's failure to limit terror sponsorship. This trend further accelerated in the early years of Donald Trump's tenure, resulting in Pakistan's increased isolation from the US and growing reliance on China. Further in South Asia, Pakistan continues to be alienated. Pakistan's friends - Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Maldives, have grown more cautious of India's concerns vis-a-vis Pakistan. Consequently, Sri Lanka had to cancel Imran Khan's parliamentary address scheduled for his recent visit, and Maldives had to defend India's Kashmir policy at the OIC Summit while asking Pakistan to reconsider its campaign of defaming India.

Pakistan is also looked at unfavourably by Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Bhutan has shaped its foreign policy by calculating India's interests and security concerns. Thus, Bhutan has largely deterred developing a closer relationship with Pakistan. On the other hand, Bangladeshi PM Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party has prioritised closer ties with India. This has become easier as the pro-Islamic and pro-Pakistan Bangladesh National Party continues to be in shackles, with their chairperson Khaleda Zia behind bars. Finally, as Afghanistan continues to be ravaged in the conflict, its government continues to blame Pakistan for promoting terrorism and the Taliban.

With these diplomatic setbacks, Pakistan has been seeking allies in the camp of revisionist powers - Turkey, Iran, Russia, and China. Yet these relations cannot guide Pakistan out of isolation. Turkey and Iran have continued to assert themselves as leaders of the Islamic world and have consistently questioned the role of Saudi Arabia in this process. Thus, embracing a close relationship with them will further upset the Saudis and UAE. Further unsettled issues of Shia persecution, border crossings, and terrorism will continue to hinder Iran-Pakistan relations.

Similarly, Pakistan's location can easily facilitate Russia to enhance its trade and influence in Central Asia; and link its Eurasian Economic Union projects to those of China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI). But, despite this evolving strategic and economic partnership, Russia is hesitant to completely embrace Pakistan as it would upset India.

Finally, despite Pakistan and China continuing to maintain their so-called 'all-weather friendship', there might be some genuine concerns for Pakistan. Pakistan's choice of friendship with China has now evolved into compulsion. The more Pakistan is isolated internationally, the more it is depending on China. Pakistan is well aware of Chinese debt-trap diplomacy



and is also realising how dependence on China is influencing its security policies. Considering the cruciality of its investments in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China has already persuaded Pakistan to integrate Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province and is now pressurising Pakistan to solve its Baluchistan issue by hook or crook.

Pakistan is thus realising that it can neither completely depend on China nor can it get rid of its isolation by doing so. Hence, it is attempting to accelerate its diplomatic and strategic leverage. Consequently, by the second half of the Trump administration, Pakistan played an active role in brokering US-Taliban peace talks. This had two implications: one, it created lasting leverage for Pakistan with the USA, as inner turmoil and civilian targeting continue to prevail in Afghanistan while the West is desperate to retreat from there. Secondly, by orchestrating the Taliban, Pakistan intends to have a non-hostile government in Afghanistan and reduce its isolation.

Pakistan is thus accelerating its diplomatic and strategic leverages to

enhance its diversification and be less isolated. This has led to its drastic change of tone and recent developments with India.

It is this strategic calculation that has initiated a shift in New Delhi's tone as well. First, unlike during Trump's tenure, the US will now find it hard to completely discard or isolate Pakistan, as the former continues to play a major role in Afghanistan. Second, President Joe Biden is keeping a keen eye on diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Thus, New Delhi has to be more cautious with its coercive tactics against Pakistan. In this context, it is important to restrict relations from further depletion, as it would be difficult for India to execute another Uri or Balakot. Therefore, India is intending to normalize its border situation that has been worsening since 2018.

Likewise, China's growing influence in the region and recent intrusions have reminded New Delhi of its long-lasting rivalry against China and the short-term distractions caused by Pakistan. Thus, it is important to attempt normalising India-Pakistan ties. Finally, neither the USA nor India would want to see an isolated Pakistan moving closer to China. An indebted Pakistan would be more vulnerable to China's strategic and financial exploitation. This would provide China with access and proximity to the strategic locations of Central Asia, South Asia, and most importantly the Indian Ocean; efficiently defeating the cause of Indo-Pacific strategy amongst the QUAD and other democratic states.

It is, therefore, India's strategic calculation and Pakistan's increasing isolation in the world that have contributed to the recent developments.

The writer is an MSc International Relations graduate from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and comments on foreign policy issues.

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

It is anticipated, as is stated in the official review of last year's events in Bengal, that a new trade and industrial centre will be created in the neighbourhood of the inland harbour to be constructed at Manicktolla in connection with the Grand Trunk Canal scheme. The prospect begins to take shape in papers just issued by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. These are circular letters from the Grand Trunk Canal Technical Sub-Committee making preliminary inquiries with a view to the renting of land for warehouses for the storage of imported goods to be sent up-country by rail or inland steamer. The new harbour will have railway connections with the Kidderpore Docks, the Eastern Bengal Railway, and, via Naihati, with the East Indian and Bengal-Nagpur lines. It is pointed out that, with the railway service from the Docks, the transport of goods will become an easy matter compared with the present laborious and slow process of carting from the Dock or jetties either to the importers' warehouses or those of the carrying companies, saving time, double cartage, handling, wear and tear, and reducing incidental damage to a minimum. The advantage of storage facilities at the harbour will no doubt be fully appreciated by those interested in up-country traffic, and the changes to be effected by the harbour and canal scheme will, it is to be hoped, effect a vast transformation for the better in this part of Calcutta.

NEWS ITEMS

BIG JUTE BLAZE NEAR SERAMPORE

News reached Calcutta yesterday of a big jute fire at Champney, about four miles from Serampore, in which several thousand bales of jute at the Dalhousie and Northbrook Jute Mills caught fire. The fire originated at the Dalhousie Jute Mill, and was first noticed at 11 A.M., when a huge stock of bales of jute caught fire. The European Assistants and workmen of the mill, as well as men from the neighbouring mills worked on the fire. The services of the Port Commissioners' fire float was also requisitioned. A strong breeze was blowing at the time and in spite of the efforts of the men, the fire spread. A gros-shop on the opposite side of the road was gutted. The damage is reported to be considerable.

APPLICATION TO RESTRAIN LANDLORD

The Chief Presidency Magistrate had again before him the application of Mr. M.E. Gray of Chowringhee Road, under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, for an injunction against Mr. Abdur Rahim, the owner restraining him from demolishing the premises. Mr. G. Sircar with Mr. P.K. Das appeared for Mr. Gray and Mr. Khuda Bux counsel instructed by Mr. C.C. Mitter for the defendant, a written statement was put in on behalf of Mr. Abdur Rahim in which it was mentioned that the structure at present was in the possession of Ali Akbar a contractor. Documents showing that the sale had been effected were produced, and on a fresh application being made, the rule against Mr. Rahim was discharged and a notice issued on Mr. Ali Akbar to show cause why he should not be restrained from demolishing the premises.

RULER OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Jammu, Mar 5 His Excellency the Viceroy in the course of his address at the Durbar at Jammu said his first visit in 1918 was associated with happy memories of the beauties of the Kashmir Valley and of the victorious advance of the Allied troops which preceded the Armistice. His present visit to the Province of Jammu, from which, in the first half of the last century, the gallant Dogras, under the leadership of His Highness' grandfather spread their conquests, far and wide over the surrounding country, for he came to restore to His Highness the full powers of administration and the full authority which his ancestors enjoyed. In the course of this great struggle the rulers of the Indian States rendered services which would never be forgotten.

SIR L. ROGERS TREATMENT OF LEPROSY

Sir Leonard Rogers, who has returned from Calcutta after 27 years in the Indian Medical Service, reports that he has discovered a system of treatment for destroying leprosy bacilli in human tissues. He states that he has got nearer to this than any other British scientist. In the course of an interview Sir Leonard Rogers gave instances of the results of his system. One leper had recovered his sight, another had gained the sense of touch, and yet another, who could not walk three hundred yards, now walked ten miles. He concluded that it was not yet possible to say that he had found a permanent cure but there were good grounds for hoping that real cures would be obtained.

SATURDAY INTERVIEW

'States must battle drugs jointly'



of Punjab, Haryana or Delhi?

A. Like other hill areas such as J&K, Uttarakhand and the North East, Himachal has a problem of illicit cultivation of cannabis and opium, which had traditional linkages too. The state is facing the challenge of criminal networks of foreign origin engaged in peddling of cannabis. Inter-state level opium trafficking is another challenge. So this is an additional problem in HP compared to Punjab, Haryana or Delhi, where drug storage, trafficking and drug abuse are the main issues.

Q. What should be the immediate concern of HP with regard to drug menace?

A. The immediate concern in HP is illicit drug trafficking and consumption of opioids (Chitta) and psychotropic substances like Tramadol as this is making the youth dependent. Further it is also pushing youngsters into criminal, anti-social activities. HP

needs to focus on an ultra-modern intelligence and analytics mechanism supplemented by dedicated law enforcement and development. The recent trends emerging from the increasing number of drug seizures in Himachal are indicative of serious involvement of young people in drug consumption and trafficking. This is resulting in disintegration of the socio-economic fabric of the state. As per data of drug seizures in HP, nearly 75 per cent of the accused fall within the age bracket of 15-40 years, many of whom are also drug users.

Q. Is it more difficult to handle the drug issue in HP, given the current scenario?

A. I don't think so. The detailed analysis of drug situation can be done only after official surveys are conducted on the extent and pattern. Based on this, the government can formulate a multi-pronged strategy with a holistic approach. There have

been isolated efforts in the past. The strategy, however, has to be practical, sustainable, continuous and simultaneous at all levels in a Mission Mode. An empirical estimation of the entire problem is available and we have already started working on it. Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has given strong indications to deal with the situation sternly.

Q. You have worked with NCB in the region. How can the drug issue be tackled at the regional level?

A. Drug menace is a multidimensional problem and the states are dependent on each other. So, every state has a role to play to check trafficking. The coordination of all central and state intelligence agencies, law enforcement agencies, and inter-chief ministerial cooperation is pivotal to address the problem. The HP chief minister took a historic step in bringing together the chief ministers of the neighbouring states for analysis and information sharing. We need to move ahead on this aspect.

Q. So far no other state has a NashaNivaran Board. What was the purpose of setting up this Board in HP?

A. The process of constituting HP NashaNivaran Board had started in 2017 itself and it was set up in January 2020 to establish synergy and cooperation among responsible governmental agencies and to monitor action taken on targets set for all line agencies to check the drug menace. The present government has accorded top priority to the issue of drugs. The Board also has a mandate to suggest policy measures for different types of initiatives focusing on all the aspects of drug menace.

Q. What difference has the

NashaNivaran Board made in one year in HP?

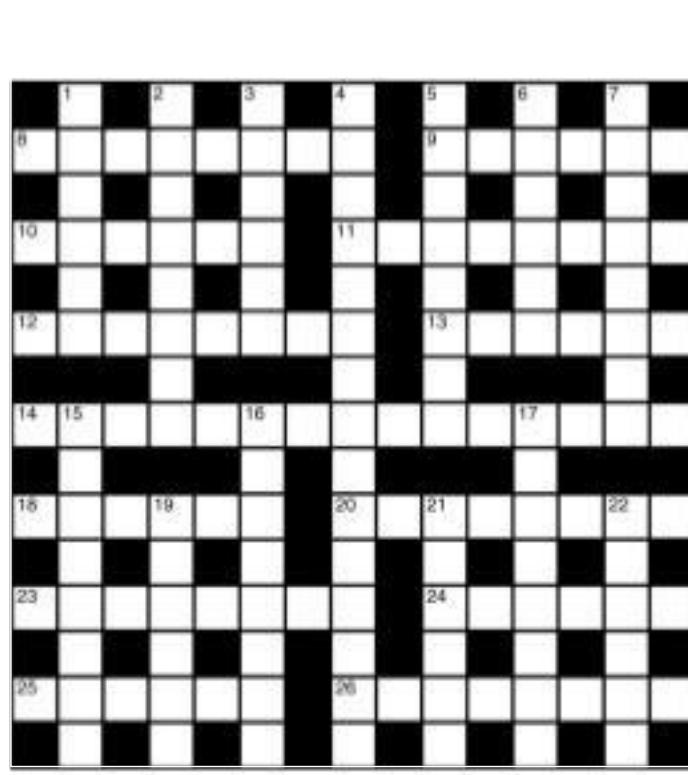
A. The Covid-19 pandemic overshadowed the year 2020. Still the Board has been able to coordinate with authorities in most of the drug-affected districts in HP. A survey was conducted on de-addiction centers, besides one study on the extent of drug abuse in a particular belt of Mandi district. A field visit of 50 vulnerable Panchayats in Chamba district was undertaken and elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) were sensitised in Tissa, Pangi and Salooni areas. The Board convened a capacity building programme for police and excise officers through UNODC, regional office of South Asia, wherein two-day training on drug law enforcement was held and associated issues of national and global importance were discussed. As per Board's decision, the HP government is creating a State Fund for Control of Drug Abuse (SFCDA), which is the first such initiative in the country. The Board is also in the process of framing its own drug prevention policy, considering local socio-economic factors.

Q. Do you think that the state lacks facilities for drug de-addiction and rehabilitation?

A. To some extent this is correct. There are nearly 65 de-addiction centres run by NGOs and private people. There are very few such centres under the central scheme known as Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for Addicts. A survey indicates that most of the de-addiction centres in Himachal lack facilities for rehabilitation and social integration. They only have de-addiction treatment and counselling facilities, without 24x7 supervision and support of psychiatrists. The government is however shortly going to establish eight de-addiction centres with rehabilitation facilities, including one model centre under the aegis of HP State Mental Health Authority.

NO 28845

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

BECKITT	DUCHAMP	RESERVOIR	ANVIL	EOMWCEA	TOWEL	BLINKERED	AFRICANS	DISOWN	KOERNR	ORWELL	HODGKINS	SODRA	MANSFIELD	SOLAR	ODRMSNC	SCENA	AKHMATOVA	IRMIN	OIAS	SUSPEND	WOLFRAM
BECKITT	DUCHAMP	RESERVOIR	ANVIL	EOMWCEA	TOWEL	BLINKERED	AFRICANS	DISOWN	KOERNR	ORWELL	HODGKINS	SODRA	MANSFIELD	SOLAR	ODRMSNC	SCENA	AKHMATOVA	IRMIN	OIAS	SUSPEND	WOLFRAM
BECKITT	DUCHAMP	RESERVOIR	ANVIL	EOMWCEA	TOWEL	BLINKERED	AFRICANS	DISOWN	KOERNR	ORWELL	HODGKINS	SODRA	MANSFIELD	SOLAR	ODRMSNC	SCENA	AKHMATOVA	IRMIN	OIAS	SUSPEND	WOLFRAM
BECKITT	DUCHAMP	RESERVOIR	ANVIL	EOMWCEA	TOWEL	BLINKERED	AFRICANS	DISOWN	KOERNR	ORWELL	HODGKINS	SODRA	MANSFIELD	SOLAR	ODRMSNC	SCENA	AKHMATOVA	IRMIN	OIAS	SUSPEND	WOLFRAM
BECKITT	DUCHAMP	RESERVOIR	ANVIL	EOMWCEA	TOWEL	BLINKERED	AFRICANS	DISOWN	KOERNR	ORWELL	HODGKINS	SODRA	MANSFIELD	SOLAR	ODRMSNC	SCENA	AKHMATOVA	IRMIN	OIAS	SUSPEND	WOLFRAM

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

ACROSS

- 8 Woman in charge in Italian city (8)
- 9 Frank's happy to start firing a gun (4,2)
- 10 Don't dine outdoors after appearance of unknown growth hormone (6)
- 11 Foolish admirer filled with energy to become more romantic (8)
- 12 Judge changing a plea's not a hot thing (8)
- 13 Rubbish place to sleep? I'm not sure (6)
- 14 Going crazy here, late tonight, fully undressed (2,3,10)
- 15 Think about giving welcome to good man (6)
- 16 Attention diminishes with medication (8)
- 23 State extremists in Syria transfixed by row about Israel's borders (3,5)
- 24 Diffuse nebula lacking in strength (6)
- 25 Son of Darius succeeded old king from the East (6)
- 26 In confusion, I googled "keep a low profile" (3,5)

DOWN

- 1 Ambassador has lie-ins regularly with a woman (6)
- 2 Way to pay homage to all political leaders after they retire (8)
- 3 Group of women that is collecting clothes from Nelson Mandela (6)
- 4 Charlotte Baden's extraordinary crime novel (5,2,3,5)
- 5 Sack a very rich person disregarding society (8)
- 6 Perhaps lackey's son to become ordinary kind of farmer (6)
- 7 End timeless piano piece by Chopin in silence (8)
- 15 Groups of 9 or 11 out of 12 houses may be labelled thus? (8)
- 16 Shock when nonsense's written about Northern Ireland (8)
- 17 Herb Alpert ultimately right to visit part of Spain (8)
- 19 Stars laid-back in carefree surroundings (6)
- 21 Back of computer connected to external device (6)
- 22 Matter of indifference? (6)



Budget focuses on promoting growth while giving the message that tax rates will remain stable

BIBEK DEBROY
CHAIRMAN, EAC-PM

THUMBNAILS

Contactless transactions: SBI Payments and National Payments Corporation of India (NPCL) have joined hands to launch RuPay SoftPOS that will enable merchants to make contactless transactions of up to Rs 5,000 through their smart phones. The solution has the capability to transform NFC (near field communication) enabled smartphones into merchant point-of-sale (PoS) terminals for retailers, SBI and NPCL said in a joint release on Friday.

PTI

Covestro: Covestro, one of the leading polymer companies, saw a strong end in year 2020 despite covid pandemic and benefited, especially in the second half, from its consistent crisis prevention measures and a recovery in demand. "We were able to successfully navigate through the year 2020 and maintained our ability to act at all times. We took a broad range of measures to protect our employees, keep supply chains running, and expand our strong liquidity position," said CEO Markus Steilemann.

SNS

Vahan provides job: Vahan, an AI-enabled livelihood platform, announced that it has provided employment opportunities to over 1 lakh blue-collar professionals through its WhatsApp API-enabled chatbot called 'Mitra'. With an increase of 400 per cent since 2020, these workers have been placed in several blue/grey-collared jobs in sectors such as logistics, delivery, and BPOs.

SNS

Amazon support: Amazon India in partnership with Startup India has launched Amazon Global Selling Propel (AGSP) Accelerator aimed at providing dedicated support to emerging Indian brands to reach customers around the world through Amazon's Global Selling Program. The accelerator programme provides startups an opportunity to get mentorship from Amazon leaders, VCs and leaders from Startup India, according to a Press release.

SNS

Vivo initiative: Smartphone maker Vivo on Friday launched Vision+, a global initiative reaffirming their long-term commitment to leadership in mobile photography technology in India. The initiative aims to build a visual content ecosystem for mobile photography enthusiasts through initiatives, including content co-creation, education, and cultural exchanges, said a Press release.

SNS

Robotics manufacturing facility: Addverb Technologies, one of the biggest automation and robotics companies in India, inaugurated a world class manufacturing facility "Bot-Valley" in Noida, Uttar Pradesh. With the establishment of this facility, Addverb intends to create a self-sustaining ecosystem for the Robotics industry in India that can also export innovative products & disruptive technology solutions to the world.

SNS

Modi bets big on PLI scheme

PLI Scheme is expected to increase country's production by \$520 billion in the next five years, he says

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, which is aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing and exports, is expected to increase the country's production by \$520 billion in the next five years.

Addressing a webinar on PLI scheme, organised by department of industry and international trade (DPIIT) and NITI Aayog, through video conference, Modi said the government is continuously carrying out reforms to boost domestic manufacturing.

In this year's Budget, about Rs 2 lakh crore was earmarked for the PLI scheme for the next five years and "there is an expectation that the scheme would result in increasing the production by about \$520 billion in India in the next five years," he said.

He added that there is also an expectation that the current workforce in the sectors, which will avail the benefits of the PLI scheme, will be doubled and job creation will also increase.

The Prime Minister said the

BOOSTER DOSE FOR MANUFACTURING

► In this year's Budget, about Rs 2 lakh crore was earmarked for the PLI scheme for the next five years.

► There is an expectation that the scheme would result in increasing the production by about \$520 billion in the next five years, the Prime Minister said.

► There is also an expectation that the current

workforce in the sectors, which will avail the benefits of the PLI scheme, will be doubled and job creation will also increase, the PM said.

► The Prime Minister said the government is working to reduce compliance burden, further improve ease of doing business and cut down logistics costs for the industry.

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"An average of 5 per cent of production is given as incentive. This means that PLI schemes will lead to production worth \$520 billion in India in the next five years," he said.

Modi said that over the past 6-7 years, several successful efforts have been made to encourage "Make in India" at different levels.

He stressed on the need to take a big leap, as well as increase the speed and scale to boost manufacturing as it

would increase employment generation in the country.

The Prime Minister said the government is working at every level to promote the industry through measures like ease of doing business, reducing the compliance burden, creating multi-modal infrastructure to reduce logistics costs, and constructing district-level export hubs.

"Our effort is to reduce over 6,000 compliance burden for industry," he said.

The government, he said, believes that its interference in everything creates more problems than solutions and "therefore, self-regulation, self-attesting, self-certification



are being emphasised".

"We have to attract cutting-edge technology and maximum investment in the sectors related to our core competency," he added.

Underlining the difference between the earlier schemes and those of the current government, the Prime Minister said that earlier industrial incentives used to be open ended input-based subsidies, now they have been made targeted and performance based through a competitive process.

About PLI benefits, he said 13 sectors have been brought under the ambit of the scheme and it would benefit the entire

Rising Covid cases poses downside risk to economy: Report

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

The surge in active Covid-19 cases in India poses a downside risk to economic growth, said the finance ministry's monthly economic report released today.

The report mentioned a major downside risk to India's economic growth continues to be the pandemic-induced morbidity and the rising coronavirus cases that has elevated health stimulus as a key macroeconomic lever for India's continued recovery.

Modi added that recently approved PLI scheme in IT hardware and telecom equipment manufacturing will lead to tremendous increase in production and domestic value addition.

IT hardware is estimated to achieve Rs 3 lakh crore worth production in four years and domestic value addition is expected to rise from current 5-10 per cent to 20-25 per cent in 5 years," he said, adding similarly telecom equipment manufacturing will witness an increase of about Rs 2.5 lakh crore in five years.

"We should be in a position to export worth Rs 2 lakh crore from this," the Prime Minister said.

ered health care, the practice of social distancing is critical to preserving the successes so far achieved on the health front," reads the report.

As per the report the GDP growth is expected to be in positive territory in the second half of 2020-21. It also mentioned the second advance estimates of national income for FY 2020-21 recently released by NSO indicate real GDP contraction at 8 per cent, larger than real GVA contraction of 6.5 per cent. "This is not a normal occurrence. Real GDP growth has been higher than real GVA growth since 2011-12 when estimation of national income in India moved to a new base year. Recalling that GDP is GVA plus indirect taxes net of subsidies, GDP growth is higher than GVA growth when growth of indirect taxes is higher than growth of subsidies," reads the report. The report also highlighted the expansion of services activity since the beginning of 2021 as people overcoming the fear of the pandemic have shown preference for enhanced mobility, albeit at the risk of increasing the infection rate.

Sebi lays out guidelines on votes cast by mutual funds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

including changes in the state of incorporation, merger and other corporate restructuring, and anti-takeover provisions as well as capital structure, including increases and decreases of capital and preferred stock issuances.

Also, casting of votes would be necessary for stock option plans and other management compensation issues, social and corporate responsibility issues, appointment and removal of directors and any other issue that may affect the interest of the unit holders.

Mutual funds, including their passive investment schemes like index funds, exchange-traded funds (ETFs), will be required to cast votes compulsorily in respect of related party transactions of the investee companies and corporate governance matters, Sebi said in a circular.

In addition, mutual funds will have to cast votes on corporate governance matters,

the mutual fund level. However, in case fund manager of any scheme has strong view against the views of fund manager of the other schemes, the voting at scheme level would be allowed, subject to recording of detailed rationale for the same, the Sebi said.

Fund managers need to submit a declaration on a quarterly basis to the trustees that the votes cast by them have not been influenced by any factor other than the best interest of the unit holders.

Further, trustees in their half yearly trustee report to the Sebi would confirm the same.

The guidelines will be applicable with effect from 1 April 2021, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) noted.

OPEC ignores India's plea to ease production control

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

International oil prices rose after OPEC and its allies ignored India's plea to ease production control, with Saudi Arabia asking New Delhi to instead use oil it bought at rock bottom rates last year.

Brent crude, the most widely used benchmark, today rose nearly one per cent to \$67.44 a barrel after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a group known as OPEC+, agreed not to increase supplies in April awaiting more substantial recovery in demand.

India's oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan had in the run-up to Thursday's OPEC meeting urged the producers' group to ease production

curbs to fulfil their promise of stable oil prices.

He felt rising international oil prices were hurting economic recovery and demand.

Responding to a question on India's pleas, Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman at a Press conference after the OPEC+ decision on Thursday said New Delhi should take some of the crude out of storage that they had purchased "very cheaply last year."

India had purchased 16.71 million barrels of crude in April-May 2020 and filled all the three strategic petroleum reserves created at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and Mangalore and Padur in Karnataka. The average cost of that crude purchase was \$19 per barrel, according to Pradhan's written reply to

a question in the Rajya Sabha on 21 September 2020.

Retail petrol and diesel prices, which already are at historic highs, should rise if the oil companies decide to pass on the surge in international oil prices to consumers.

Petrol and diesel prices have remained unchanged for the last five years and oil companies have in past not revised prices in the run-up to crucial assembly elections in 2017 and 2018 ahead of elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry and Assam go to the polls in the next few weeks.

Earlier this week, Pradhan had said India, where fuel demand is recovering to pre-pandemic levels, wants reasonable and responsible oil prices.

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) today said its board has approved payment of second interim dividend of Rs 5 per share for financial year 2020-21. CIL has fixed 16 March as "record date" for the purpose of payment of second interim dividend on equity shares for 2020-21, the PSU said in a filing to BSE.

"The board of directors in its meeting held on Friday, the 5th March 2021 approved payment of 2nd Interim Dividend for financial year 2020-21 @ Rs 5 per share of the face value of Rs 10 per equity share," the filing said. The date of payment of interim dividend is on and from 24 March, it said.

CIL accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal production. It is eyeing one billion tons output by 2023-24. PTI

Stock indices fall on global woes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 5 MARCH



from Federal Reserve chairman on rising bond yields weighed on investors' sentiments. Barings FMCG, all key sectoral indices witnessed sharp pull-back with metals and PSU bank indices witnessing steeper correction in the range of 3-4 per cent," said Binod Modi, head - strategy at Reliance Securities.

Over the last two sessions,

the Sensex has shed 1,039.33 points or 2.02 per cent and the Nifty has lost 307.5 points or 2.01 per cent. However, on weekly basis, the Sensex gained 1,305.33 points or 2.65 per cent and the Nifty added 408.95 points or 2.81 per cent.

On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank, SBI, Dr Reddy's, NTPC, ICICI Bank, HCL Tech and Bajaj FinServ emerged as

major laggards. On the other hand, ONGC, Maruti, Kotak Bank, Nestle and Ultratech Cement were among gainers. Of the Sensex shares, 21 ended with losses.

Clearly, rising bond yield fear, which appeared to have softened last week, has come to the fore again with back-to-back sharp rise in USA treasury yields, Modi said, adding that higher bond yield reduces future earnings or cash flow projections and therefore premium valuations of equities become doubtful.

Foreign investors had offloaded equities worth Rs 223.11 crore on a net basis in Indian capital markets on Thursday, according to exchange data.

On the foreign market front, the rupee closed 19 paise lower at 73.02 against the US dollar. Global crude oil benchmark Brent was trading 1.26 per cent higher at \$68.11 per barrel.

ICICI Bank cuts home loan rate to 6.70%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 5 MARCH

ICICI Bank today cut interest rate on home loans to 6.70 per cent, par with market leader SBI, as part of a limited period offer.

The second largest private sector lender said the interest rate offering, which is valid till 31 March, is the lowest in a decade.

Over the last week, there have been a slew of similar announcements by lenders on interest rates which were at 16-year-low at the systemic level.

SBI cuts rate first to 6.70 per cent to best rated borrowers, which was followed up quickly by smaller rival Kotak Mahindra Bank that slashed its rate to 6.65 per cent and non-bank leader HDFC also reviewing it down.

In November last year, the bank had crossed the Rs 2 lakh crore mark in mortgage loan portfolio, becoming the first private sector lender to attain the mark.

Utkarsh SFB files papers for ₹1,350-cr IPO

NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

Utkarsh Small Finance Bank has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India to raise Rs 1,350 crore through an initial share sale.

The initial public offer (IPO) comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 750 crore and an offer for sale to the tune of Rs 600 crore by promoter Utkarsh Coreinvest Ltd, according to the red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed with the Sebi.

The Varanasi-headquartered lender said it may also consider raising Rs 250 crore through a pre-IPO placement which would be in consultation with the lead managers to the issue.

Proceeds from the fresh issue would be utilised to augment tier-I capital base to meet future capital requirements.

Utkarsh began operations as a small finance bank in 2017 from being a microfinance lender since 2009. The small finance bank's bulk of the lending portfolio is towards microfinance.

According to a Crisil report, Utkarsh was one of the most profitable small finance banks in the country as on FY'20.

As on 30 September 2020, the small finance bank across 528 banking outlets served 2.74 million customers, mainly located in rural and semi-urban areas in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand that have a significant untapped market.

The lender's deposits and disbursements grew at a CAGR of 54.48 per cent and 33.66 per cent, respectively during FY18-20.

ICICI Securities, IIFL Securities and Kotak Mahindra Capital Company have been appointed as bookrunning lead managers to the issue.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 5 MARCH

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman today indicated the government's intent to appeal against an arbitration panel asking India to return \$1.4 billion to UK's Cairn Energy Plc, saying it is her "duty" to appeal in cases where the nation's sovereign authority to tax

Odisha CM inaugurates World Skill Centre, 3000 'Seva Kendras'

MSME Trade Fair, Odisha One Portal launched to mark Biju Patnaik's 105th birth anniversary

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 5 MARCH

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik dedicated 3000 'Mo Seva Kendras' (Common Service Centres), inaugurated a World Skill Centre, MSME Trade Fair and Odisha One Portal among a string of programmes to mark the 105th Birth Anniversary of legendary late Biju Patnaik and Pan-chayati Raj Divas on Friday.

The World Skill Centre has been developed in partnership with ITEES Singapore as the knowledge partner and the Asian Development Bank.

The CM described it as an important milestone that adds a new chapter in the skill ecosystem of Odisha.

The WSC will be a premier institute to impart advanced skills and create globally employable youth in state.

Built over an area of 450,000 square feet, it's now the tallest building in the state.

It will provide skills to 3000 students in 8 trades for now, he noted.

This will help our youth to stay ahead of the competition in the professional world, he added. Within a short span, the



results of this investment have added feathers to Odisha's story, he said.

Out of it is amongst the best in the country, the Gold Medal win at World Skill Competition has demonstrated Skilled in Odisha brand, he said.

Subrata Bagchi, Chairman Odisha Skill Development Authority said in five years 11 of Odisha it is been among the top 100 IT of India.

Addressing via video conference, Mr Bruce Poh, DG SARD, Asian Development Bank said the centre will provide a huge competitive advantage at the global level.

He said the government has plans to set up at least one Mo Seva Kendra in each panchayat of the state.

Citizens can avail public ser-

vices without visiting government offices frequently, he added. The CM also launched the 'Odisha One' portal, a unified digital service delivery platform to ensure swift delivery of online services at these places.

He reaffirmed his government's commitment to help revive the MSME sector which has been hit badly by the pandemic. A special package has been announced he said while inaugurating the MSME Trade Fair today.

He went on to underscore the success of Mission Shakti groups, Start-Ups and the state of art incubation centre O-Hub.

The ruling BJD organised several functions through the day - cyclingly from Anand Bhawan

Cuttack to the Biju Patnaik International Airport at Bhubaneswar, blood donation camps and meetings at the party office.

Addressing party workers, the CM recalled Biju Patnaik's dream of an empowered and prosperous Odisha.

Pucca house to all, pipe water supply and electricity to every household will bring smile on the face of people and that will be our greatest treasure, he told party workers. He referred to the success in women empowerment by way of Mission Shakti.

As directed by party leaders, we observed the day with active participation of large chunk of local party workers. The party cadres have been told to keep maintain connect with the people.

Odisha logs 91 fresh COVID-19 cases

Over 95,000 senior citizens inoculated

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 5 MARCH

Odisha on Friday reported 91 fresh COVID-19 cases, the highest spike in the past fortnight.

While 18 districts reported new cases, 12 districts did not report fresh COVID-19 infections in the past 24 hours.

The state's recovery rate has shot up to 99.18% with as many as 3,34,838 patients cured of the disease so far.

Odisha currently has 812 active cases.

It is for the 12th consecutive day that the state recorded over 60 new infections while 22 out of the 30 districts

reported fresh cases of virus infections.

Sundargarh district with 18 reported the highest number of fresh infections.

Meanwhile the number of people who are 60 years of age and covered under the third phase of COVID-19 vaccination drive has reached at 95,882 in the state since its launch on 1 March, said Health and Family Welfare Department Officials.

As many as 39,849 senior citizens above 60 years' age group were administered the vaccine dose yesterday.

The state has also decided to inoculate eligible prisoners in jail premises.



Events marking the 105th Birth Anniversary of Biju Patnaik.

DRDO tests SFDR technology

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BALASORE, 5 MARCH

The DRDO successfully carried out flight demonstration based on Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) technology from Integrated Test Range Chandipur off the coast of Odisha today.

All the subsystems including the booster motor and nozzle-less motor performed as expected, said an official release of DRDO.

During the test many new technologies were proven including Solid Fuel based Ducted Ramjet technology, said the release.

Successful demonstration of Solid Fuel based Ducted Ramjet technology has pro-

vided DRDO with a technological advantage which will enable DRDO to develop long range air to air missiles.

At present, such technology is available only with a handful of countries in the world. During the test, air launch scenario was simulated using a booster motor. Subsequently, the nozzle-less booster accelerated it to the required Mach number for Ramjet operation.

The launch was monitored by senior scientists of various DRDO labs including DRDL, RCI, and HEMRL.

Dr GSathesh Reddy, Secretary DD R&D & Chairman DRDO congratulated the team involved in the successful flight test, it added.

Commemorate Biju-Haldane plans : Dhir

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, 5 MARCH

memory of both great men, Biju Patnaik and Haldane, said Dhir.

The house in which Haldane stayed is still there in the OUAT campus, so is his old lab, he added.

Incidentally, the West Bengal government has named the busy connector road from Eastern Metropolitan Bypass to Park Circus area on which the Kolkatta Science City is located, as the J.B.S. Haldane Avenue.

It may be noted that Biju Patnaik, in 1951, he made a generous grant and established the international Kalinga Prize for popularization of Science and Technology which is given annually by UNESCO.

Biju Patnaik also had plans to develop a Science City and had earmarked the present site of the Sambalpur University at Burla for the project.

His vision was to invite top scientists of the world to come to Odisha. He had chalked out setting up of state-of-the-art laboratories and facilities and had invited Dr. Krishna Dronamraju, president of the Foundation for Genetic Research at Houston, to help in establishing a new Science Center at Bhubaneswar.

In 1961, Biju Patnaik invited internationally known Biologist, Scientist and Philosopher, Prof. J.B.S. Haldane to come to Odisha and continue his work on genetics.

Haldane had migrated to India in 1957 and his friendship with P.C. Mahalonobis led him to join the Indian Statistical Institute at Kolkata where he headed the Biometry unit.

Haldane was disappointed with CSIR and quit. When Biju Patnaik heard this, he deputed senior officers to Kolkatta and offered Haldane the post of Director of the Biometry and Genetics Laboratory being set up at Bhubaneswar.

Haldane met Babu and accepted the offer. In his own words, Haldane described that he had readily agreed because he felt that "Biju was capable of displaying great respect towards individuals whom he considered to be

performing worthwhile work".

He moved to Odisha in February 1961.

He led an entirely independent research establishment, where he worked with his young colleagues and published a slew of papers on population genetics that are considered classics.

Haldane tried to impart science in simple language to the common man "who must know what goes on inside the research laboratories, for some of which he pays".

The Biometry Lab would have become a premier institution of the nation, and the world, but for his sudden death on 1 December, 1964 at Bhubaneswar.

Doctor arrested after 3 years

JAGATSINGHPUR, 5 MARCH

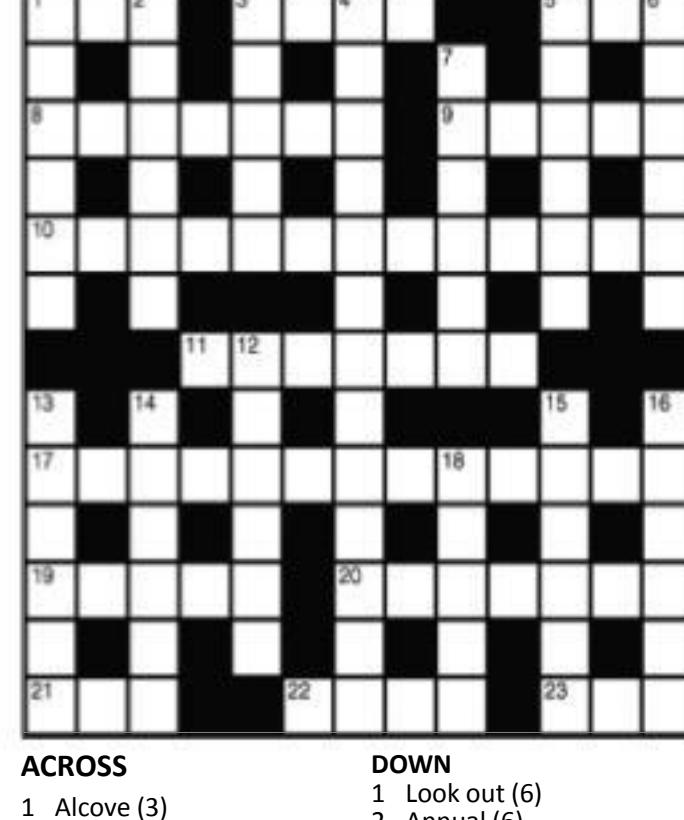
A doctor who had been absconding for three years in a case relating to alleged illegal abortion and child trafficking at his clinic here was arrested by the police yesterday.

Dr Paramananda Acharya and one Arabinda Khutia had evaded arrest for three years, said the police.

The two went missing after a case was registered by the district child protection unit against them for running an unauthorized clinic. The child welfare committee and police had reached the clinic and rescued two newborns after there were complaints that illegal abortion, child trafficking etc were leveled. SNS

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS	DOWN
1 Alcove (3)	1 Look out (6)
3 Meat (4)	2 Annual (6)
5 Playing card (3)	3 Alcohol (Informal) (5)
8 Lose intensity (4,3)	4 Efficacy (13)
9 Enumerate (5)	5 Grown-ups (6)
10 Fairground ride (6,7)	6 Whole (6)
11 Football forward (7)	7 Glacial period (3,3)
17 Unnoticeable (13)	12 Soup dish (6)
19 Concur (5)	13 Reptile (6)
20 Immoderate (7)	14 Wellness (6)
21 Speck (3)	15 Preoccupy (6)
22 Catch sight of (4)	16 Cure (6)
23 Cunning and deceitful (3)	18 Shabby (5)

By arrangement with The Independent
Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

2258622, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 180012511

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886,

5459, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

Haryana Roadways 23861262

Guru Tegh Bahadur

23717473, 23325320

FLIGHT INQUIRY

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and

Reservation 18001801407

INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi

City Office 43513185, Call Cen-

tre 09109038388,

256562294 (Airport)

Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry

and Reservation 23354373

SCRABBLE® BRAND

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

RACK 1 = 21

RACK 2 = 78

RACK 3 = 13

RACK 4 = 64

JUDD'S TOTAL = 174

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

TESTER'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

RACK 1 = 21

RACK 2 = 78

RACK 3 = 13

RACK 4 = 64

JUDD'S TOTAL = 174

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JUDD'S TOTAL = 174

JUDD'S TOTAL = 174

JUDD'S TOTAL = 174

JUDD'S TOTAL = 174



Indian-descent Americans are taking over the country... thank you. You guys are incredible

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN
DURING A VIRTUAL INTERACTION

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	32	26 H
HONG KONG	23	19 H
TOKYO	18	9 H
LONDON	8	3 H
DUBAI	33	21 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	15	8 H
NEW YORK	2	-3 S
MOSCOW	-2	-8 CL

S= sunny, CL= clear, H= hazy, R= rainy...

THUMBNAILS



A newborn kangaroo joey peers out from its mother's pouch at a zoo in the local park of miniatures in Bakhchisaray, Crimea on Friday. ■ AGENCIES

Swiss mull 'burqa ban': At a time when seemingly everyone in Europe is wearing masks to battle Covid-19, the Swiss go to the polls Sunday to vote on a long-laid proposal to ban face-coverings, both the niqabs and burqas worn by a few Muslim women in the country and the ski masks and bandanas used by protesters. The issue is one of three measures on the national ballots. AP

International Women of Courage award: Women from Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and China have been selected for a prestigious award for demonstrating exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for justice, gender equality and women's empowerment, the US State Department has said. The annual International Woman of Courage (IWOC) award recognises women from around the globe. It will be presented in a virtual ceremony next week, the department said on Thursday. PTI

Pacific quake sets off tsunami, threat lifts in New Zealand

WELLINGTON, 5 MARCH

One of the strongest earthquakes to hit the South Pacific in modern history triggered tsunami warnings across the ocean and forced thousands of people in New Zealand to evacuate coastal areas Friday. Small tsunami waves were seen, but little damage was apparent hours later.

The magnitude 8.1 quake in the Kermadec Islands region about 1,000 kilometres from New Zealand was the largest in a series of tremors over several hours, including two earlier quakes that registered magnitude 7.4 and magnitude 7.3.

The tsunami threat caused traffic jams and chaos in New Zealand as people scrambled to get to higher ground.

Residents recorded waves of small wave surges in some places, including at Tokomaru Bay near Gisborne. In the afternoon, the National Emergency Management Agency said the threat had passed and people could return to their homes, although they should continue avoiding beaches.

One of the earlier quakes hit much closer to New Zealand and awoke many people as they felt a long, rumbling shaking. "Hope everyone is ok out there," New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern wrote on Facebook during the night.

After the largest quake, civil defense authorities in New Zealand told people in some coastal areas to immediately get to higher ground. They said a damaging tsunami was possible, and waves could reach up to 3 metres.

People had followed the advisory, emergency Management Minister Kiri Allan said.

Police trampled: New docs show 6 Jan chaos

Law enforcement agents were being pulled into the crowd, assaulted with scaffolding material, and bear-maced by protesters

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 5 MARCH

Two firefighters loaned to Washington for the day were the only medics on the Capitol steps January 6, trying to triage injured officers as they watched the angry mob swell and attack police.

Law enforcement agents were being pulled into the crowd and trampled, assaulted with scaffolding materials, and/or bear maced by protesters, wrote Arlington County firefighter Taylor Blunt in an after-action memo. Some couldn't walk, and had to be dragged to safety.

Even some of the attackers sought medical help, and Blunt and his colleague Nathan Waterfall treated those who were passing out or had been hit. But some feigned illness to remain behind police lines, Blunt wrote.

The memo is one of hundreds of emails, texts, photos and documents obtained by *The Associated Press* through 35 Freedom of Information requests to Capitol area law enforcement agencies. Taken together, the materials shed new light on the sprawling patchwork of law enforcement agencies that tried to stop the riot and the lack of coordination and adequate plan-



ning that stymied their efforts. We were among the first mutual aid teams to arrive and were critical to begin the process of driving protesters off the Capitol, wrote Blunt.

Five people died in the insurrection, including a police officer. Two other officers killed themselves after the attack. There were hundreds of injuries and more than 300 people, including members of extremist groups Proud Boys and Oathkeepers, have been charged with federal crimes. Federal agents are still investigating and hundreds more suspects are at large.

The Arlington firefighters ended up at the Capitol because, two days earlier, Washington Metro Police Chief Robert J. Contee had formally asked the Arlington Coun-

ty Police Department to lend them some officers trained for protests and riots, according to the documents.

At the time, the Capitol Police had issued a security assessment warning that militia members, white supremacists and other extremists were heading to Washington to target Congress in what they saw as a last stand to support President Donald Trump.

Members of Congress, who were locked down or rushed to safety as the attackers approached the House and Senate chambers, are holding

hearings this week to get to the bottom of what went wrong with the law enforcement response that allowed the crowd to ransack the Capitol building.

One question they are looking to answer is why the Capitol Police didn't have more help on hand that day.

The emails, hastily written and including misspellings and incomplete sentences, show that nearby police agencies were alerted two days earlier that there might be trouble and were prepared to help.

The night before the breach, after hours of rallies and speeches across the city, Federal Protective Service officers, who protect federal property, had noticed protesters trying to camp out on federal property, emailing that they were being vigilant for any suspicious activity, according to an agency email.

The agents were particularly interested in the rightwing extremist group, Proud Boys. They noted how many were in Washington, that they were staying at a downtown hotel, and what they planned.

In a briefing at noon on that day, just as Trump was encouraging supporters to fight like hell, a Federal Protective Service email said about 300 Proud Boys were at the Capitol grounds.

Fairfax County, Virginia, officials were also closely monitoring the events on January 6, and realised their Washington counterparts needed help.

Capitol Police chief appeals for National Guard to stay

ASSOCIATED PRESS
WASHINGTON, 5 MARCH

The letter underscored the confusion over how best to secure the Capitol after a dismal lack of protection in January and biting criticism for law enforcement's handling of the invasion.

And it came as authorities spent the day on high alert, primed for a possible plot by a militia group to storm the building again, two months after Trump supporters smashed through windows and doors in an insurrection meant to halt the certification of Joe Biden's presidential victory.

The list in the letter to lawmakers included a partial removal of the imposing fence encircling the Capitol grounds starting Monday and a drawdown of the Guard to 900 troops from the current 5,200 remaining in Washington.

Police want to keep the fence indefinitely. In her letter, Pittman said she would ask for a drawdown of the deployment based on the threat environment and physical and operational security capabilities.

YouTube removes Myanmar army channels; UN to meet on crisis

ASSOCIATED PRESS
YANGON, 5 MARCH



YouTube removed five channels run by Myanmar's military for violating its guidelines, it announced Friday, as demonstrators defied growing violence by security forces and staged more anti-coup protests ahead of a special UN Security Council meeting on the country's political crisis.

YouTube said it is watching for any further content that might violate its rules. It earlier pulled dozens of channels as part of an investigation into content uploaded in a coordinated influence campaign.

The decision by YouTube followed Facebook's earlier announcement that it has removed all Myanmar-military-linked pages from its site and from Instagram, which it also owns.

The escalation of violence by security forces has put pressure on the world community to act to restrain the junta, which seized power on February 1 by ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

While many abuses are committed by police, there is even greater concern about military forces being deployed in cities across the country that are notorious for decades of brutal counter-insurgency tactics and human rights abuses.

In Yangon, members of the army's 77th Light Infantry Division have been deployed during anti-coup protests. The 77th was also deployed in Yangon in 2007 to suppress anti-junta protests, firing upon protesters and ramming them with trucks, witnesses told Human Rights Watch. The 99th Light Infantry Division has also been deployed, including in Mandalay. It is infamous for its counter-insurgency campaigns against ethnic minorities across the country, including spearheading the response that led to a crackdown that caused more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee.

Situation in Myanmar 'troubling': WH

WASHINGTON, 5 MARCH

The White House has said that the situation on the ground in Myanmar is "troubling" and the Biden administration has been working closely with its partners in the region.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at a daily news conference on Thursday that the Biden administration has taken sanction steps to send a clear message that the coup in Myanmar is unacceptable. The Biden administration has been working closely with its partners in the region, Psaki said.

At a separate news conference, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said that the US is deeply saddened by reports that security forces in Myanmar killed as many as 24 people on March 3.

"We strongly condemn the use of violence by Burmese security forces against the Burmese people, including peaceful protesters, journalists and civil society. We continue to urge the Burmese military to exercise maximum restraint," he said. AP

TASTE OF FREEDOM



Residents come out to celebrate with national flags and fireworks after Hai Duong authorities ended 34 days of lockdown in Chi Linh city, Hai Duong province, Vietnam. ■ AGENCIES

Joe Biden looks forward to engaging with Quad partners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 5 MARCH

Indo-Pacific as soon as possible, a senior administration official said.

In less than 50 days after being sworn in as the President of the United States, Biden and his administration, including Secretary of State Tony Blinken, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan have had unprecedented engagement with their counterparts from Quad countries, the official said.

Quad leaders were among the top 10 phone calls of Biden with world leaders. He spoke with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga on January 27, Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia on February 3 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 8. Indo-Pacific region figured prominently in each

of these phone calls.

The informal grouping of Australia, India, Japan and the US is called Quad, a format that is strongly being pushed by the Biden administration.

Quad already has had its first meeting of its foreign minister. The Japanese media had last month reported that a Quad summit is in the works.

Both the White House and the State Department have refrained from making any comment on a Quad summit so far. The Pentagon last month said it supports such a meeting of its leaders.

Axios news website, citing people familiar with the matter, reported on Thursday that Biden plans to meet this month with the leaders of Japan, Australia and India in a virtual summit of the so-called Quad.

Virus: Japan extends emergency for Tokyo area

TOKYO, 5 MARCH

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced that his government is extending a state of emergency in the Tokyo region for another two weeks because its medical systems are still strained by Covid-19 patients.

At a government coronavirus taskforce meeting Friday night, Suga said the emergency will be extended through March 21 for Tokyo and three neighbouring prefectures, where the ongoing measure was to end Sunday.

He said medical systems in the region were still burdened with Covid patients and more hospital beds have to be freed.

Suga declared a month-long emergency on Jan. 7 for Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba that was later extended through March 7. An emergency that applied to other urban prefectures was lifted last week, underscoring the government's eagerness to allow businesses to return to normal as soon as possible.

Australia asks EU to stop blocking vaccine exports: Australia is seeking assurances from the European Union's executive arm that future shipments of vaccines will not be blocked, after Italy banned a large export of the AstraZeneca coronavirus shots.

The shipment to Australia of more than a quarter-million doses was blocked from leaving the 27-nation bloc the first use of an export control system instituted by the EU to make sure big pharma companies respect their EU contracts.

Pope arrives in Iraq to rally Christians despite pandemic

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BAGHDAD, 5 MARCH



Pope Francis arrived in Iraq on Friday to urge the country's dwindling number of Christians to stay put and help rebuild the country after years of war and persecution, brushing aside the coronavirus pandemic and security concerns to make his first-ever papal visit.

The pope, who wore a facemask during the flight, kept it on as he descended the stairs to the tarmac and was greeted by two masked children in traditional dress. But health measures appeared lax inside the airport despite the country's worsening coronavirus outbreak.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said Iraqis were eager to welcome Francis' message

and the prime minister took theirs off as they sat down for their first meeting seated less than two meters (yards) apart and later stood next to each other shaking hands and chatting.

Iraqis were keen to welcome the pope and the global attention his visit will bring, with banners and posters hanging high in central Baghdad, and billboards depicting Francis with the slogan "We are all Brothers" decorating the main thoroughfare.

The government is eager to show off the relative security it has achieved after years of war and militant attacks that nevertheless continue even today. Francis and the Vatican delegation are relying on Iraqi security forces to protect them, including with the expected first use of an armoured car for the pope-mobile-loving pontiff.

Russia blocks Syria chemical weapons use accountability

ASSOCIATED PRESS
UNITED NATIONS, 5 MARCH

The United States accused Syrian President Bashar Assad and his close ally Russia on Thursday of trying to block all efforts to hold Damascus accountable for using chemical weapons during attacks on civilians.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the UN Security Council that the Assad regime has tried to avoid accountability by obstructing independent investigations and undermining the role and work of the OPCW, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons which is the international chemical weapons watchdog.

She accused Russia of

defending Assad despite its chemical weapons attacks, obstructing independent investigations, and undermining efforts to hold the Syrian government accountable not only for using chemical weapons but for numerous other atrocities.

OPCW investigators blamed three chemical attacks in 2017 on Assad's government in April 2020. The OPCW Executive Council responded by demanding that Syria provide details. When it didn't, France submitted a draft measure on behalf of 46 countries in November to suspend Syria's rights and privileges in the global watchdog which means it would lose its vote. It will be considered at the April meeting of the OPCW's 193 member states.



Problems among neighbouring countries should be resolved through negotiations and discussions.

BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA
TO VISITING INDIAN EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR

The Statesman

11

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY 06 MARCH 2021

China sets GDP growth target of over 6% in 2021

Beijing is looking to rebound from the Covid-19 pandemic after dropping growth targets last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, 5 MARCH

China, which was the first to be hit by the Covid-19 and the earliest to recover from the lockdown effects, on Friday fixed a GDP target of over six per cent in 2021, optimistic of an economic recovery after last year's 2.3 per cent growth, its weakest in decades.

Premier Li Keqiang, in an announcement at the country's Parliament National People's Congress (NPC), said China, the world's second largest economy, aims to expand its Gross Domestic Product by over six per cent in 2021, with more efforts on reform, innovation and high-quality development.

China on Friday commenced the six-day annual session of the NPC to approve the significant economic agenda which included the 14th five-year plan and long-term development plan for 2035, amidst continued trade war with the



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang delivers a speech during the session of China's National People's Congress (NPC) on Friday. AP

US.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and senior leadership of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) attended Friday's opening session where Premier Li read a 35-page work report, outlining the achievement of his government in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, which broke out in Wuhan before turning into a pandemic and the eradication of absolute poverty in the country.

Li announced a six per cent GDP target for 2021,

reversing his last year's decision not to fix the growth target for the economy which remained in a slowdown mode.

Announcing the new growth target, Li said: "a target of over 6 per cent will enable all of us to devote full energy to promoting reform, innovation and high-quality development."

In setting this target, we have taken into account the recovery of economic activity".

The six per cent target

marks a return to strong growth after the pandemic impacted China's economy amid estimates from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that China's economy could grow at 8.1 per cent this year, analysts said.

The consensus for the year is about 8 to 9 per cent but this is coming from a low base. The focus is still on the quality versus the quantity of growth," BBC quoted as saying Catherine Yeung, who is an investment director at Fidelity International in Hong Kong.

According to an analyst note, Bruce Pang from investment bank China Renaissance said the more flexible target leaves some room for structural reform and a transition to a more mature economy.

"We think it is likely the target will be achieved, indicating that authorities are shifting focus to the quality of growth instead of speed," he said.

Premier Li also set a target for urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 per cent, with a goal of more than 11 million new urban jobs, up from nine million last year.

We achieved major strategic success in our response to COVID-19 and China was the world's only major economy to achieve growth. We attained a complete victory in the fight against poverty, and we scored decisive achievements in securing a full victory in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

"In setting this target, we have taken into account the recovery of economic activity. A target of over 6 per cent will enable all of us to devote full energy to promoting reform, innovation and high-quality development," he said.

The country aims its eyes to create more than 11 million new urban jobs, lower the deficit-to-GDP ratio to 3.2 per cent, and expand domestic demand and effective investment, which are expected to put the economy firmly like before.

Pak PM Imran Khan to meet allies ahead of today's vote of confidence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ISLAMABAD, 5 MARCH

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has convened a meeting of his allies on Friday to firm up his strategy, a day ahead of seeking a vote of confidence from the National Assembly following a key defeat in this week's closely-contested Senate elections.

Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) candidate and former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani defeated ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Abdul Hafeez Shaikh on Wednesday, in a major blow to Khan, who had personally campaigned for his Cabinet colleague.

The defeat of the finance minister in the elections to the upper house prompted calls for resignation of Khan by the Opposition leaders.

Khan hit back by announcing to seek a vote of confidence from the National Assembly on Saturday. Shaikh was defeated by a margin of 5 votes.

President Arif Alvi has summoned the session on Saturday where Khan's PTI is determined to prove his majority with the help of allied par-



ties.

Khan is expected to meet lawmakers from Mutahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) to discuss the vote of confidence.

Sources in the PTI said that GDA has some issues as its candidate for Senate seat lost in Sindh Assembly and the Prime Minister would like to address the concerns in the meeting. Similarly, he will try to assure the MQM-P about its concerns regarding the issues faced by Karachi.

Khan needs the support of 171 lawmakers in the National Assembly, currently having 340 members out of total 342, as two seats are vacant.

Minister for Science Fawad Chaudhry said that Khan will easily win the confidence vote as news agency PTI's woman candidate for Senate, Fouzia Arshad, got 174 votes on Wednesday and won in the house where Shaikh got 164 votes and was defeated.

The requisite support is available and Khan will easily win, he said.

Education Minister Shafiqat Mahmood said that the vote of confidence will be held in an open setting, which means that it will be hard for any PTI lawmakers to openly defy the Prime Minister.

However, Opposition leaders are calling it a victory that Khan was forced to seek a vote of confidence, saying it was a sign of weakness and will finally lead to his ouster.

The Prime Minister has lost the moral ground to remain in power and winning the vote of confidence is imminent, said Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former premier and leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

Khan, addressing the nation on Thursday, said that he would sit on opposition benches if the house refused to pose trust in his leadership.

Singaporean jailed for possessing knife

SINGAPORE, 5 MARCH

A Chinese-origin Singaporean, originally accused of murdering an Indian-origin man following a brawl at a nightclub, was sentenced on Friday for up to five years after pleading guilty to a reduced charge of being in the company of someone who had a weapon in his possession.

Tan Hong Sheng, now 24, was the sixth person linked to the case who was dealt with in a district court. He was sentenced on Friday to a reduced charge of being in the company of someone who had a weapon in his possession.

China will participate in the pragmatic cooperation on the Arctic and the building of a "Polar Silk Road," the state-run Xinhua news agency has quoted the draft outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for national economic and social development and the long-range objectives to the year 2035.

Both the plans were submitted to China's National People's Congress (NPC), the country's Parliament which began its annual session here on Friday. Connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Transpolar Sea Route (TSR) will cut across the centre of the Arctic Ocean, passing close to the North Pole.

To the best of our knowledge, China is the only country to have led official expeditions of all three Arctic shipping passages, including the TSR, the research team, led by Dr Mia Bennett from the University of Hong Kong, wrote in the paper mentioned.

India has been severely critical of the BRI, the pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, as the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of the BRI, passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).



it much harder to traverse than the two Arctic shipping routes currently available to the Northern Sea Route and the Northwest Passage, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted a research paper earlier.

China unveiled the BRI in 2013 with an aim to link Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa and Europe with a network of land and sea routes.

India has been severely critical of the BRI, the pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, as the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is part of the BRI, passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

China has also made clear its intention to expand in the Arctic region and to pen down the decision, the country has

published a white paper on this in early 2018 calling for its transformation into a Polar Silk Road and highlighting its plans to integrate with its multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

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About 5,80,000 frequent fliers' data breached, says airline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SINGAPORE, 5 MARCH

Around 580,000 privilege fliers, KrisFlyer and PPS members, have been affected by a data breach, Singapore Airlines (SIA) has said.

The data breach involves the passenger service system servers of SITA, an air transport information technology company, according to Channel News Asia report.

"While SIA is not a customer of the SITA PSS, this breach of the SITA PSS server has affected some KrisFlyer and PPS members," the national carrier said on Thursday.

SIA added that this data breach specifically does not involve the passenger service system servers of SITA, an air transport information technology company, according to Channel News Asia report.

The information involved is limited to the membership number and tier status and, in some cases, membership name, as this is the full extent of the frequent flyer data that Singapore Airlines shares with other Star Alliance member airlines for this data transfer, said SIA.

One of the Star Alliance member airlines is SITA PSS customer. As a result, SIA has access to the restricted set of frequent flyer programme data for all 26 Star Alliance member airlines including Singapore Airlines.

Data transfer is necessary to enable verification of the membership tier status, and to accord to member airlines' customers the relevant benefits while travelling, said SIA

The information involved is limited to the membership number and tier status and, in some cases, membership name, as this is the full extent of the frequent flyer data that Singapore Airlines shares with other Star Alliance member airlines for this data transfer, said SIA.

It further said none of its IT systems have been affected by the breach and that they

are reaching out to all KrisFlyer and PPS members to inform them about the incident.

"The protection of our customers' personal data is of utmost importance to Singapore Airlines, and we sincerely regret the incident and apologise for the inconvenience caused," SIA confirmed in a separate statement that it was the "victim of a cyber-attack" which led to the data security incident.

After confirming the seriousness of the incident on February 24, SIA said it took immediate action to contact the affected SITA passenger service system customers and all related organisations.

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has raised concerns about security threats, and at the same time, cyber-criminals have become more sophisticated and active. This was a highly sophisticated attack," the Channel quoted the company as saying. SIA added that the matter remains under continued investigation by its security incident response team with the support of leading external experts in cyber-security."

Israel has list of Iran-backed targets: Gantz

TEL AVIV, 5 MARCH

Israel's defence minister says his country has drawn up plans to strike Iranian targets if Tehran shows signs of nuclear escalation.

Benny Gantz told Fox News that Israel is still working on its plans, but we have them in our hands of course.

He displayed a map of Lebanon that he said which consisted of information of ground forces, missiles and launching sites set up by Iranian proxy forces along the border.

"This is a target map. Each one of them has been checked legally, operationally, intelligence-wise, and we are ready to fight," Gantz said.

The remarks come as President Joe Biden's administration considers re-joining the 2015 Iran nuclear deal to limit Iran's nuclear program, with some major and also crucial changes to toughen curbs on Tehran's activities.

Former president Donald Trump had cancelled the US membership in the atomic agreement and imposed sanctions instead.

"The Iranian nuclear escalation must be stalled," Gantz said.

He made this remark while repeating the Israeli government's approach to the new administration on the issue.

"If not, we must stand independently and we must defend ourselves by ourselves," Israel's defense minister further said.

Japan planning to extend virus emergency for two weeks in Tokyo

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, 5 MARCH

Japan's government will extend a state of emergency in the Tokyo region for another two weeks because its medical systems are still strained by Covid-19 patients and more hospital beds have to be freed.

Suga declared a monthlong emergency on 7 January for Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba that was later extended through 7 March.

An emergency that applied to other urban prefectures was lifted last week, underscoring the government's eagerness to allow businesses to return to normal as soon as possible.

The state of emergency, which is non-binding, request centres around asking restaurants, bars and other businesses to voluntarily close at 8 pm.

Japan has never had a mandatory lockdown, but has managed to keep infections relatively low with social dis-

announces the plan Friday night after parliament approval. He said medical systems in the region are still burdened with Covid-19 patients and more hospital beds have to be freed.

Suga declared a monthlong emergency on 7 January for Tokyo, Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba that was later extended through 7 March.

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Nepal govt, Maoist rebels sign peace agreement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, 5 MARCH

Nepal's radical Maoist group leader Netra Bikram Chand, who made his first public appearance in two years, on Friday said that he was committed to the peace agreement reached between his banned outfit and the government aimed at ending violent attacks, extortion and bombings by the rebels.

Rebel leader Chand, known by his guerrilla name Bipav, emerged out of hiding after the government lifted a ban on his Nepal Communist Party group, CPN-Bipav, so it could take part in the public signing of the peace agreement.

I would like to assure everyone that we will abide by the agreement signed with the

government, said Chand, while addressing the agreement signing ceremony here, which was attended by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and Home Minister Ram Bahadur Thapa.

The two sides on Thursday had reached the three-point agreement. Under the peace deal, the rebel group would seek to address all its political issues through dialogue and carry out all political activities peacefully, and the government, in return, would lift the ban imposed on the party's activities and initiate the process to release the party's cadres arrested in the past and withdraw cases against them.

Oli said, "Nepal has entered a peaceful era. There is no more violence in Nepal or any violent conflicts left in Nepal."

The Nepal government had imposed a ban on the activities of the CPN-Bipav in March 2019 after the party carried out two blasts in Kathmandu, killing one person.

Chand, once a loyal lieutenant of Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who led the decade-long Maoist war, had formed his Communist Party of Nepal, saying Dahal had left the people's war halfway and that he wanted to complete it through a unified people's revolution.

Chand and Thapa, the incumbent home minister who was also a key member of the Maoist party during the war, had parted ways with Dahal in 2012, six years after the historic peace deal. But their association did not last long as they differed on their political lines.

Oli said, "Nepal has entered a peaceful era. There is no more violence in Nepal or any violent conflicts left in Nepal."

Pro-Beijing committee to elect HK legislators

BEIJING, 5 MARCH

The largely pro-Beijing committee that elects Hong Kong's leader will also choose some members of the legislature, a top Chinese official announced Friday as part of a major revamp that will increase Chinese control over Hong Kong politics.

