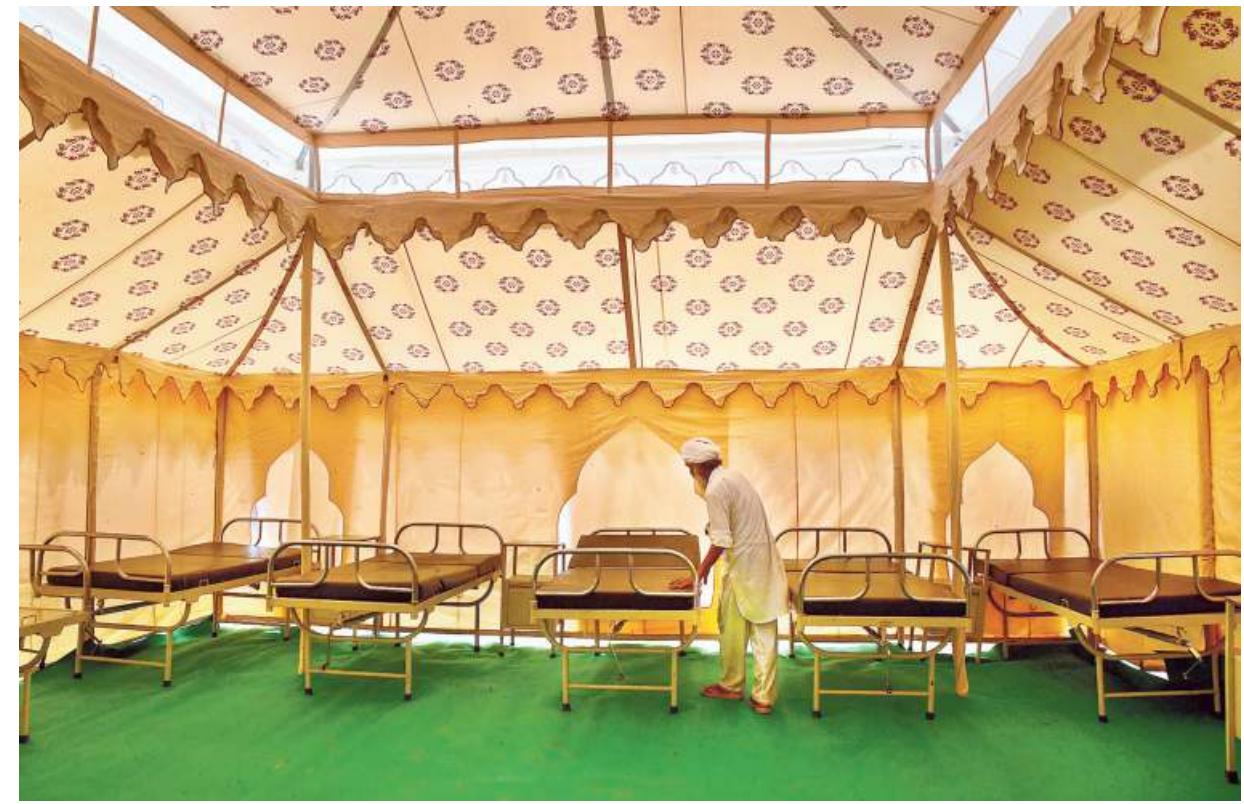




(From left) Farmers building a temporary air-conditioned shelter at the Singhu border; a 40-bed hospital being built at the protest site on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



'We feel neglected, our horses need sheds'

Nihangs share their grievances, but assure they will support the farmers' movement till the end

HEMAMI BHANDARI
NEW DELHI

Nihang Sikhs, who have been leading from the front at the Singhu border protest site, said that they feel neglected and that their horses need sheds, but no leader is paying heed to their difficulties.

The Nihangs have been camping at the front of the protest site since it began, and the horses were brought shortly after. On Monday, they took the stage to share their grievances and said that they will continue to support the movement but as the temperature is rising, their horses need attention.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Amanpreet Singh Nihang said that they are here for the truth and have no vested interest in favouring the farmers or standing against the government.

"We are not farmers. We are not against the government. The truth is that black



Nihangs have been camping at the protest site since it began and the horses were brought shortly after. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

laws must be repealed and that's the reason we are here," he said.

Sitting inside an open tent with a cooler, which barely worked, he said that there are about 50 horses at the Singhu border, and they have been able to build makeshift sheds for only a few of them.

The rest of them are tied in the open.
At least we can speak for

ourselves. These horses cannot tell us about their pain. In extreme heat, they get fever. Even at places where they stay originally, they have permanent sheds," he said.

Nihangs said that over the last 15 days they have told the leaders and people on the stage about their grievances for at least three times, but no one listened to them.

"What kind of leaders are

Farmers from Haryana are kind enough to bring fodder for our horses, but the leaders, or their people, have never asked us about the same

they? They do not think about their own people? They get money from abroad and so many other people. Can't they construct sheds for our horses?" he added.

Another Nihang Sikh, who did not wish to be named, said that no one had ever asked them how they were managing the fodder for the horses. "Farmers from Haryana are kind enough to bring it for us, but the leaders or their people have never asked us," he complained.

"They can say that we have come on our own and

we can leave if we want. They can say it is not their responsibility, but that is the ideal attitude leaders should have," Mr. Amanpreet said.

Nihang Sikhs said that they would support the movement till it ends, and they are not scared of anyone either. "If sheds are not created, then we will just take the horses and tie them near the main stage," he said.

40-bed hospital

In another development, a 40-bed hospital behind the main stage was all set to be inaugurated on Tuesday.

The makeshift hospital is being made by Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader Abhay Chautala and will be named Jan Nayak Chaudhary Devi Lal Kisan Hospital.

"There will be two doctors present at all times and the hospital will be open 24x7," said Ashok Kaushik, an INLD member.

Kejriwal misleading farmers by playing the victim card: Bidhuri

'Changes made to GNCTD Act to end misuse of powers'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Ramvir Singh Bidhuri

Leader of the Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Monday asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to stop playing "the victim card" on amendments to the GNCTD Act as these were required to put an end to the "misuse of such powers" by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government and fast-track the wheels of "administration and justice" in the city.

'Bunch of lies'

Mr. Bidhuri said that Mr. Kejriwal had been calling himself a victim in front of protesting farmers and was misleading them by stating that he had to face the ire of the Central government as he had come out in support of the agitation.

"At the farmers' rally in

tunes," he alleged.

Four years ago, during the Punjab Assembly elections, Mr. Bidhuri alleged that Mr. Kejriwal had "misinformed the farmers and the people" that the Delhi government was paying ₹2,600 per quintal minimum support price for wheat and ₹2,700 per quintal for rice and the same would be extended to the farmers of Punjab if the AAP came to power.

"Whereas the reality is that, till date, the farmers of Delhi have not gotten any MSP support. The ₹200 crore earmarked for the welfare of the farmers has also not been spent," he alleged.

"The administrative powers have been given to the Lieutenant-Governor now so that the power is not misused to help criminals," the senior BJP leader said.

CISF holds bomb drill outside NMC

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and other agencies on Monday conducted a "dummy check" outside the National Media Centre [NMC] at Raisina Road in New Delhi using a toy-shaped object to examine the response of security personnel to any bomb scare, officials said.

"It was a dummy check conducted by our Government Building Security (GBS) unit to check the response of our teams to such [bomb] threats," CISF chief spokesperson DIG Anil Pandey said.

Delhi Police said that a CISF team was examining the area outside NMC around 10 a.m. when they spotted a suspicious object. "The bomb detection squad of the CISF checked it thoroughly and presence of any explosive was ruled out," a police officer said.

Safety first



Preparations under way for a project to improve a junction at the Delhi Gate intersection to enhance road safety for commuters and pedestrians in the Walled City on Monday. ■ PTI

DUTA holds awareness drive on funds disbursal

It calls for an executive council meet

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) on Monday held a "Jansamvad" – an outreach programme – to raise awareness on the delay in disbursement of funds, insufficient funds and the pattern of assistance in the 12 DU colleges that are fully funded by the Delhi government.

CM's constituency
The awareness drive was carried out in Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's constituency, including Gole Market, R.K. Ashram metro station and Janpath metro station.

Activists also talked to people about the issues facing the employees of the 12 DU colleges where the government has been systematically delaying the payment of salaries and other dues. A similar programme is proposed in Deputy CM Manish Sisodia's constituency on April 9," said Mr. Ray.

The DUTA also called for an emergency Executive Council meeting to pass resolutions against the Pattern of Assistance document and appointment of senior administrative officers in the 12 colleges.

The DUTA president Rajib Ray said, "The 12 colleges are facing an unprecedented ordeal for many months now. The Delhi government has repeatedly failed to give timely grants-in-aid with the result that employees of

these colleges have been forced to go without salaries for many months. Former employees have also been struggling as their pensions have been stopped."

During the Jansamvad, DUTA activists distributed leaflets on the implications of privatisation on the cost of education.

"Activists also talked to people about the issues facing the employees of the 12 DU colleges where the government has been systematically delaying the payment of salaries and other dues. A similar programme is proposed in Deputy CM Manish Sisodia's constituency on April 9," said Mr. Ray.

The DUTA also called for an emergency Executive Council meeting to pass resolutions against the Pattern of Assistance document and appointment of senior administrative officers in the 12 colleges.

MPD-2041: L-G chairs 3rd Advisory Council meet

Draft chapters on development discussed

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The third Advisory Council meeting on the preparation of the Master Plan for Delhi-2041 was held on Monday where draft chapters related to development in new areas through land-pooling, green development areas and transit-oriented development were discussed.

The meeting was chaired by L-G Anil Baijal, who is also the Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority.

Development Code and Development Control Norms were some of the other chapters in the draft MPD-2041 that were deliberated upon

at the meeting, according to officials.

"MPD-2041 endeavours for the first time to provide all Development Control Norms at a single place for greater coherence and ready reference. MPD-2041 envisages multi-agency coordination and monitoring of Delhi's development through a dynamic multi-pronged framework having a key set of performance indicators under the aegis of a high-powered apex committee," said Mr. Baijal.

Mr. Baijal also emphasised on making the new master plan a "common man's document" by ensuring simple language and illustrations.

Man found dead in Mangolpuri

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

The body of a 35-year-old man was found in northwest Delhi's Mangolpuri area on Monday morning, the police said.

They received an information regarding a body with injury marks at 9:35 a.m. at Mangolpuri police station.

"The police reached and the deceased was identified as Chandrabhan. He used to work as a cardboard box painter in Vasant Vihar after jumping bail granted to him due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A case has been filed and a probe is under way.

Arms supplier in police net after exchange of fire

He was absconding after jumping bail

Van, following which a team was deployed.

Raju was spotted and asked to surrender. The accused left the scooter, whipped out a pistol and fired at the police. The police retaliated in which Raju received injuries on his legs. He was rushed to Lok Nayak Hospital," DCP (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said.

Five semi-automatic pistols and four live cartridges have been recovered from the accused.

Raju was previously involved in more than two dozen criminal cases in Delhi and U.P., the police said.

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय

गंगा पम्प नहर प्रमेंडल साहेबगंज

अति अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सचन सं-01/2021-22 (झोलुकोरमेंट सचन)

विविदा संदर्भ संख्या :- WRD/GPCDIV/SBG/F2/01/2021-22 Dated 05/04/2021

1. विविदा का नाम :- जल संसाधन विभाग, झारखण्ड सरकार।

2. कार्यपालक अभियंता, गंगा पम्प नहर प्रमेंडल साहेबगंज

3. निविदा प्रेसिपर वेसाईट पर प्रकाशित की अवधि :- दिनांक- 12/04/2021

4. परिमाण प्रेसिपर की आड़नालॉड की अवधि :- दिनांक- 13/04/2021 से 19/04/2021 तक

5. परिमाण प्रेसिपर प्राप्ति की अविमि तिथि एवं समय :- दिनांक- 13/04/2021 से 19/04/2021 को 5:00 बजे (अपराह्न) तक

6. परिमाण प्रेसिपर खोलने की तिथि एवं समय :- दिनांक- 23/04/2021 को 3:00 बजे (अपराह्न)

7. अग्रवाल की राशि एवं निविदा का मूल्य जामा करने का समय एवं स्थान :- दिनांक- 13/04/2021 से 22/04/2021 5:00 बजे (अपराह्न) तक कार्यालय, गंगा पम्प नहर प्रमेंडल साहेबगंज।

8. कार्य का विवरण :-

9. निविदा की शर्तें विभागीय प्रेसिपर से जुड़ी हैं।

10. कौन से विविदा प्रेसिपर की राशि देय होगा। निविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी। विविदा प्रेसिपर की राशि देय होगी।

11. विविदा प्रेसिपर का राशि देय होगा। विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

12. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

13. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

14. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

15. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

16. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

17. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

18. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

19. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

20. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

21. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

22. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

23. विविदा प्रेसिपर का मूल्य कबल वैन और स्टेप लैट्रक की राशि देय होगी।

Timings
DELHI

TUESDAY, APR. 06	
RISE 06:06	SET 18:42
RISE 02:50	SET 13:28
WEDNESDAY, APR. 07	
RISE 06:05	SET 18:43
RISE 03:34	SET 14:27
THURSDAY, APR. 08	
RISE 06:04	SET 18:43
RISE 04:12	SET 15:26

Delhi Weather	max min
Delhi City	39 19
Safdarjung	39 19
Palam	39 22

Delhi Palam Today
30°C Thunderstorm or light duststorm activity is likely at some places over the area during evening. Uneasy hot afternoon.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
37°C Morning temperature may rise further. Dry moderate gusty winds would prevail. Very warm day likely.

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THE HINDU
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'Heatwave unlikely for another week'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

The maximum temperature crossed the 40 degrees Celsius mark in parts of Delhi on Monday, but a heatwave is "unlikely" for another week, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, recorded a maximum of 38.8 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal. The minimum settled at 18.5 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of year.

"The temperature is likely to rise on Tuesday. However, it will drop again (by 2-3 degrees) in the coming days," said Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the regional forecasting centre of the IMD.

Atishi accuses North civic body of ₹1,400-cr. property tax scam

BJP says AAP trying to 'cover up' reprimand by High Court

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi on Monday alleged that the BJP-ruled North Delhi Municipal Corporation has not collected property tax from around eight lakh property owners.

She said there is a "scam" of ₹1,400 crore. The BJP termed the allegations a "cover up" by the AAP.

In 2017, the North body hired an agency - Data World Company - to survey and quantify the number of properties. Following this, it came to light that more than 12 lakh properties had to pay property tax to the civic body. In 2017, it collected property tax from 5,75,000 properties, but in 2020 it collected property tax from only 4,25,000 properties," said Atishi at a press meet.

She said these 12 lakh pro-

From today, many hospitals to vaccinate round the clock

In view of recent surge, govt. reserves 1,500 more beds for COVID-19 treatment

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Seeking to accelerate the pace of vaccination against COVID-19 in the Capital, the city government on Monday ordered that one-third of inoculation sites at all Delhi government hospitals will run round-the-clock.

Vaccination sites at present operate from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. "It is hereby ordered that with effect from April 6, 2021, one-third of the vaccination sites in all Delhi government hospitals will also function from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m.," read an order.

"Thirty-four government hospitals have six vaccination sites each. From Tuesday, all of them will be working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and two from each hospital will then work from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m.," a Delhi government spokesperson said.

The order came on a day



People register for COVID-19 vaccine at one of the centres in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

when the city reported 3,548 new cases in 24 hours, taking the tally to 6,79,962.

Fifteen deaths were also reported in 24 hours, taking the toll to 11,096. Of the total cases, 6,54,277 people have recovered and there are now 14,589 active cases.

The number of tests done in the last 24 hours was less

than Sunday by 26.3%.

A total of 64,003 tests were done in past 24 hours compared to 86,899 the day before. The number of new cases on Sunday was 4,033.

Night curfew

Meanwhile, officials said the government has chalked out a plan for a night curfew.

"A plan for imposing a curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. has been made. The file has gone to the Minister level for approval. But it is yet to be approved," a Delhi government official said.

A government spokesperson, however, neither confirmed nor denied the development.

The government on Monday also increased the number of beds for COVID-19 treatment in 11 of its hospitals to 2,910 from 1,370. The number of ICU beds at these hospitals has also been increased to 630 from 276.

Priate hospitals were also ordered to increase capacity. "Fifty-four large private hospitals having bed strength of 100 beds or more are directed to reserve at least 30% of their ICU bed and normal bed capacity or double the occupancy as on April 5, 2021," read an order.

Micro-containment zones to curb virus spread: Jain

He appeals to residents to wear masks

STAFF REPORTER
NEW DELHI

Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Monday said that "micro-containment zones" are being created in areas that have reported more than two COVID-19 cases.

Testing capacity

"The Delhi government is taking appropriate measures, the most significant one being boosting of the daily testing capacity. Around 80,000-90,000 tests are being conducted each day. Moreover, among the infected patients, asymptomatic and mildly symptomatic patients are being home isolated, and moderate to severe cases are being isolated and treated in hospitals. Genome tracing is also being carried out and about 30 people are being traced for the COVID-19 infection," he said.

"Additionally, micro-containment zones are being created wherever two-three

cases are detected to prevent the spread of the virus," Mr. Jain said.

He further appealed to all residents of Delhi to follow COVID-appropriate behaviour, wear a mask, and not show any negligence in observing precautions.

"I believe that taking necessary precautions is of utmost importance to stop the infection. The severity of the cases is comparatively lower as compared to the previous virus waves. This is the fourth wave in Delhi and the second wave in the country," the Minister said.

About variants

Responding to a question about variants of the virus, Mr. Jain said, "Let scientists look at the variants. Scientists say that the current COVID-19 variant is spreading at a fast pace with less severity and the mortality rate is also low. The central laboratory is doing the study on the variants."

Give ₹10K to each family in containment zones: Cong.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Congress on Monday appealed to the government to provide financial assistance of ₹10,000, under the Nyay Yojna, to each family residing in the containment zones of the city.

It also asked Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to call for an all-party meeting to come up with a strategy on how to deal with the fourth wave of COVID-19 currently sweeping Delhi.

Delhi Congress chief Ch. Anil Kumar said: "It is the responsibility of the Delhi government to come to people's support at such a critical time and strengthen measures to check the COVID surge by creating awareness among the people like wearing of masks, social distancing etc., instead of penalising them."

Can give jab to all within 3 months: Kejriwal

He appeals to PM to remove age curbs, relax rules for opening vaccine centres

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI



Arvind Kejriwal

Mr. Kejriwal said he hoped for a response in the affirmative.

"There is an urgent need to increase the number of vaccination centres. For this, the pre-conditions placed by the Centre regarding vaccination centres need to be relaxed," he stated.

For example, according to the instructions of the Central government, Mr. Kejriwal said, vaccination centres can only be set up in hospitals or dispensaries. Initially, this was done to ensure that if someone had an adverse reaction to the vaccine, they could be treated immediately in the hospital.

The vaccination drive in the last three months, he wrote, had shown that the

vaccine was safe. Therefore, he stated, his request was that this condition be removed so that largescale vaccination centres can be built in schools, community centres and other places.

It will be necessary to take precautions to ensure these relaxations do not put the citizens in harm's way and the Delhi government will ensure that it takes all necessary precautions, he said.

"It [the vaccine] should be made available to everyone by removing the age limit. Except for those who cannot get vaccinated medically, we should start vaccinating everyone. The more people get vaccinated, the more we will be able to reduce the spread of the disease," he stated.

IIIT-Delhi centre to solve transport problems; govt. allocates ₹6.1 crore

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

as a repository of knowledge of mobility in Delhi; faculty and members will also create regular policy paper and research articles on the issues that the Capital faces in sustainable mobility. A previous venture shared between the Delhi government and IIIT-Delhi was the contactless ticketing initiative.

All transport advancements under this centre will be integrated into a single

app called "One Delhi" which will be done by the centre, the government stated, adding that ₹6.1 crore had been allocated for it.

According to the government, the centre is to serve



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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

CM reviews water reuse projects

'Our aim is to increase availability of clean drinking water'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday convened a review meeting with Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC) officials on various ongoing projects related to reuse of waste water and groundwater recharge.

According to the government, Mr. Kejriwal issued instructions to expedite negotiations with other States and the Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB). In case of Utter Pradesh, 140 MGD of

On the incoming treated water from Haryana through

Published by N. Ravi at Kasturi Buildings, 859 & 860, Anna Salai, Chennai-600022 and Printed by S. Ramanujam at HT Media Ltd. Plot No. 8, Udyog Vihar, Greater Noida Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. 201306, on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act).

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Expression of Interest (EOI) for Prospective Indigenous Container Manufacturers.

This notice is being floated with the aim of preparing and showing the way forward for prospective Indigenous Container Manufacturers for the forthcoming Competitive Bidding Process.

CONCOR plans to procure 6000 nos. of 20 Feet High Cube End Open Containers (34T) by a process of Two Packet Open Tender to be floated shortly & a minimum developmental order of 1000 nos containers is planned to be distributed amongst a maximum of six(6) vendors. The purpose of this EOI is to prepare the prospective Indigenous Container Manufacturers for the forthcoming Competitive Bidding Process and also to take their suggestions and inputs in order to achieve the objective of developing indigenous container manufacturers in accordance with Government of India's policies of "Make in India" & "Atma Nirbhar Bharat". Further details are available on CPP Portal (<https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>) & CONCOR website (www.concorindia.com).

(i) Date & Time of Interactive Meeting: 15/04/2021 at 12:00 Hrs (Through VC)
(ii) Date & Time of Submission of EOI: 03/05/2021 upto 12:00 Hrs at the Communication Address mentioned below.

Communication Address:-
Executive Director (Project & Services) / Policy
Container Corporation of India Ltd. (CONCOR)
CONCOR BHAWAN, C-3, Mathura Road,
New Delhi - 110076



MAKE IN INDIA

EMBASSY SHRESDHAR BHARAT

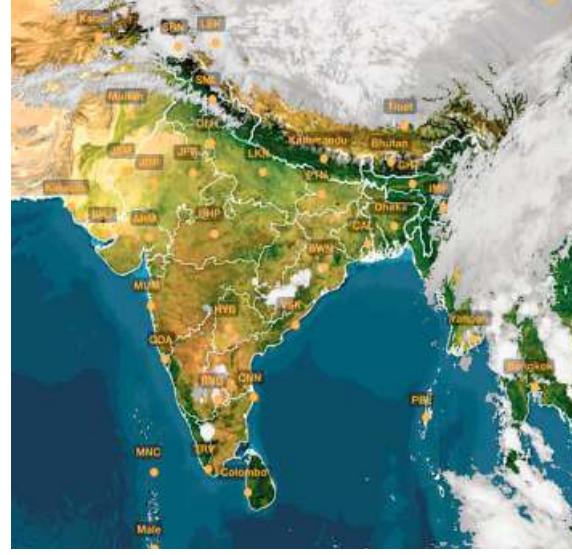
20 MARCH 2014

ASSEMBLY POLLS

DEHLI THE HINDU | TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2021

WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy rainfall/snowfall likely in isolated pockets over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. Thunderstorm with lightning likely at isolated places over Uttar Pradesh, Assam and coastal Karnataka. Heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Rajasthan and interior Tamil Nadu

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	...-33.4...	19.4		Kozhikode	...-33.8...	26.8	
Ahmedabad	...-40.6...	24.2		Kurnool	...-39.2...	26.8	
Aizawl	...-28.4...	13.0		Lucknow	...-39.2...	18.0	
Allahabad	...-41.3...	17.4		Madurai	...-39.2...	26.4	
Bengaluru	...-34.9...	22.8		Mangaluru	...-35.2...	27.4	
Bhopal	...-40.4...	18.4		Mumbai	...-32.7...	24.8	
Bhubaneswar	...-37.5...	22.0		Mysuru	...-35.2...	21.2	
Chandigarh	...-36.1...	20.4		New Delhi	...-38.8...	18.5	
Chennai	...-34.6...	28.0		Patna	...-35.8...	18.2	
Coimbatore	...-38.0...	23.6		Port Blair	...-31...	24.4	
Dehradun	...-36.4...	19.6		Puducherry	...-32.8...	27.0	
Gangtok	...-0.6...	21.2	10.4	Pune	...-39.8...	21.2	
Goa	...-34.6...	26.0		Raipur	...-40.0...	23.8	
Guwahati	...-2.3...	33.0	18.4	Ranchi	...-37.0...	18.3	
Hubballi	...-38.0...	21.0		Shillong	...-1.8...	11.5	
Hyderabad	...-35.6...	25.1		Shimla	...-19.0...	14.6	
Imphal	...-27.1...	12.3		Srinagar	...-0.7...	17.6	6.3
Jaipur	...-40.2...	21.2		Thiruvananthapuram	...-36.1...	25.8	
Kochi	...-32.8...	27.8		Tiruchi	...-39.4...	26.8	
Kohima	...-26.4...	11.2		Vijayawada	...-36.0...	27.4	
Kolkata	...-0.9...	34.9	21.8	Visakhapatnam	...-33.7...	26.6	

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing Yesterday

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	44	68	39	121	106	■■■■■
Bengaluru	4.0	49	82	129	100	■■■■■
Chennai	6	18	55	72	100	■■■■■
Delhi	55	178	84	245	217	■■■■■
Hyderabad	4	79	33	155	151	■■■■■
Kolkata	15	20	54	146	136	■■■■■
Lucknow	20	78	76	251	199	■■■■■
Mumbai	47	31	18	32	188	■■■■■
Pune	6	35	72	122	99	■■■■■
Visakhapatnam	-	22	2	100	100	■■■■■

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

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

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

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

181 votes cast in booth with 90 voters

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

Five Assam polling personnel have been suspended after it was found that the 90 eligible voters of the booth that they were assigned had ended up casting 181 votes.

The Dima Hasao District Election Officer has also ordered a re-poll at the 107-A Kothlir Lower Primary School polling booth in the Haflong Assembly constituency, which went to the polls in the second phase on April 1.

The constituency had recorded 74% voting.

RAHUL KARMAKAR

GUWAHATI

A bridge tipped to be India's longest has become an unusual issue in a polarised part of Assam often synonymous with "illegal immigrants".

Electoral politics in Assam since the 1970s has invariably been spun around the narrative of 'Bangladeshis' threatening to take over the State. Dhubri district in western Assam, from which South Salmara-Mankachar was carved out in 2016, has been the peg of this storyline.

But the buzz in this part of Assam ahead of the third and final phase of polling on

April 6 has been around the Dhubri-Phulbari bridge across the Brahmaputra, to be India's longest at 19.282 km.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on February 18 laid the foundation stone of this project that was once considered a bridge too far.

If completed within the target of seven years and nine months, it will connect three Assembly constituencies – Dhubri, Gauripur and South Salmara – and the Phulbari Assembly constituency in Meghalaya.

The Congress had won the South Salmara seat, and the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) Dhubri and



FILE PHOTO

"No government before

ours could achieve so much for connectivity. Bridges such as Bogibeel [India's longest rail-road bridge across Brahmaputra] and Dholasadiya have underlined our commitment to development. The Dhubri-Phulbari bridge too will be our crowning glory," BJD State president Ranjeet Kumar Dass said.

Ajmal's stand

But AIUDF president Badruddin Ajmal, who represents the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat that encompasses the three 'bridge' constituencies, said the Dhubri-Phulbari project might not have been a reality had he not

pushed it since 2009.

"I am thankful to Narendra Modi for giving shape to an idea of the people of my constituency that I discussed in Parliament at least once a year in these 13-14 years. But I am equally thankful to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singhji for believing in this idea," he told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Ajmal said he wrote 38 letters to various Ministries, met the Prime Minister every two months and the Ministers concerned to also revive the Rupsi Airport of Second World War vintage, and the British-era railway and inland water connectivity in Dhubri district.

REGION

Fight against Maoists will be intensified: Shah

Minister reviews security arrangements in Chhattisgarh, says the attack on security personnel was an act of desperation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The fight against the Maoists will be intensified in the coming days, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said.

Mr. Shah, who flew to Chhattisgarh on Monday, two days after the April 3 attack at Tarrem in Sukma where 22 security personnel were killed, said the killings were "an act of desperation by the Maoists" and the fight would soon take a decisive turn.

"I reviewed the security today. The officers here said there should not be any let-up in the fight against the



PTI

would also be accelerated.

As many as 14 of the 27 districts in Chhattisgarh are affected areas at a rapid pace, and development works

opened 18 new security camps in South Bastar.

Shrinking dominance'

New camps are being established in the area because of which the Naxals are panicking. The area of Naxalite dominance is shrinking rapidly. It is the first time when we have entered the den of Naxalites," Mr. Baghel said.

Mr. Shah flew to Chhattisgarh on Monday. During his day-long trip, he visited Jagdalpur where he attended the wreath laying ceremony for the fallen personnel.

On April 2 evening, a joint

team of the Chhattisgarh Police, comprising the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF) along with various teams of Central Reserve Police Force, had proceeded for a combing operation in south Bastar. An exchange of fire started with the Maoists on April 3 around 12 noon and it lasted for over three hours.

The bodies of jawans could only be retrieved 24 hours later on April 4. The deceased include seven from the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action unit (CoBRA) of the CRPF, a unit specially

trained for operations in LWE affected areas, and 15 from the Chhattisgarh Police. Thirty one others were injured. A Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) commando is still missing.

After the wreath laying ceremony, Mr. Shah attended a security review meeting at Jagdalpur police lines with Mr. Baghel, D.M. Awasthi, Director General, Chhattisgarh Police; K Vijay Kumar, Senior Security Advisor, Ministry of Home Affairs; Arvinda Kumar, Director, Intelligence Bureau; and Kuldip Singh, Director General, CRPF.

The Bihar-based Ram Kumar, 35, was released at an undisclosed location two days after his Assam-based co-worker Pranab Kumar Gogoi, 51, was set free near the border in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh miles to the northeast.

ULFA-I frees second oil firm hostage in Nagaland

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent (ULFA-I) on Monday released the second abducted employee of a New Delhi-based private oil exploration firm along the India-Myanmar border in Nagaland's Mon district.

The Bihar-based Ram Kumar, 35, was released at an undisclosed location two days after his Assam-based co-worker Pranab Kumar Gogoi, 51, was set free near the border in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh miles to the northeast.

Mr. Kumar was engaged as a radio operator and Mr. Gogoi as drilling superintendent by the Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Limited. The ULFA-I members had abducted them from the Kumchaika drilling site in Changlang on December 21, 2020.

Thavaseelan K., Mon's Deputy Commissioner, confirmed Mr. Kumar's release near the international border. The personnel of the paramilitary Assam Rifles took him into custody. An Assam Rifles patrol team had on April 3 found Mr. Gogoi in Changlang district.

Karnataka HC had restored complaint filed by an investor



B.S. Yediyurappa

complaint filed by Mr. Pasha on the ground that "no sanction for prosecution under the Prevention of Corruption Act is necessary after demitting office or retirement of the public servant".

The High Court had ordered the case to be proceeded in accordance with law.

Table of events

The table of events began in April 2012 when Mr. Pasha, who is the managing director of Pash Space International Pvt. Ltd., filed a complaint with the Bengaluru Lokayukta accusing Mr. Yediyurappa, former State Industries Minister Murugesh R. Nirani and other senior officials of corruption.

He alleged that a project proposal to build and establish 'value homes for the middle and low income group', generating employment to 500 people, was approved by the Yediyurappa

government via a notification in July 2010.

Twenty-six acres at Devanahalli Industrial Area in Bengaluru rural district was allotted for the project. Mr. Pasha's company had applied for the project.

However, the plug was pulled on the project in January 2011.

Mr. Pasha claimed it was done with an alleged intention to divert the project to some other firm in order to have an illegal monetary gain. Mr. Pasha also alleged that a letter with his signature was forged to show that his company was not interested in the project.

Mr. Pasha said no such letter was rendered by his company.

This time the special judge dismissed the complaint for lack of prior sanction. Following this, Mr. Pasha had moved the High Court against the dismissal to win a favourable order on January 5 this year.

ineligible claimants were paid during the acquisition.

Lokayukta probe



South phase

Much is at stake for the Left and the Congress in Kerala, and for regional parties in T.N.

The States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, along with the Union Territory of Puducherry, are going to the polls today after an extremely competitive campaign. Voting in all 234 Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu and 140 in Kerala is taking place in a single phase. In T.N. and Kerala, the DMK and the Congress respectively, can ill-afford to lose another election. The AIADMK government in T.N. is seeking a third straight mandate while the CPI(M)-led LDF government in Kerala is seeking a second consecutive term. After being out of power for 10 years, the DMK hopes to be back in the saddle in T.N. Meanwhile, there is a search for new alignments in both States. The fragmentation of Dravidian politics, following the passing of Jayalalithaa of the AIADMK and M. Karunanidhi of the DMK, has opened up possibilities. Actor-turned politician Kamal Haasan and film-maker and Tamil nationalist Seeman also fancy their chances as they jostle for space in the changed scenario. Though the BJP is far from gaining a foothold in either State, its looming influence is evident in the resonance of religious appeals in the public sphere. In Kerala, the BJP and the Congress promised to keep the Sabarimala shrine out of bounds for women of menstruating age citing tradition while the LDF quenched its stance fearing a Hindu backlash. A constituent of the LDF said 'love jihad' was a matter of concern; in T.N., the DMK sought to give itself a makeover as a party not antithetical to customs and traditions.

In the rivalry between the Dravidian camps in T.N., the Congress used to be the swing power. Whether it retains that role is to be seen. With Rahul Gandhi's personal fortunes too at stake, the ripples of its performance in Kerala will be felt for the Congress across the country. The campaigns in T.N. and Kerala were thankfully not centred around communalism, but misogynistic statements by representatives of progressive parties were unfortunate. Parties and the people must put a cost on leaders who make offensive statements. All parties in both States appeared to support welfarism through various modes, but less attention was paid to discussing economic and development issues. Unless the focus is on growth, the incoming governments in both T.N. and Kerala may find the present welfarism unsustainable. The role of the central agencies during the campaign was controversial for several reasons. True, it is their duty to investigate illegal activities, but if they do so in a manner that seemingly helps the ruling party at the Centre and constrains its political opponents during the campaign, the election gets vitiated. The Election Commission of India must take note of this increasing unhealthy trend, and do what is essential to ensure a level-playing field in elections.

Persistent mindlessness

Tarrem attacks indicate that the weakened Maoists remain a strong military threat

The deaths of over 20 paramilitary personnel in an encounter with the Maoists in the Tarrem area near Chhattisgarh's Sukma district once again puts the spotlight on the long-running conflict in this remote tribal region. Reports indicate a Maoist ambush of the paramilitary personnel from different units - the Special Task Force, the District Reserve Guard of the Chhattisgarh police besides the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)'s elite COBRA unit - who had proceeded to perform combing operations in Maoist strongholds. The units had embarked upon their combing exercise at a time when Maoists were trying to disrupt the construction of a road near Silger-Jagargunda. The lack of road and telecommunications infrastructure in these remote areas has been one of the reasons for the Maoists being able to use the terrain to their advantage. Questions will be asked as to how such a large force failed to anticipate the ambush and were attacked by insurgents reportedly belonging to the Maoists' "1st Battalion" led by a tribal, Hidma. The encounter has raised the number of security forces killed in Bastar to more than 175 since the killing of 76 CRPF personnel in the Chintalnar attack in April 2010. It is now quite clear that despite facing losses to its cadre and leadership across central and east India and being hemmed into possibly its only remaining stronghold of south Chhattisgarh, the Maoists are still a formidable military threat.

The Maoist insurrection which began first as the Naxalite movement in the 1970s and then intensified since 2004, following the merger of two prominent insurgent groups, remains a mindless guerrilla-driven militant movement that has failed to gain adherents beyond those living in remote tribal areas either untouched by welfare or are discontents due to state repression. The Maoists are now considerably weaker than a decade ago, with several senior leaders either dead or incarcerated, but their core insurgent force in south Bastar remains intact. The recourse to violence is now little more than a ploy to invite state repression which furthers their aim of gaining new adherents. While the Indian state has long since realised that there cannot only be a military end to the conflict, the Chhattisgarh government's inability to reach out to those living in the Maoist strongholds remains a major hurdle, which has resulted in a protracted but violent stalemate in the area. The Tarrem attacks came in the wake of a recent peace march held by civil society activists who had urged a dialogue between the Maoists and the Chhattisgarh government to end the violence that has claimed more than 10,000 lives since 2000 alone, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal. While a military response and recriminations will inevitably follow the ambush, the civil society plea must not be ignored if a long-lasting solution to the conflict is to be achieved.

The alchemy of anti-incumbency

Mamata Banerjee's assumption that Bengali nationalism could block anti-incumbency and Hindutva may be optimistic



VARGHEESE K. GEORGE

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) government in West Bengal is a unique specimen in understanding anti-incumbency. Welfare schemes that usually make incumbents popular have added to the anti-incumbency woes of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, as the workers of her party made those the easy and only option for rent-seeking. 'Cut money', or the cut for TMC local leaders on welfare disbursement, is the most important reason for anti-incumbency in the State. The unaccountable nature of power at the panchayat level after the 2018 elections were rigged by the ruling party, made it into an apparatus of extraction rather than a dispenser of patronage. The balance between patronage and extraction, which sustains political parties, was lost. Second, Ms. Banerjee, sought to compensate for her past alliances with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), by an overuse of Muslim symbolism, which has caused a backlash among Hindus and Muslims.

Usually, smart politicians use a crisis to neutralise accumulated resentments and reinforce their popularity. In Kerala, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan could turn two floods (2018 and 2019), a cyclone and the COVID-19 pandemic as opportunities to demonstrate his governance; in Assam, pandemic relief helped the BJP government quieten any public dissatisfaction and Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma became the face of a caring government. In contrast, Ms. Banerjee's wayward workers

made the Amphan cyclone (2020) in the midst of the pandemic a spectacle of corruption and inefficiency. The weakness of the state in West Bengal that the CPI(M)'s organisational capacity could camouflage earlier became more pronounced under the TMC. The key strategist of the party has acknowledged that anti-incumbency is a major factor. In fact, it is the overarching theme.

Ms. Banerjee is trying to control the damage. Welfarism is an important tool in her kit – the TMC is offering a universal basic income for all families, if elected to power for a third term in West Bengal. She also realises that economic promises without emotional appeals are just not good enough. She is appealing to Bengali exceptionalism, and questioning Delhi imperialism, invoking the fear of the outsider, accompanied by a show of her Hindu anchorage.

Political impact

The existence of strong anti-incumbency is not a question of debate, but its impact is. Who are the new claimants to power? Which one among them has the capacity to harness anti-incumbency in its favour? The Left-Congress-Indian Secular Front (ISF) alliance and the BJP are relentless in attacking Ms. Banerjee. There are two mobilising issues at play – one is the TMC's governance and the other is the Hindu-Muslim religious divide.

The Left-Congress campaign focuses on the TMC's track record; while the BJP is going on a no-holds-barred, double-barrel mobilisation on anti-incumbency and along the religious divide. In fact, the Left-Congress-ISF alliance can be of help to the BJP in two ways – it provides an alternative to those who are tired of the TMC, but would not vote for the BJP; and the emergence of cleric Abbas Siddiqui as a prominent face of the al-



liance fulfils the fear of the Muslim theme that headlines the BJP campaign.

In certain circumstances, a new claimant can spook voters to an extent that they would rather stay with the detested incumbent.

Cases of Gujarat, Bihar

Two recent examples of the Congress in Gujarat in 2017, and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in Bihar in 2020, are instructive. The BJP government in Gujarat after being in power for 20 years; and the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar after 15 years in power faced massive anti-incumbency among their respective core voters. The capacity of the challengers, the Congress in Gujarat and the RJD in Bihar, was limited, significantly due to the strong-arm measures of central agencies.

But the defining turning point in both elections was a reframing of the campaign by the incumbent, from anti-incumbency to the basest instincts and fear of a threshold population. In Bihar, the non-Yadav Other Backward Classes groups would rather stay with the National Democratic Alliance than risk the possibility of Yadav domination under new RJD government. In Gujarat, where the basest appeal is religion and not caste – the spectre of a Muslim Chief Minister, the BJP's rhetoric in the last days of the campaign, held back enough flock in the incumbent's tent.

Ms. Banerjee's strategy is pre-

mised on a belief that Bengalis think as Bengalis first; and they cannot be communally polarised to the extent of Gujarat or Uttar Pradesh. The TMC strategy relies on demography – a fourth of West Bengal's voters are Muslims – and the assumption of a Bengali exceptionalism that is less permeable to intellectual ingress from the east. While demography is a strong barrier, Bengali exceptionalism could be an exaggeration. Bengal has been a recipient and originator of ideas in its interconnections with territories to the east. Some formative ideas of Hindu nationalism originated in Bengal in the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and U.N. Mukherji. In today's West Bengal, roughly 10% of the population is non-Bengali. The presumption that a latent, universal resentment against the 'national' is the leitmotif of Bengal politics is overwrought. In fact, Ms. Banerjee's emphasis on Bengali identity could backfire on her.

The cross-border factor

Ms. Banerjee's calculation is that Bengali nationalism could blunt the communal appeal of the BJP's politics, but the way the debate is playing out could further religious polarisation. There is a cross-border Bengali identity that connects the populations of West Bengal and Bangladesh. The BJP too has a cross-border politics that connects Bangladesh and West Bengal as one theatre, but its basic premise is Hindu cultural nationalism. This idea was reinforced in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh recently. In the Hindu imagination, West Bengal – and India – is a location of the Hindu refuge, while Bangladesh is a place of their persecution. The BJP has promised in West Bengal the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act that fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslim immi-

grants from Bangladesh. The BJP campaign in West Bengal has portrayed Ms. Banerjee's Bengali nationalism as illegitimate affinity towards Bangladesh. The BJP said West Bengal would become the next Kashmir under the TMC – suggesting that Bangladesh was also Pakistan until 1971. At this juncture, Bengali identity gets divided, not along the international border between India and Bangladesh and India, but as Hindus and Muslims who live on both sides. In other words, far from catalysing any Bengali renaissance against Hindutva, the invocation of Bengali nationalism may have invoked traumatic memories of communalism, separatism and violence that pulverised the region for decades, thanks to the BJP's retelling.

Ground realities

While the incumbent's strategy has evident weaknesses, the challenger's capacity is not beyond doubt, despite help from central agencies. It has been pointed out that the BJP performs weaker in Assembly elections compared to Lok Sabha elections. The argument goes that if it goes lower than its 2019 performance, the BJP cannot win in West Bengal. But each election has unique factors at play, and history also tells us there is always a first time. The BJP has no baggage of history in West Bengal. However, the party's organisational capacity is limited in West Bengal, and it has no ground game – so much so that several of its high-profile rallies came a cropper. Comparing one election to another is always fraught with problems, but the situation in West Bengal is broadly comparable to Assam in 2016 – a besieged incumbent, a triangular fight in some regions, and the BJP led by defectors from other parties.

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The pillars of an equitable post-COVID India

In the post-pandemic world, addressing inequality is key to sustaining growth and well-being



S. MAHENDRA DEV

COVID-19 in the last one year has once again reminded us of the growing inequalities in India. A recent Pew Research Report shows that India's middle class may have shrunk by a third due to the novel coronavirus pandemic while the number of poor people earning less than ₹150 per day more than doubled. The Pew report also warned that the situation may actually be worse than estimated because of worsening inequalities. International organisations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the International Labour Organization have also warned about rising inequalities in several countries including India due to the pandemic.

Made worse now

Inequalities in India have been high even in the pre-COVID-19 period. The economic shock due to the pandemic has been much more severe for the country for two reasons. First, pre-COVID-19, the economy was already slowing down, compounding existing problems of unemployment, low incomes, rural distress, malnutrition, and widespread inequality. Second, India's large informal sector is particularly vulnerable. Inequalities were increasing earlier also but the pandemic has widened them further. For example, the share of wages declined as

compared to that of profits. The big companies and a large part of the corporate sector could manage the pandemic. The quarterly net profit of the BSE200 companies reached a record high of ₹1.67 trillion in the third quarter of FY21 and was up by 57% year-on-year. But the informal sector and workers have suffered a lot with loss of incomes and employment in the last one year. In other words, the recovery is more k-shaped with rising inequalities.

The economy recovered in the third quarter of FY21 with a positive GDP growth of 0.4% as compared to minus 24.4% in the first quarter and minus 7.3% in the second quarter. For the year FY21, the economy would contract by 8%. GDP growth is likely to increase by 10%-11% in FY22. But the levels of GDP show that it will grow only around 1.1% in FY22 as compared to FY20 levels. According to the Centre For Monitoring Indian Economy, the employment rate is still 2.5 percentage points lower now as compared to the level before the lockdown last year. Women lost more jobs and many are out of the workforce. Inequalities have increased in health care and education.

A three-step plan

As the British economist Anthony Atkinson says, "much is written about the 1 per cent and the 99 per cent. But, if we are serious about reducing income inequality, what can be done?" Reduction in inequalities is important for its own sake and for improving demand which can raise private investment, consumption and exports for higher and sustainable economic growth.



We concentrate here on a three-pronged approach for reducing inequalities. These are: focus on employment and wages; raising human development, and quasi universal basic income and other social safety nets.

First, creation of quality or productive employment is central to the inclusive growth approach. At the macro level, the investment rate which declined from 39% in 2011-12 to 31.7% in 2018-19 has to be improved. Investment in infrastructure including construction can create employment. In the recent Budget, the central government has rightly focused on capital expenditure for infrastructure.

There are seven challenges in employment: creating productive jobs for seven to eight million per year; correcting the mismatch between demand and supply of labour (only 2.3% of India's workforce has formal skill training as compared to 96% in South Korea, 80% in Japan, and 52% in the United States); Structural change challenge (manufacturing should be the engine of growth. Here, labour-intensive exports are important and manufacturing and services are complementary); focusing on micro, small & medium enterprises and informal sectors including rights of migrants; Getting ready for automation and technology revolution; Social se-

curity and decent working conditions for all; raising real wages of rural and urban workers and guaranteeing minimum wages.

Fixing dichotomies

The second approach is in creating equality of opportunity by improving human development. Increasing public expenditure on health and education is another form of redistributive measure. COVID-19 has supplied us several lessons on the health sector. Public expenditure on health is only 1.5% of GDP. Apart from spending on vaccines and other related measures, we need to move towards universal health care and spend 2%-3% of GDP on health. Education and health achievements are essential for reducing inequality of opportunities. Much dichotomy exists in both these sectors. In education, there are islands of excellence that can compete internationally even as a vast majority of masses of children are churned out with poor learning achievement. We also have the experience of a digital gap in education during the pandemic. One has to fix this dichotomy in health and education.

The third approach is in providing a quasi-universal basic income and other safety nets. For example, C. Rangarajan and I had suggested three proposals on minimum income for the poor and the vulnerable in the post-pandemic period. These are: cash transfers to all women above the age of 20 years; expanding the number of days provided under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and a national employment guarantee scheme for urban areas. In all these proposals, there is no problem of identi-

fication. A combination of cash transfers and an expanded guarantee scheme would provide income support to the needy.

Apart from the ideas above, increasing farmers' income especially for small and marginal farmers is needed to reduce inequalities and create demand. Farmer producer organisations should be strengthened. States have to be given a bigger role in agri-marketing reforms. The terms of trade for agriculture have to be improved.

Tax base, budgets

Enhancing tax and non-tax revenues of the government is needed to spend on the above priorities. The tax/GDP ratio has to be raised, with a wider tax base. Richer sections have to pay more taxes. Similarly, the inequalities between the Centre and States in finances should be reduced. State budgets must be strengthened to improve capital expenditures on physical infrastructure and spending on health, education and social safety nets.

Apart from economic factors, non-economic factors such as deepening democracy and decentralisation can help in reducing inequalities. Unequal distribution of development is rooted in the inequalities of political, social and economic power. We have to find opportunities and spaces where the power can be challenged and redistributed. In the post-COVID-19 world, addressing inequality is important for higher and sustainable economic growth and the well-being of the population.

S. Mahendra Dev is Director and Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Begin a dialogue

No words can console the families of the paramilitary force men and commandos who have laid down their lives in the line of duty in Sukma. Even if they are soldiers, they cannot be treated as gun fodder forever. This has to end soon, a matter which is in the hands of the Centre and the States concerned. The best way to stop this unending violence is through dialogue and nothing else. Local, political and community leaders along with 'genuine' NGOs can help convince the Maoists about the

futility of violence and the Centre can initiate the process at the earliest. No civil society can ignore these tragedies and pass on treating these as a mere law and order issue.

**RETTAVAYAL S. KRISHNASWAMY,
Chennai**

"Seizures stand at ₹428.46 crore," April 5). God alone knows the value of the cash and valuables and items which have not been seized. The public will never know the truth or even who was behind all this. It is strange that no political candidate has been suspended for any of the seizures or action taken against any political party.

**S. PARTHASARATHY,
Chennai**

The chief matters
In India, with perennial elections of every description, the quality of governance and its politics

is disproportionately placed in the hands of its Election Commission. By its very construct, the Election Commission of India has been left to the ability, wisdom and innovation of the main person at its helm. Only some leave impressions, positive or negative, deeper than others and an attrition of public faith which reflects more on the individual than on the organisation. The CEC, in 1992, had disqualified 14,000 potential candidates for public office and on mass protests by the political groups, cancelled elections

**R. NARAYANAN,
Navi Mumbai**

in Bihar and Punjab, to then elevate public faith. Its deferring the Gujarat elections in 2017 vis-à-vis the election dates of Himachal Pradesh, the disqualification of 20 MLAs of Delhi or issuing show cause notice only to Opposition leaders for campaign code violations, significantly dimmed its

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In a Science & Technology page story titled "How Asian desert dust enhances Indian summer monsoon" (April 4, 2021), the reference to the use of carbon model to simulate the impact of anthropogenic aerosols should be corrected to say climate model. Also, the reference to the study of the minor components of desert dust aerosols should have been mineral components.

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A ND-NDE

CM Y

In Kerala, the Church is a crucial political player

Any polarisation in the UDF's Christian vote will upset its plans of coming back to power



ANAND KOCHUKUDY

Going into the final lap of the Kerala Assembly election campaign, the million-dollar question is whether the Left Democratic Front (LDF) can buck the four-decade-old trend of the electorate voting out the government in the State. Even as pre-election surveys and opinion polls predict a second term for Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the outcome would still depend on many factors, including the polarisation of Christian votes in central Kerala. While pollsters generally tend to take the Christian community as a monolith, or distinguish only between Syrian Christians and Latins, it is important to analyse the historic role played by the Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala politics to establish the root cause of this vote shift.

Switching of loyalties

Syrian Christians, or Saint Thomas Christians, are further divided into the Syro-Malabar Church (Catholics), the Jacobite, Orthodox and Mar Thoma factions of the Malankara Rite, apart from the Protestants. The long-standing dispute between the Jacobite and Orthodox factions had been sought to be capitalised on by both the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Kerala for a while, but it is the tectonic shift in the political stance of the numerically strong Syro-Malabar Church which jolted the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in the preceding local body polls.

The significance of the switching of loyalties of the Syro-Malabar Church needs to be underscored by the fact that it has been a crucial political player in the State right from the 1950s. In fact, the Catholic Church was at the vanguard of the Vichyamana Samaram (Liberation Struggle) which felled the first E.M.S. Namboodiripad-led Communist Party of India (CPI) government.

The formation of the Kerala Congress, the Congress breakaway party, in 1964, was the first instance of the



"The Church reckons that it is in its interest to back the LDF this time around." Cardinal George Alencherry, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, leads the Palm Sunday Procession in St. Mary's Basilica in Kochi. ■ THULASI KAKATT

Church ditching the Congress in Kerala. But when the Congress split at the national level in 1969 and Youth Congress leaders such as A.K. Antony and Vayalar Ravi assumed leadership of the party with their progressive policies in Kerala, the Church went back to supporting the Kerala Congress. When the Kerala Congress joined the Congress-CPI alliance government led by C. Achutha Menon in 1975 during the Emergency, it backed that government, and its support for Congress has continued since. Even as recently as the tenure of the previous LDF government led by V.S. Achuthanandan, the Church and the CPI(M) were at each other's throats, with then Education Minister M.A. Baby regularly baiting the Church.

However, some developments during the latter half of the tenure of the Achuthanandan government led to a gradual change in this equation. The Kerala Congress faction led by P.J. Joseph was increasingly getting marginalised in the LDF and the 2008 delimitation exercise saw Malappuram district, the stronghold of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), getting additional seats. The IUML had been politically isolated in Kerala politics until 1967 when the Left gave it political representation. The party made steady progress in extending its clout.

Post the 2008 delimitation exercise, the Syro-Malabar Church took the initiative to broker a truce between the Kerala Congress factions of K.M. Mani and P.J. Joseph leading to their merger in 2010 to try and ensure parity with the IUML in their political representation in the UDF.

Fear of IUML domination

Meanwhile, the Kerala Congress also came out of the UDF and the ball was set rolling for the party's LDF entry before the next election. With K.M. Mani's demise, the official faction

was led by Jose K. Mani, his son, and joined forces with the LDF. This brought the Church closer to the Communists. For a long time, K.M. Mani was the Church's pointsman in the UDF. His demise meant that the UDF no longer had a line of communication open with the Church. The Congress's tactic to bring Oommen Chandy, hailing from the Orthodox faction, to the forefront in the run-up to the Assembly election had absolutely no impact on the Church whatsoever as Mr. Chandy no longer enjoyed the Church's trust.

The wresting of three extra seats by the IUML in the UDF, up from 24 in 2016 to 27 in 2021, further raised the hackles of the Church even as the P.J. Joseph-led Kerala Congress faction had to settle for just 10 seats. Meanwhile, the LDF was magnanimous in allotting more seats to the Jose K. Mani-led Kerala Congress faction, sending a clear signal to the Church that its representative in the LDF would get decent accommodation.

An article by a key IUML leader in the party organ on Hagia Sophia's reopening as a mosque in Turkey and the Congress's confused response on the issue of reservations for economically weaker sections following IUML's posturing had exacerbated the Church's schism with the UDF even before the local body polls. The LDF's win defying all predictions in those polls was clearly aided by the Christian vote shift away from the IUML in Central Travancore, among other factors.

The Church reckons that it is in its interest to back the LDF this time around. Its fear of IUML dominating the UDF is also parroted by the LDF propagating this theory with abandon. The UDF is the ultimate loser here as any polarisation in its Christian vote will upset its plans of coming back to power. The Congress hasn't also helped its cause by failing to open a channel of communication with the Church following K.M. Mani's demise. Unless the laity chooses to defy the Church in large numbers, the UDF will end up paying a heavy price for failing to arrest matters following the setback in the local body polls.

Anand Kochukudy is a Kerala-based journalist and former editor of *The Kochi Post*

U.S. and China need each other

Economic interdependence today makes the war of words in Alaska confined to rhetoric



KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

U.S. President Joe Biden has called Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean President Kim Jong-un "thugs", Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan an "autocrat" and Russian President Vladimir Putin a "killer". Like individuals, nations too are prone to using epithets, but are vexed when paid back in similar coinage. Therefore, the U.S.-China Foreign Ministers' meeting in March at Alaska was instructive in many respects.

The public is accustomed to read-outs about conversations between international leaders. These often portray a righteous West instructing the world on how to behave by constructing a media narrative for the domestic audience. It cannot be assumed that foreign leaders who receive diatribes from western counterparts listen penitently without response. It is noteworthy that there are few read-outs of conversations between non-western leaders, who do not pontificate and have no global media at their disposal.

Confrontation and competition

Former U.S. President Donald Trump accused China of unfair trade practices and pursued a dual policy of offering deals and threatening sanctions, but China continued to extend its influence and counter American increases in military funding by expanding its own military power. The U.S. and Europe have imposed sanctions against China, Russia and others. The U.S.-sponsored Quad with Japan, India and Australia will prove an uphill effort because even some of the U.S.'s formal allies have re-shaped their foreign and economic relations with China.

Confrontation and competition between the U.S. and China will dominate this century. Mr. Biden has censured China for human rights abuses in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, aggression in the South and East China Seas, intimidation of Taiwan, intellectual property theft, currency manipulation, and cyberattacks, but these homilies are incidental to U.S.-China tension, which is due to China's rise that is transforming power settings and the U.S.'s attempts to constrict China before it becomes a peer competitor. China will surpass the U.S. as the world's largest economy, has established a worldwide network of economic ties and set up multilateral and financial institutions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to

compete with the West-dominated International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Sharp exchanges

Preliminaries for the Alaska meeting were not promising: Beijing saw it as the start of a strategic dialogue, while Washington diminished it as a one-off event. The U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, hoping to seize the initiative, opened the meeting with a charge sheet against China, comprising attacks on values; threats to a rules-based order that maintains global stability; China's actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan; cyberattacks on the U.S.; and economic coercion against U.S. allies. To this, Chinese Communist Party leader Yang Jiechi countered that China would strongly oppose interference in China's internal affairs, referred to the U.S.'s struggling democracy and poor treatment of minorities, and criticised U.S. policies as seeking military and financial hegemony to impose extra-territorial jurisdiction and suppress other countries. He concluded that the U.S. abuses definitions of national security to obstruct normal trade exchanges.

These sharp exchanges were intended for respective domestic audiences. The American media were bewildered about how to portray this accusation of their country's policies and resorted to calling the Chinese position intemperate. Despite the bombast, the Americans require the Chinese to deal with certain issues, and the meeting ended with anodyne agreement to work together on issues like climate change, COVID-19, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and G-20, health, cyber-security, the Iran nuclear issue, Afghanistan, Korea and Myanmar.

The U.S.-China rhetoric masks the reality that both countries need each other not only for world stability but growth, supply chains, jobs, services, investments and market access. China's rise generated booms for numerous Asian and Western economies and accelerated the transition of the U.S. towards the lower end of manufacturing. Sanctions used indiscriminately against China are unlikely to engender any change of behaviour, and it is clear that hectoring will not be left unanswered. The U.S. deals for the first time with an economic and military rival it cannot browbeat, and economic interdependence today makes the war of words confined to words. Mr. Putin correctly summed up this situation: "They (the Americans) think that we are like them, but we are different. We have a different genetic, cultural and moral code." With the prevailing mistrust across regions, every possible solution becomes an insuperable problem.

Krishnan Srinivasan is a former Foreign Secretary

Free and unhindered justice

Access to the Supreme Court has been made easier with virtual hearings, but more needs to be done

ANHAD S. MIGLANI

It is ironic that it has taken a pandemic to acknowledge the significance of fair and equal access to the Supreme Court, or the lack thereof. While the lockdown limited people's movements, it opened new vistas for litigants and lawyers across India to approach, through technology, the country's highest court with relative ease. It is no wonder then that despite demands for a return to physical hearings by the Bar in Delhi, there are calls for virtual access to the Supreme Court to continue.

Increasing reach

Even at the time the Constitution was being debated by the Constituent Assembly, geographical access to the Supreme Court was flagged as a concern. The B.R. Ambedkar-led Drafting Committee was nevertheless of the view that the Court must have a specified place of sitting and that litigants should "know where to go and whom to approach". However, the framers of the Constitution agreed that the volume of litigation from different parts of the country may require the Supreme Court to increase its reach and hold court elsewhere. Accordingly, in recognition of the same, the Constitution empowered the Chief Justice to hold sittings of the Supreme Court in places other than Delhi as well. However, despite an increasing caseload and repeated pleas by litigants and governments, successive Chief Justices have refused to invoke this constitutional power for reasons best known to them.

Indeed, virtual hearings may not be the perfect alternative, but such imperfections must be preferred over a denial of the right to access justice itself. It is only when each person in India is provided unhindered access to its corridors can the Supreme Court be said to have fulfilled its constitutional promise. More than one Law Commission and Parliamentary Committee have recommended Circuit Benches of the Supreme Court to be set up around the country. Nonetheless, till the judiciary acts on such proposals, virtual hearings should be allowed to continue, if not as a matter of right, then at least as a matter of just and equitable policy.

Anhad S. Miglani is an alumnus of the National Law School, Bengaluru, and a practising advocate



DATA POINT

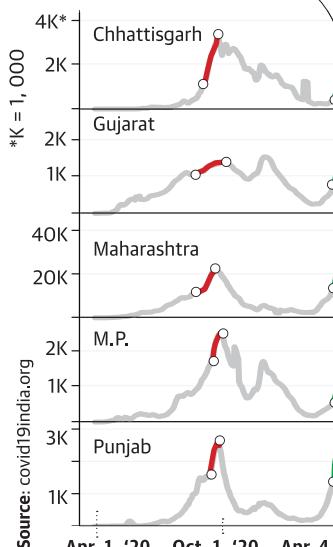
Wave after Wave

ascending faster than the first wave that peaked in mid-September last year. However, it is crucial to note that the number of COVID-19 tests conducted during the second wave is much higher than the first. Thus, analysis of a combined measure such as the positivity rate (cases found per 100 tests) becomes essential. At present, the positivity rate of the second wave is still lower than that of the first wave in many high-burden States. All the States where the latest peak crosses the peak of the first wave were considered. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Naresh Singaravelu and Sumant Sen



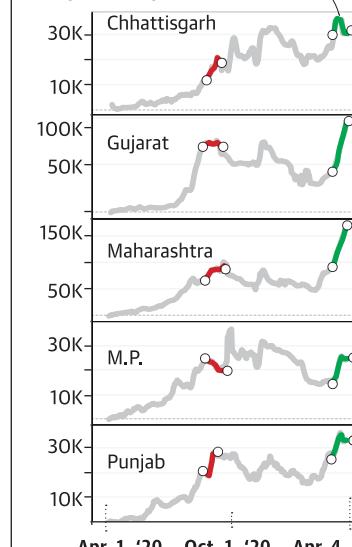
1. AVERAGE CASES | The graph shows average new cases in five States. The 20-day period before a State's peak during the first wave (P1 —) and the 20-day period before a State's peak during the second wave (P2 —) are highlighted.

The cases climbed relatively faster during P2 than P1



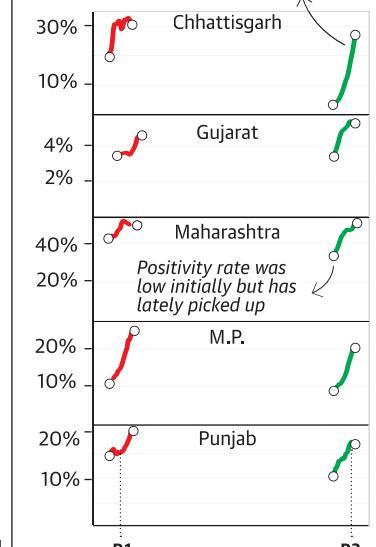
2. AVERAGE TESTS | The graph shows average new tests in five States. The number of tests conducted during P2 is significantly higher than P1. So, the rapid increase in cases during the second wave is mainly a factor of the parallel increase in tests.

Number of tests were relatively higher during P2 than P1



3. CASES PER 100 TESTS | The graphs show the average cases found per 100 tests conducted (positivity rate) during P1 and P2. In four States, during most of P2, the positivity rate has remained lower than P1. In Gujarat, it has slightly exceeded the P1 rate.

Positivity rate during P2 was lower on most days compared to P1



The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 6, 1971

Bridge over Padma safe

Krishnagar, April 5: The famous Hardinge Bridge over Padma river in Kushtia district is quite safe and sound, though bombed by the West Pakistani army, according to an eyewitness report. A PTI correspondent, who visited Kushtia town, 120 km from here yesterday, found the liberation forces heavily guarding the bridge with an anti-aircraft gun and a contingent of 60 men on each side of it. The correspondent who reached Kushtia via Shikarpur and Pragpur also witnessed heavy bullet marks on several buildings in the town, including those of the police lines, zilla school, wireless centre and dakh bungalow. Returning via Varamara, he came by roads blocked by felled trees and static goods wagons at the railway crossing. Meanwhile, Mr. Jaharul Haque Raja Miah, Awami League member of the East Bengal Provincial Assembly from Varamara, told the correspondent that the district was under the full control of the League. He said the League authorities of the district had issued an order to all government employees of the area to resume their duties by April 5, failing which they would be severely penalised to the extent of termination of service or even capital punishment.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 6, 1921

Himalayan Ascent

Allahabad, April 3: A Home correspondent sends to the "Pioneer" the following details of the expedition to Mount Everest. The party would consist of Colonel Howard Burry in command, Mr. Harold Raeburn, the mountaineering expert, Mr. T. Linch of the Alpine Club, and Dr. Wollaston, who, besides being in medical charge, will also take charge of the Botanic and other scientific parts of the expedition. They will be leaving London towards the end of March and will be joined in India by Mr. Morshead and Mr. Wheeler Len and by the Indian Survey Department and Dr. Kellas, the celebrated Himalayan Mountaineer. The start for Mount Everest will be made from Darjeeling at about the middle of May and the country over which the expedition will move in its journey to the northern slopes of the mountain is virtually unexplored. It is hardly expected to accomplish the ascent of the mountain this year as a good deal of exploration work has first to be done in and around the unexplored valleys north of the mountain and it is anticipated from this exploration work that the best way to ascend the mountain will be ascertained.

FROM PAGE ONE

Lavrov-Jaishankar talks to be held today

Another major item that is expected to feature in the talks is the pending delivery of the Russian S-400 missile defence system to India.

U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd James Austin III during his latest visit to New Delhi had said that he had not raised the issue of sanctions with the Indian side.

India is expected to receive the first S-400 system later this year.

The delivery may attract U.S. sanctions under the

Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.

On the visit of President Biden's climate envoy, the U.S. Embassy spokesperson said, "A key focus for our administration is supporting and encouraging India's decarbonisation efforts through clean, zero and low-carbon investment, and supporting India in mitigating its fossil energy use."

After India, Mr. Kerry is scheduled to visit Dhaka.

Deshmukh quits as HC orders CBI probe

Mr. Param Bir Singh had written a letter to the Chief Minister last month, after being transferred out as the Commissioner, alleging that Mr. Deshmukh had told suspended Mumbai police officer Sachin Vaze to collect ₹100 crore in extortion money from hoteliers in the city.

Mr. Vaze is currently in National Investigation Agency custody for his involvement in the case of explosives being found near the house of industrialist Mu-

kesh Ambani.

Mr. Deshmukh flew to Delhi later in the evening, ahead of approaching the Supreme Court.

The new Home Minister, Mr. Walse-Patil, one of the senior-most NCP leaders, is a staunch loyalist of Sharad Pawar. An MLA from the Ambedkar Assembly constituency in Pune district, he has held the Finance, Power and Higher Education portfolios in the past. He was the Assembly Speaker from 2009 to 2014.

Govt. rejects Rafale report as Cong. demands probe

The latest investigations by Mediapart could, however, revive the issue in the election season, especially in West Bengal where there are five more phases of voting.

The French portal reported that an Indian company owned by a middleman, being investigated for another defence deal in India, received payment to the tune of € 1.1 million.

"That middleman is now accused of money laundering in India in another defence deal. The company said the money was used to pay for the manufacture of 50 large replica models of Rafale jets, even though the inspectors were given no proof that these models were made. Yet against all apparent logic, the AFA decided not to refer the matter to prosecutors," according to the Mediapart investigation.

Dassault had provided AFA with a "proforma invoice" dated March 30, 2017 supplied by an Indian company called Defsys Solutions which according to the AFA investigation report was related to 50% of the total order (€1,017,850), for the manufacture of 50 models of the Rafale C, with a price per unit of €20,357.

However, the report claimed, Dassault was unable to provide the AFA with a "single document showing that these models existed and were delivered, and not even a photograph" when AFA inspectors subsequently found these details in mid-October 2018 and asked the company for an explanation.

"The inspectors thus suspected that this was a bogus purchase designed to hide hidden financial transactions," it said.

The Indian company in

SC calls Maudany a 'dangerous man'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, heading a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, orally referred to People's Democratic Party leader Abdul Nasir Maudany as a "dangerous man" while hearing his plea to relax his bail condition and permit him to stay in his hometown in Kerala till the pendency of the trial in the 2008 Bengaluru bomb blast case in which he is an accused. "You (Maudany) are a dangerous man," Chief Jus-

tice Bobde addressed senior advocate Jayant Bhushan, appearing for Maudany.

Mr. Bhushan said the PDP leader had lost a leg and referred to his medical condition to justify the plea. "Your Lordships, in 2014, had granted him bail but ordered him to stay back in Bengaluru," Mr. Bhushan submitted.

However, the hearing was cut short when Justice V. Ramasubramanian voiced doubts about appearing for Maudany at some point in the past.

Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry to vote today

Polls to be held in compliance with COVID-19 norms

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/CHENNAI

After the high-octane campaign of the past weeks, the stage is set for the Assembly elections in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on Tuesday. Extensive arrangements are in place for the smooth conduct of the polls.

In Kerala, the by-election for the Malappuram Lok Sabha seat too will be held on Tuesday. Polling will open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. in all constituencies except nine – Mananthavady, Sultan Bathery, Kalpetta, Ernad, Nilambur, Wandoor, Kondad, Mannarkkad and Malampuzha – where it will start at 7 a.m. and end at 6 p.m. In all, 2,74,46,039 voters



Wait ends: Officials leaving for polling stations in Wayanad district on Monday. ■ PTI/TWITTER

voters are eligible to exercise their franchise as per the final roll published by the Election Commission of India (ECI). Among them, 1,32,83,724 are men, 1,41,62,025 are women while 290 belong to the third gender. Overseas voters number 87,318. In all, 957 candidates are seeking the mandate this time in Kerala.

The elections are being conducted in strict compliance with the COVID-19 and green protocols. COVID-19 patients and quarantined electors will be permitted to vote in the final hour of the polling. Kerala has

40,771 polling stations, including 15,730 auxiliary stations necessitated by the ECI decision to keep voter numbers per booth to 1,000, given the COVID-19 situation.

In view of the recent controversy over multiple en-

tries on the electoral rolls, the ECI has laid down strict guidelines for preventing bogus voting. The ECI had issued standard operating procedures in this regard and furnished presiding officers with polling station-wise lists of Absent, Shifted, Dead/Duplicate voters

seeking to prove themselves as credible alternatives to the two Dravidian parties.

The by-election to the Kanniyakumari Lok Sabha constituency too will be held on Tuesdays.

Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo said on Monday said 95% of the booth slips had been distributed. He clarified that as long as the name was on the list, booth slips were not compulsory. Voters could obtain booth details from the National Voters Service Portal or by dialling '1950' with the respective STD code pre-fixed. On representations for cancellation of polling for alleged cash distribution, he said a report had been sent to the Election Commission of India.

The front, led by Makkal Needhi Maiam founded by Kamal Haasan, Naam Tamilar Katchi, anchored by Seeman, and T.T.V. Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam-led alliance are

SIT asked to submit status report on probe

HC order comes on PIL pleas on CD scandal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Monday directed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to submit in a sealed cover a status report on the probe conducted so far into the complaints registered in connection with the CD scandal involving former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi.

A Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Suraj Govindaraj, issued the direction while hearing two separate PIL petitions questioning the validity of establishing a SIT and seeking a court-monitored probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation into the complaints



Call for action: Congress workers protesting against Ramesh Jarkiholi in Bengaluru last week. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

related to the scandal. While questioning the validity of setting up the SIT, Geetha Misra, a city-based social activist, asked why the first information report (FIR) was not registered by the police soon after one Dinesh Kallahalli brought the scandal to their notice.

No legal sanction
She alleged that the SIT was set up on the letter written by the Home Minister after Mr. Jarkiholi, an accused, himself sought a SIT probe

into the complaint of Mr. Kallahalli though there was no FIR when the SIT was set up on March 11, as the Cubbon Park police had merely treated Mr. Kallahalli's complaint as a petition before it was withdrawn.

Mr. Jarkiholi lodged a "vague" complaint with the

police on March 13, two days after the SIT was formed, the petitioner said, claiming that the SIT had no legal sanction when it was set up, as neither the City Police Commissioner had power to set up a SIT nor a notification was issued in the official gazette in this regard.

IN BRIEF

Filmmaker Balachandran passes away

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
P. Balachandran, screenwriter, filmmaker, dramatist and actor, passed away at his home in Vaikom in Kerala on Monday. He was 69. His foray into cinema was by scripting *Uncle Bun* (1991) starring Mohanlal. He proved his mettle with his subsequent films *Ulladakkam* and *Pavithram*. *Kammatipadam* (2016) was his recent work.

Kin of slain A.P. jawans to get ₹30 lakh each

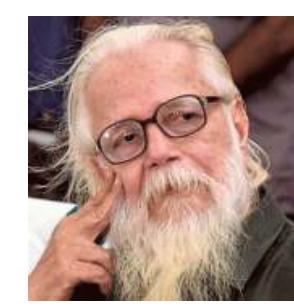
VIJAYAWADA
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced an ex gratia of ₹30 lakh each to the families of jawans Routhu Jagadeesh and Sakhamuri Murali Krishna, who died in Saturday's Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh. Jagadeesh hailed from Gajularega village of Vizianagram district while Murali Krishna belonged to Sattenapalli in Guntur district.

Five-year-old girl dies after brutal assault

PATHANAMTHITTA
A five-year-old girl died after being brutally assaulted allegedly by her stepfather at Kumbaraha here in Kerala on Monday. He is said to have assaulted her earlier too following arguments with her mother. The girl was found lying unconscious at her house on Monday afternoon. Her stepfather has been arrested. The family hails from Tamil Nadu.

TTD sacks three top channel officials

TIRUMALA
The TTD issued orders terminating the services of three top executives working in Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel (SVBC) with immediate effect in the porn link episode that shook the management last year. It was during November last that an office subordinate had shared the link of a porn site to a devotee causing widespread outrage.

Act against erring officials, urges Centre

Nambi Narayanan

er Kerala ADGP Siby Mathew and former senior police officials K.K. Joshiwa and S. Vijayan. At the time of his arrest on November 30, 1994, Mr. Narayanan was working on cryogenic engine technology at ISRO.

Police had accused him of passing on to Pakistan documents and drawings relating to Viking/Vikas engine technology, cryogenic engine technology and PSLV flight data/drawings.

The Supreme Court had dismissed the case in 2018.

HC relief for Shivakumar in tax case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

In a relief to former Minister D.K. Shivakumar, the Karnataka High Court on Monday upheld a Special Court's 2019 order discharging him from a case concerning alleged evasion of income tax of around ₹13 crore.

The accused later circulated the G.O. copy to his badminton friends WhatsApp group, which was later forwarded in several groups and individuals by the participants of that group, he said.

"Everyone assumed it to be an original G.O. A G.O. is a serious document in the government and one cannot treat it in a lighter vein. Forging a government document, that too a G.O., is a serious offence, which can lead to unimaginable consequences," Mr. Kumar said.

When the accused was questioned by mediapersons why he resorted to the act, he said "for fun".

The accused later circulated the G.O. copy to his badminton friends WhatsApp group, which was later forwarded in several groups and individuals by the participants of that group, he said.

SC to take up report on ISRO frame-up

Act against erring officials, urges Centre

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Centre has put its weight behind a report filed by a three-member committee chaired by former Supreme Court judge, Justice D.K. Jain, tasked to unravel rogue officials responsible for the infamous Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) "frame-up" case of 1994 that destroyed the life and reputation of Nambi Narayanan, one of the country's prominent space scientists.

The Centre has applied to the top court, urging it to accept on record the inquiry report submitted by the Justice Jain Committee and take suitable action on the suggestions made against the "erring officials". The court may take up the case next week.

Mr. Narayanan, in his petition before the Supreme Court, had arraigned form-

Police arrest CA for fake lockdown G.O.

Its circulation triggers panic

STAFF REPORTER
HYDERABAD

A chartered accountant (CA), who allegedly forged and circulated a Government Order on COVID-19 lockdown in Telangana, which created panic, was arrested by the Hyderabad police here on Monday.

The accused, Sreepathi Sanjeev Kumar, 48, who worked at a private accountancy firm and is a resident of Madhapur, downloaded and forged the government document in his laptop and phone on April 1, which he further circulated in the WhatsApp groups.

Mr. Kumar is a native of Dargah Mitta in Nellore of Andhra Pradesh. A laptop and a mobile phone were seized from his possession.

He prepared and circulated the fake G.O. dated April 1 in the name of Chief



TELANGANA

Secretary to Telangana government and cheated people by circulating the same on social media," Commissioner of Police Anjani Kumar said.

The accused later circulated the G.O. copy to his badminton friends WhatsApp group, which was later forwarded in several groups and individuals by the participants of that group, he said.

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Karnataka records 32 deaths, over 5,200 cases

12 fatalities, 2,357 cases in Kerala; Telangana, A.P. rise steady

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Recording a steep rise, Karnataka on Monday reported 5,279 cases of COVID-19, of which 3,728 cases were from Bengaluru Urban. The State reported 32 more deaths. The test positivity rate (TPR) for the day stood at 5.39%.

The State on Monday received 15 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

With the Centre freezing fresh registrations for vaccination of healthcare and frontline workers, many of them turned up to get immunised but were sent back. The State had vaccinated 45,95,086 so far.

On Monday, 76,784 senior

citizens and 1,08,243 above 45 years took the jab.

JDS supremo H.D. Deve Gowda, hospitalised with mild symptoms as a contact of his wife who tested positive on March 31, was discharged from Manipal Hospitals on Monday. His wife, Chenamma Deve Gowda was also discharged.

COVID-19

Kerala reported 2,357 new cases on Monday, with TPR of 5.86%. There were 12 new deaths recorded. Kozhikode reported four deaths, Kollam three, and Kannur two, while one death each was reported

(With inputs from Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad, Chennai and Vijayawada bureaus)

SC calls Maudany a 'dangerous man'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde, heading a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, orally referred to People's Democratic Party leader Abdul Nasir Maudany as a "dangerous man" while hearing his plea to relax his bail condition and permit him to stay in his hometown in Kerala till the pendency of the trial in the 2008 Bengaluru bomb blast case in which he is an accused. "You (Maudany) are a dangerous man," Chief Jus-

Third phase of polls in West Bengal today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA

The Election Commission of India has deployed 618 company of Central forces in West Bengal for the third phase of polling in the State in which 31 Assembly seats are going to polls on Tuesday.

Of the 618 companies of Central forces, 317 companies will be deployed in South 24 Parganas, the district where 16 Assembly seats are going to polls. 167 companies of Central forces will be developed in Hooghly and remaining in Howrah. Eight seats in Hooghly and seven in Howrah will go to polls in the third phase.

A total of 205 candidates are in the fray across the 31 seats and nearly 78 lakh electors can exercise their franchise in this phase across 10,871 polling booths. Twelve of the 31 Assembly segments in the State are reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates.

Stakes higher for Mahajot in final phase

Migrant Muslims have a say in many of the constituencies going to the polls in this phase in Assam

RAHUL KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI

When Mohammed Sanullah, a retired soldier, casts his vote at the Koloikash Primary School under the Chaygaon Assembly constituency on Tuesday, his mind will perhaps be on a faraway "hellhole" he had spent a week in, almost two years ago.

The Goalpara Central jail, one of six in Assam also serving as detention centres for "foreigners", is about 100 km from his village west of Guwahati. Mr. Sanullah was lodged in this detention centre after a Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) declared him a non-citizen.

But he is more worried about the one to come – an exclusive detention centre at Matia about 25 km east of the Goalpara jail and under the Goalpara East Assembly constituency. This centre is expected to house 3,000 people who don't get reprieve from the FTs after exclusion from the National Register of



Miles to go: Officials taking a boat ride through the Brahmaputra to conduct voting on a remote island at Koltoli village of Assam, on Monday. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

Citizens (NRC).

"This election has perhaps been the most polarised, stoking the sentiments as well as fears of the minorities. We will be voting for dignity, to live without the tag of Bangladeshi or Miya or illegal immigrant," Mr. Sanullah told *The Hindu* on the eve of polling across 40 of Assam's 126 Assembly seats.

About 19.06 lakh out of 3.3

crore applicants were left out of the complete NRC draft published in August 2019.

Opposite stands

The government refrained from divulging the district-wise exclusion data, but it is believed that the bulk of the Brahmaputra Valley dwellers, mostly Bengali Muslims and Hindus, excluded from the NRC are from at least half

the constituencies in the second phase.

The two main alliances fighting to run the next government have taken opposite stands on the issue of NRC. While the BJP-led alliance, unhappy with the outcome of the updating exercise, has vowed to come out with a "corrected" NRC, the Congress-led *Mahajot*, or grand alliance of 10 parties, said it will accept the NRC

and issue identity card to every citizen. The Congress and its prime ally, All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), hopes its pro-NRC and anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act would see it through in most of the constituencies where migrant Muslims call the shots.

BJP hopes to surprise

The BJP and its ally Asom Gana Parishad, which won 15 of these seats in 2016, are confident too. "Going by the vote share in the 2019 Parliament elections, we expect to spring a surprise in some minority areas," State BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass,

contesting the Patarchukuchi seat, said. Key candidates in this phase are BJP Ministers Himanta Biswa Sarma (Jalukbari seat) and Chandra Mohan Patowary (Dharmapuri), AGP Minister Phani Bhushan Choudhury (Bongaigaon) and BPF Ministers Pramila Rani Brahma (Kokrajhar East) and Chandan Brahma (Sidhi).

CRPF commando may be in Maoists' custody

Police say they have information from several sources

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

A commando of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), who was part of the team that was ambushed at Tarrem in Sukma of Chhattisgarh on April 3, is suspected to have been abducted by the Maoists, the police said.

Director-General of Police, Chhattisgarh, D.M. Awasthi told *The Hindu* that the police had information from several sources that the commando was with the Maoists.

The commando, Rakeshwar Singh Minhas, belonged to the Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) of the CRPF, a unit specially trained for operations in areas affected by left-wing extremism.

"There is no statement by the Maoists yet, but we have information from other

sources that the commando is with them. We can say he is safe so far. We are trying to ascertain how he was taken away," Mr. Awasthi said.

A senior police official said it was possible that the commando ran for cover when a volley of bullets came from the Maoists and unknowingly moved to the other side.

Mr. Manhas's family in Jammu released a video message appealing for his safe return. His wife, Meenu, said she last spoke to him around 9.30 p.m. on April 2 when he told her that he was going for an operation and would return the next day.

The police official said the Maoists were watching the forces. "There were four groups numbering over 400 that left from various camps on night of April 2. When the fourth and the last group

reached Tarrem, they were attacked. There were two villages on the way that were empty and the forces should have avoided the route," said the official.

Another official said there was prior information about the presence of Maoists there since it was one of their core areas. "There were intelligence inputs, but we could not find Maoists at the said location. The security forces were being watched and when the last group moved in, they were attacked," said the official.

Around two dozen sophisticated weapons used by the security personnel were taken away by the Maoists.

Home Minister Amit Shah, on a day-long visit to Chhattisgarh on Monday, addressed the CRPF personnel who were part of the encounter at Tarrem.

The Congress also targeted Home Minister Amit

Rahul Gandhi on Monday said, "Jawans are not cannon fodder to be martyred at will," and alleged that the anti-naxal operations in Chhattisgarh were either poorly designed or incompletely executed.

"No Indian jawan should face an enemy without body armour in the 21st century. It needs to be made available to every soldier," Mr. Gandhi said in a tweet.

In another tweet, he commented on a media report that quoted CRPF chief General Kuldeep Singh as saying that an equal number of naxals were killed.

"If there was no intelligence failure then a 1:1 death ratio means it was a poorly designed and incompetently executed operation," Mr. Gandhi said on Twitter.

The Congress also targeted Home Minister Amit

Gandhi for "continuing to address election campaigns in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam". "When armed forces and soldiers were becoming martyrs, the Home Minister was doing a roadshow with a former cine actress in Tamil Nadu. Thereafter, he addressed another meeting in Tirunelveli, then he went to Kerala and finally proceeded to Assam. He didn't come to Delhi or go to Chhattisgarh. On April 4, he addressed another rally in Sorbhog in Assam," Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said.

SC appoints Special Judges in coal case

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday appointed Arun Bhadravaj and Sanjay Bansal as Special Judges to preside over two separate courts and continue trials in 41 pending cases in connection with the coal block allocation scam.

A Bench led by Chief Justice

of India Sharad A. Bobde decided on the two senior judges on the basis of a panel of names handed over by the Delhi High Court Registrar General.

On March 15, the Bench asked the Delhi High Court Chief Justice to share the names of judges of "high calibre and absolute integrity"

to take over the trials. The two judges will replace Judge Bharat Parashar.

According to a communication from the Delhi High Court, Judge Parashar needed to be replaced, as he has now completed more than six years in the same post. The top court's order referred to how the cases

had been pending for about six years when the law required them to be disposed of in two years.

The Comptroller and Auditor General report tabled in Parliament in 2012 pegged the losses to the exchequer due to alleged irregularities in the allocation of blocks at nearly ₹2 lakh crore.

Officer behind 'doubtful' voter detection dead

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

A retired IPS officer whose drive to weed out "illegal immigrants" from the voters' list led to the Assam agitation of 1979 to 1985 passed away on Monday. He was 86.

Former Deputy Inspector General of Police, Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharya, was suffering from a prolonged illness.

Posted as the DIG of the Assam's Border Police, Mr. Bhattacharya had in the late 1970s found thousands of names in the State's electoral rolls doubtful and identified them as "illegal immigrants" from Bangladesh. The drive yielded a category of voters classified as 'D', meaning doubtful voters.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER & BASIN MANAGER, SUBARNAREKHA & BUDHABALANGA BASIN, AT/PO:- LAXMIPOSI, DIST:-MAYURBHANJ	
Government of Odisha "e" PROCUREMENT NOTICE	
Bid Identification No.: 01 /21-22 of CEBM, SBB, Laxmiposi	
i. Name of Work	: Construction of Baisinga Branch Canal from RD 30.00 KM to RD 45.00 KM including all structures with Cement concrete lining and Service road, Package-XXI
ii. Estimated Cost (Lakh)	: Rs.10909.58 Lakh
iii. Period of Completion	: 24 (Twenty Four) Calendar Months
iv. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: 12.04.2021 at 10 A.M.
v. Last date / time for receipt of bid in the portal	: 11.05.2021 up to 5 PM.
vi. Name & Address of the O.I.T.	: Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, O/o the CEBM, Subarnarekha & Budhabalanga Basin, Laxmiposi, Mayurbhanj

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>".

Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, Subarnarekha & Budhabalanga Basin, cebmsbb2019@gmail.com

A-1: QIPR-32074/11/0001/2122

Stop Corona
(i) Wash Your Hands, (ii) Wear Mask, (iii) Maintain Social Distance

DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER(EAP)-I
ROOM NO.501, VARUNALAYA PHASE-I, KAROL BAGH,
NEW DELHI-110005

Email: eeeap1.djb@gmail.com

SUBJECT: CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH PROSPECTIVE BIDDERS FOR 24X7 WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE NETWORK IMPROVEMENT WITH LONG TERM O&M

DJB is in the process of engaging contractor for providing 24x7 Water Supply & Sewerage Network Improvement with Long Term O&M across Delhi. A draft bid document of the same has been prepared which shall be shared and discussed with the prospective bidders.

The firms who intend to participate in the bidding process are requested to attend the meeting and share their inputs.

Consultative meeting will be held on 9/4/2021 at 11:00 AM at Auditorium, DJB (Head Office), Varunalya, phase-II, karol Bagh, Delhi.

The firms who are unable to attend the meeting may contact at email: eeeap1.djb@gmail.com. The draft bid document shall be shared with them and they may send their inputs through email.

ISSUED BY P.R.O.(WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V. 21 (2021-22)

Executive Engineer (EAP)-I (+91-9650094468)

INSTITUTE OF FOREST BIODIVERSITY

(Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education)
(An autonomous body under Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India)

Dulapally, Kompally S.O., Hyderabad - 500 100 Ph: 040 66309500, Fax: 040 - 66309521, e-mail: director_ifb@icfre.org, website: <http://ifb.icfre.gov.in>

TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited for replenishment study of Subarnarekha river stretch – Along the Odisha -West Bengal interstate boundary and within Balasore district and having path length of about 27.5 km. The tender start time and closing time of the bid is

06.04.2021 15:00 hrs (3 PM) and 29.04.2021 18:00 hrs (6 PM). Fortender document and further details please visit website <https://moefcc.euniwizarde.com> and <https://ifb.icfre.gov.in> or may contact 040- 66309500

Sd/- Director.

The remark came during the hearing of a petition filed by Common Cause, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, objecting to the appointment of Praveen Sinha as interim CBI Director following the retirement of Rishi Kumar Shukla on February 2.

The petition said the government had failed to appoint a regular Director through the high-power selection committee of the Prime Minister, Chief Justice

Probe Param Bir's letter, HC tells CBI

He had accused Anil Deshmukh of graft

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to initiate a preliminary inquiry within 15 days into the letter by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh containing allegations of corruption against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

In a 56-page order, a Division Bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni said, "Mr. Deshmukh is the Home Minister. The Police Department is under his control and direction. There can be no fair, impartial, unbiased and untainted probe, if the same were entrusted to the State police force. As of necessity, the probe has to be entrusted to an independent agency like the CBI."

The court said a probe by an independent agency was

necessary to "instil public confidence and safeguard the Fundamental Rights of the citizens".

Following the High Court direction, Mr. Deshmukh submitted his resignation.

The court was hearing a PIL petition filed by Mr. Singh seeking an independent CBI probe into his March 20 letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and a criminal writ petition by advocate Jayshri Patil, filed the next day, with the Malabar Hill Police Station and Director, Anti-Corruption Bureau of the CBI.

Dr. Patil's complaint said, "The letter should have been immediately given to the police station concerned as a FIR under Section 154 (information in cognizable cases) of the Criminal Procedure Code, as a senior police officer and an offence was required to be registered but the same has not happened."

Supreme Court frowns on interim heads for CBI

Court tells govt. 'in-charge' appointments can't continue

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday told the government that interim appointments to the post of CBI Director cannot go on.

"In-charge arrangements for CBI Director cannot go on," a Bench led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao told Attorney General K.K. Venugopal.

The remark came during the hearing of a petition filed by Common Cause, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, objecting to the appointment of Praveen Sinha as interim CBI Director following the retirement of Rishi Kumar Shukla on February 2.

The petition said the government had failed to appoint a regular Director through the high-power selection committee of the Prime Minister, Chief Justice

of India and Leader of Opposition.

Mr. Venugopal said the meeting of the committee was deferred till May 2.

Mr. Bhushan said the meeting should be called before May 2. He wondered whether the government, by deferring the meeting, wanted to bypass the incumbent CJI, who is retiring on April 23.

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IIT-Guwahati suspends rape accused

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Indian Institute of Technology-Guwahati (IIT-G) has suspended a student accused of sexually assaulting a student on campus.

Four others allegedly involved in the case have been isolated from each other on campus for police and internal investigations, the institute's administration said on Monday.

Insisting that the institute has been cooperating with the police, the IIT-G said in a statement, "Prima facie, it has been found that the student has committed an act that has been considered a serious criminal offence by the judiciary leading to his arrest on April 3 by the North Guwahati police."

"These acts are a serious violation of the disciplinary rules of the institute, compromising the safety and security of students, hostel boarders and residents of the campus and disruptive to the institute environment," IIT-G said.

India delayed second wave, can contain economic impact'

Finance Ministry report stresses testing, effective isolation and contact tracing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Though India is in the middle of a second wave of COVID-19 infections, with a new peak of over 1 lakh cases reported on Sunday, the Finance Ministry stressed on Monday that the country had been able to delay the onset of the second wave and was well armed to cope with downside risks to the economy.

"The gap between the first peak to start of the second wave has been 151 days in India, while it was much lower in other countries. This implies the readiness of the health infrastructure and awareness of the standard operating protocols at this time," the Ministry said in its monthly economic report for March.

Five-fold strategy
"India is emphasising on a five-fold strategy to curb the tide of new cases – exponential



Fighting the virus: People registering for COVID-19 vaccines during an inoculation drive at a centre in Delhi on Monday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

tial increase in testing, effective isolation and contact tracing of those infected, reinvigoration of public and private healthcare resources, ensuring of COVID-appropriate behaviour and targeted approach to vaccination in districts reporting large numbers," the report said, adding that a

fast vaccine roll-out would bolster the battle against the virus. "Despite the surge in cases, the recovery in economy is resilient with sustained improvement in a majority of high-frequency indicators," noted the Department of Economic Affairs report.

Predicting a strong revival in investment growth sup-

ported by the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Mission and the infrastructure and capital expenditure impetus provided in the Union Budget for 2021-22, the report said. "The wheels of India's capex cycle have been set into motion, signs of which were imminent in the second half of the year."

Deep dip



Firefighter: A helicopter fetching water from the Tehri dam to extinguish a fire in the forest areas of Garhwal on Monday. ■ PTI

Names of vaccine expert panel released

10-member SEC cleared Covaxin in Jan.

R. PRASAD

CHENNAI

Names of the 10-member Subject Expert Committee (SEC) that approved Covaxin for restricted emergency use in clinical trial mode – after meetings on December 30, 2020, and January 1-2, 2021 – were made public by the Health Ministry on March 23.

The identity of the SEC members, which has been kept under wraps, was finally disclosed by the Ministry in response to a Rajya Sabha question by Congress MP Syed Nasir Hussain.

The 10 members are: Dr. Varsha Gupta, Professor, Department of Microbiology, Government Medical College Hospital, Chandigarh; Dr. Archana Thakur, Medical Director, Professor and HOD (Microbiology), G.B. Pant Hospital, New Delhi; Dr. Abhishek Agarwal, Emeritus Professor, Department of Medicine, SMS Medical College, Jaipur; Dr. Sushant H. Meshram, Professor and Head, Pulmonary Medicine Department, Government Medical College & Hospital, Nagpur; Dr. Anant Mohan, Professor and Head, Pulmonary Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi; Dr. A.P. Dubey, Professor of Paediatrics, ESI (PGIMSR) Hospital, New Delhi; Dr. Arvind Bagga, Professor, Department of Paediatrics, AIIMS, New Delhi; Dr. Dipendra K. Mitra, Professor and Head, Transplant

Immunology and Immunogenetics Department, AIIMS, New Delhi; Dr. B. Gupta, Professor, General Medicine Department, NDMC Medical College and Hindu Rao Hospital, New Delhi; and Dr. D.S. Arya, Professor, Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS, New Delhi.

According to the Health Ministry, nine of the 10 members participated in the virtual meeting held on January 2. Except Dr. B. Gupta from NDMC Medical College and Hindu Rao Hospital who expressed concerns about the vaccine candidate, the other eight members gave restricted use approval for Covaxin.

The recommendation of the SEC meeting held on January 2, 2021 has been posted on the website of the drug regulator too.

The restricted use approval for Covaxin came under a cloud as there was no efficacy data available at the time. The Committee approved the vaccine for restricted use based on the safety and efficacy data from a non-human, primate challenge study where the vaccine has been found to be safe and effective.

The approval came with riders saying it was in "public interest as an abundant precaution, in clinical trial mode, to have more options for vaccinations, especially in case of infection by mutant strains".

Farm unions protest direct payment order issued by FCI

They warn that the Centre's insistence on tenancy documentation could derail the crop procurement process

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Recent orders from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) have led to a new flashpoint in the ongoing farmers protests, with farm unions warning that the Centre's insistence on direct payment and tenancy documentation could derail the crop procurement process.

On Monday, farm unions affiliated to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha protested outside the FCI offices in Punjab and Haryana, as well as some

locations in other States such as Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Declaring it as FCI Bachao Divas (or Save FCI Day), farmers demanded an immediate withdrawal of the recent orders.

"The government should roll back the provision of direct payment to the bank account. Implementing it in haste can lead to many complex problems that will exclude so many farmers from getting their price of the crop," said an SKM letter to

the Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs. The FCI has insisted that direct payment to farmers' bank accounts, bypassing the powerful arhatiyas or commission agents, will lead to greater transparency and accountability. Since arhatiyas play a key role in the Punjab and Haryana farm ecosystem by providing farm loans, the move has been opposed by a large section of farmers, as well as the Punjab government.

Another FCI order stipu-

lates that tenant farmers and sharecroppers must produce a jamabandhi, or legal agreement proving that they have the right to till leased land, in order to get paid for procured crops. Thousands of sharecroppers do not have such agreements and will be hit hard by this move. SKM is demanding that this order be withdrawn as well.

The FCI's fresh proposals to tighten quality requirements for wheat and paddy procurement from the next marketing season are also

being opposed.

At a broader level, farmers connected their issues with the FCI with their existing demands to repeal the farm laws and enact a legal guarantee for procurement of all crops and minimum support prices.

Private control

"The Acts will increase control of the private sector in food grains storage, cold storage, food processing and marketing," said the All India Kisan Sabha, in a letter ad-

dressed to the PM.

"Ultimately the government plans to wind up subsidised food distribution under [the Public Distribution System] and reduce it to a cash transfer scheme under pressure from the [World Trade Organisation] and imperialist countries like the U.S.A. It also plans to sell off the FCI warehouses to the private sector to pay off the debts," it added, accusing the Centre of reducing the FCI's budget and procurement centres in recent years.

Earthquake in Sikkim; tremors felt in 4 States

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

An earthquake measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale struck the Sikkim-Bhutan border at 8.49 p.m. on Monday, with tremors being felt in Assam, West Bengal and Bihar.

People rushed out of their homes but there were no reports of any damage.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the Chief Ministers of Sikkim, Bihar and Assam and took stock of the situation, government sources said.

The epicentre was recorded at longitude 88.84 degrees East and latitude 27.23 degrees North.

In West Bengal, tremors were felt in Siliguri, Malda and Darjeeling, where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is campaigning for the fourth phase of polling.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar called her to enquire about her safety.

Railways completes arch closure of Chenab bridge

The bridge will be 35 metres higher than the Eiffel Tower

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Railways on Monday said it had completed the arch closure of the 1315m Chenab bridge, the world's highest railway bridge.

Terming it one of the biggest civil engineering challenges faced by any project in India, the Railways added that at 359m above the river bed level, the bridge would be 35 metres higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

The Chenab bridge is part of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla rail link project (USBR) and completion of the steel arch is an important construction milestone.

Most difficult part
"This was one of the most difficult parts of the bridge over Chenab. This achievement is a major leap towards



Important milestone: The arch for the railway bridge over Chenab river nearing completion, on Monday. ■ PTI

the completion of the 111-km-long winding stretch from Katra to Banihal," the Railways added.

The arch consists of steel boxes, which will be filled

with concrete to improve stability. The bridge is being built at a cost of ₹1,486 crore and can withstand high wind speeds up to 266 km per hour.

Govt. amends nine laws via ordinance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

As many as nine laws, the Centre has replaced the existing appellate authorities and vested those powers in the High Courts through an ordinance, the Tribunal Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance 2021, promulgated on Sunday.

These laws are Cinematograph Act; Copyright Act; Customs Act; Patents Act; Airports Authority of India Act; Trade Marks Act; Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act; Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act and Control of National Highways (Land and Traffic) Act.

The tenures of Chairperson and members of Tribunals were also amended. The tenure of Chairperson has been fixed for a term of four years or till the age of 70, whichever is earlier.

'INS Viraat now private property of ship-breaker'

SC responds to plea of firm wanting to make it a museum

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

INS Viraat, the Navy's decommissioned aircraft carrier, has become the "private property" of a ship-breaker who has already torn down 40% of its body, chiefly for scrap, the Supreme Court told a private company, that wants to turn the vessel into a maritime museum cum-adventure centre.

On February 10, the court had ordered a stay on the process of dismantling the ship. The carrier was bought by the Gujarat-based Shree Ram Group, a ship-breaking firm, in a bid. The 67-year-old iconic warship was towed to the breaking yard after over three decades' service in the Navy.

Envitech Marine Consultants Private Limited, represented by Vishnukant Sharma and Rupali Vishnukant



Last journey: INS Viraat approaches the Alang ship-breaking yard in Gujarat. ■ FILE PHOTO

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan for Shree Ram Group, asked the court to lift the stay order.

Ms. Sharma said warships the world around are used as museums.

"We share your sentiments about warships. But it (Viraat) has become their property. They have spent money on it," Chief Justice Bobde said.



The Dell XPS 13 9310 could be another fine addition to the high-performance ultrabook ranges if not for a few flaws



A workhorse with soul

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

In the past year-and-a-half, the most common question when buying laptops is 'can you name one that does it all (gaming, productivity, streaming) in just under ₹50,000?' This question often floors gadget gurus, as they scour online categories and often find options are lacking. As newer tech gets released, older models will naturally seem sub par.

That said, Dell XPS 13 series – which certainly is not one of those merely affordable devices – is just reported not just for its savvy design but also the ride-or-die life cycle. This model is made of CNC aluminium which sees the device carrying quite lightly, ideal for those sick of work-from-home and want to take the meetings and deadlines to a café or a friend's place. Our review device was the Frost exterior that comes with an Arctic White glass fibre composite around the keyboard and trackpad, allowing for a comfortable grip and resting position for your palms.

The 13.4-inch display on the XPS 13

9310 is, as usual, eye-catching and not too high-contrast. Does it match up to the MI MacBook's displays? It comes pretty close, thanks to the Intel Iris Xe's transformational GPU and integrated graphics that promise to support richer gaming experiences and greater speed for designers and creators.

Display size matters; the 500-nit (of brightness) screen's 16:10 aspect ratio makes for comfortable viewing thanks to there being more vertical space; when laptop screen ratios seem off-balance, this can affect how the user takes in information. In fact, this 91.5% screen-to-body ratio is known as 'a sweet spot' given it is ideal for both streaming

SPECIFICATIONS	
CHIPSET:	11th Generation Intel Core i5-1135G7 Processor
VIDEO CARD:	Intel Iris Xe Graphics
DISPLAY:	13.4" FHD+ (1920 x 1200) InfinityEdge, non-touch anti-glare 500-nit display
MEMORY:	512GB M.2 PCIe NVMe Solid State Drive



and productivity. Goodbye, annoying black bars and weird bezels!

One of the most under-discussed aspects of a display is backlight bleed, when the display's light leaks around the edges of your screen, making it unevenly lit. This, too, can affect the viewing comfort and more laptop manufacturers are waking up to this as more users become more cognizant of this odd phenomena. Thankfully, the XPS 13 9310 does not have such noticeable backlight bleed, but you may catch a glimpse of it in low-light settings, so do not use this device in complete

darkness. The touchscreen is a handy add-on, transforming the laptop into a wholly interactive device. But at the start of use, the touchscreen was not too responsive for me, so I merely adjusted my reliance on this feature. The Gorilla Glass 6 gives off a reflective and glossy finish which can be a trial to keep fingerprint-free if you are like me and are constantly distracted by every little smudge.

Dell still has not listened to the mass cries of its consumer base around its grainy camera. There is only a slight improvement in the XPS 13 9310's built-in webcam. In several different video calls, my webcam-captured self looked like

variants of a Van Gogh painting. Given the webcam is located within the frame itself, it is easy to get your fingerprint smudge on there; before your video calls, give it a good wipe with a microfibre cloth. Some users may have to dish out extra cash for a HD webcam as well as a small ring light to keep themselves video call-ready.

The battery of the XPS 13 9310 is impressive; I was able to get 16 hours of productivity out of a single full charge while gaming got a good 10 hours. My first uses ended up causing quite a bit of overheating to the point of discomfort but there are some energy distribution settings one can calibrate to amend this. Dell has purposefully invested more in performance and display here, making it one of the best Windows 10 ultrabooks out there.

Setting buyers back by ₹1,50,990, the device better come with some decent support. Dell India has prompt servicing and you can look forward to pan-country help, wherever the glitches may happen. The Dell XPS 13 9310 is a great ultrabook but there are some great high-performance options in the market costing under one lakh, such as from Asus, Dell, HP and Apple.

If you are to opt for this Dell XPS 13 9310, do it with your all and be ready for all that comes your way, because this is one that will occupy your workspace for at least the next two to three years.

Hey doc, got Fortnite?



Arnav Gupta carries a heavy course load as a third-year medical student at University of Ottawa, so winding down with a game of The Legend of Zelda always provides relief from study. But Zelda may be helping improve his surgical education, too, as Gupta and a team of researchers from the University of Toronto concluded in an April 2021 paper in the medical journal *Surgery*. The findings were deciphered from a systematic review of 16 studies involving 575 participants.

"Given the limited availability of simulators and the high accessibility of video games, medical students interested in surgical specialties should know that video games may be a valuable adjunct training for enhancing their medical education, especially in surgical specialties where it can be critical," says Gupta. "Particularly, in robotic surgery, being a video gamer was associated with improvements in time to completion, economy of motion, and overall performance. In laparoscopic surgery, video games-based training was associated with improvement in duration on certain tasks, economy of motion, accuracy, and overall performance."

"While video games can never replace the value of first-hand experience, they do have merit as an adjunctive tool, especially when attempting to replicate important movements to surgery," says Gupta, which makes games like Resident Evil 4 or Trauma Center: New Blood fitted for his own ambitions. "Games such as Fortnite have the potential to enhance those necessary movements, providing stronger motivational components and in a low stakes environment."

"There is some ambivalence towards video games in medicine," says Gupta. "The hope is that maybe this study can inspire someone to take advantage of video games' unique capabilities, reduce the general ambivalence towards it, and develop some fun ways to let students engage with surgical education."



GAMESPOT

Extraterrestrial civil war

Outriders is a fast-paced loot-and-shoot game set on an Earth-like planet with monsters and post-apocalyptic humans

JULIAN ALMEIDA

The developers of Outriders, People Can Fly, make addictive action games in the simple shooter genre. Bulletstorm, for instance, was a first-person shooter with attacks that sent people flying, perhaps justifying the studio's unique name. Outriders is their wild attempt at the lucrative loot-shooter genre.

The game has an extremely addictive shooter dynamics within a pretty good story. Humanity looks to planet Enoch after its mistakes destroy earth. You play as an Outrider, a highly trained soldier sent to scout and prepare the new planet for the rest of the colonists. But a deadly energy storm kills your entire team and puts you in cryostasis.

You wake up as an 'Altered', a mutated human with superpowers. And, you find yourself in the middle of another war. You face off against Enoch's monsters as well as factions of humans fighting over resources.

Outriders has the plot of a



blockbuster film. I wanted to go on several sidequests to explore the game's world and experience its action. The shaky camera on the cutscenes, however, is annoying. Thankfully, you can change the camera setting.

The game's action stands out. It borrows the best elements from several popular action games. Outriders is fast and frantic like Doom Eternal. And, you have the advantage of special powers. The game feels like Gears of War in both design and cover system, but there is also a distinct Mass Effect 3 vibe to it.

For your character, you can select from four distinct class-

es, each with its unique play-styles, strengths and weaknesses. The combination of gunplay and powers is great, but the cover system makes zero sense. The enemy AI is aggressive and is designed to keep you on your toes. They also cheat a bit. Hiding behind cover will automatically attract all their grenades, as they know where you are all the time. Additionally, the dodge button seems to have a mind of its own. On many occasions, I dodged the wrong way and one of the game's punishing Altered bosses made quick work of me.

Outriders can be played solo by adjusting the difficulty

tiers. But it is a game to be played with friends. In co-op, you can strategise and take down bosses effectively; encounters become a lot more fun. Though, at the time of writing this, there were many server down-times and game crashes on PC.

The game's core mechanics are strong with great animations but things feel a bit inconsistent. This is especially evident in the sound design. On some battles, it feels as if a bunch of kids put 'pew-pew'

Addictive co-ops Screenshot from the Outriders video game ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



OUTRIDERS
DEVELOPER: People Can Fly
PUBLISHER: Square Enix
PRICE: ₹3,499 on Nintendo Switch; ₹3,999 on PC, Xbox Series and PlayStation PS4/PS5

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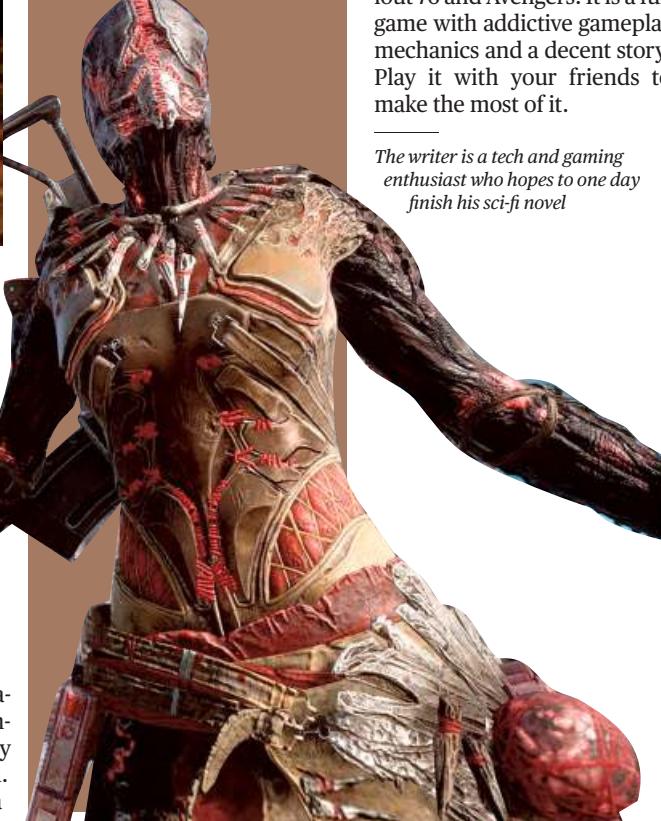
on PC, Xbox Series and

PlayStation PS4/PS5

and 'tew-tew' fighting sounds in the game. Oddly, factors such as distance did not affect the sound. So, a gatling gun-wielding enemy, who is afar, sounds like he is right in front of me.

While Outriders has a few rough edges, People Can Fly has done what EA, Bethesda and Crystal Dynamics struggled to do with Anthem, Fallout 76 and Avengers. It is a fun game with addictive gameplay mechanics and a decent story. Play it with your friends to make the most of it.

The writer is a tech and gaming enthusiast who hopes to one day finish his sci-fi novel





SUNALINI MATHEW

Anand Patwardhan's *Reason* is like The Scream – it hollows you out. Edward Munch's late 19th Century work was the outcome of a moment of mind-numbing angst; Patwardhan's was the outcome of the killings of social worker Dr NA Dabholkar and Left-leaning politician Govind Pansare, both rationalists.

Screened for the first time in India with English subtitles, the version with Hindi subtitles is already on YouTube.

The 2018 documentary film is 218 minutes long, and is best watched with pauses – either after each of the chapters, to read about the incidents, or between the first and second segment (after the 95th minute).

"I'd like people to watch *Reason* on a big screen with good sound, preferably with some friends," says Patwardhan, describing himself as a projectionist, "not just a filmmaker".

Excerpts from an edited interview:

How did *Reason* get triggered?

• I knew Dr Dabholkar personally and his murder in 2013 was shocking, but it was only after Comrade Pansare was shot dead in 2015 in a strikingly similar way – both rationalists were gunned down while on their morning walk by men on motorbikes – did I decide to take up the camera. It felt like a war on reason and so we began to investigate.

By the time the film concluded, Prof MM Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh were also killed in an almost identical manner.

How long did the whole process of movie-making take?

• *Reason/Vivek* took almost four years to shoot and edit and it no longer remained just about the murder of rationalists as we

All We need is reason

Anand Patwardhan's 2018 documentary film *Reason* is showing with English subtitles for the first time in India

realised that a hate driven, largely upper-caste led majoritarian ideology that had begun over a century ago, was now rapidly growing in different parts of the country.

When the OTT platforms

declined to show the film, what were the reasons they cited?

• No OTT platform will ever admit on paper that they are afraid of being shut down and shunted out if they go anywhere near the truth. So they just say



Docu-drama in real life (Above)
Patwardhan shooting; (below)
Pansare, speaking at a women workers rally

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

this is not what audiences want to see.

In the past I took the Government-controlled Doordarshan TV to court and forced them to show my films on the twin grounds of "freedom of expression" and the "public's right to information".

We won all our cases and many of my films were telecast by court order.

These days that option is less effective. In the case of private players it is the market, or at least the excuse of the market, that becomes the real censor.

Do you fear for your life?

• I get asked this often, but the truth is, I don't.

Not because it is completely inconceivable but because I have filmed people who are in far greater everyday danger than I am, and yet they never flinch from their duty to their own conscience.

I belong to a privileged section of society and must use my privilege to act as a witness. I don't have the right to be afraid to speak the truth as I see it.

Reason will be streamed on April 11, 2:30 pm on bookmyshow.com; this will be followed by a discussion with vocalist and author TM Krishna.

Brotherhood of music Lucky Ali and Eliezer Cohen Botzer who collaborated for the album *Lemella*

• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Cross-cultural collaboration

Lucky Ali and Eliezer Cohen hold forth on their latest single 'Amaraya' and the spiritual harmony that binds them

SB VIJAYA MARY

When singer-song writer Lucky Ali, a devout Muslim and proud Indian, and musician Eliezer Botzer, an Orthodox Jew and proud Israeli found each other, the music and poetry of their spirits immediately fused and ignited a new energy.

These lines scroll on the screen of the recently-released multi-lingual single 'Amaraya' that expounds the essence of the artists' musical collaboration.

Lucky Ali and Botzer speak to us over a video call from Bengaluru and Tel Aviv respectively; their conversation as seamless as their music – each one giving space to the other to express, and at the right moment.

The collaboration started with the release of the first track 'On My Way Home' from their album *Lemella* in November 2019. Coming post the pandemic lockdown, 'Amaraya' – meaning mirror or reflection in Arabic – according to the artistes, is a song about hope, unity and connection'.

The track, released on March 31, is recorded in Urdu, Hindi, Hebrew and Arabic and shot at Lucky Ali's farm in Bengaluru and some locales in Goa. 'Amaraya' is a soulful rendition that does not conform to a particular genre but regales the listeners with rhythmic beats and harmonies.

"I see this as a continuation of the journey within the song that will culminate in something that we are yet to discover. It's a work in progress," says Lucky Ali. He adds, "The producers had already set the idea of this rich music in place, we had to find space for ourselves, and it was a welcoming space."

Agreeing it was "the development of a journey", Eliezer says, "When we released 'On My Way Home' we didn't realise that wherever we were, we were on our way home. But then we all got into this pandemic situation and the perception of home changed. 'Amaraya' came at the right time when we see humans connecting, no matter where they are. You could be isolated but could relate to every person in the world."

"We are in a journey that always develops and we are grateful for this collaboration and friendship. We hope to meet the whole world under normal circumstances when the pandemic is behind us," says Eliezer as Lucky Ali nods in agreement.

Aerosmith on my sleeve

Harley-Davidson and Bravado, Universal Music Group's merchandise and brand management company, launch a collection in collaboration with the iconic rock band, Aerosmith. Available now, the limited-edition line of men's and women's apparel will be sold at Harley-Davidson dealerships around the world and on Harley-Davidson.com.

It is a celebration of rock and roll

music and motorcycles. The collection features men's and women's graphic T-shirts, long-sleeve shirts, sweatshirts, and tank tops. It also has iconic artwork collaborations from both Aerosmith and Harley-Davidson.

The offering will include 17 total styles and is made up of six distinct graphic capsules, comprising: Burnout, inspired by the art of Aerosmith's eponymous album and

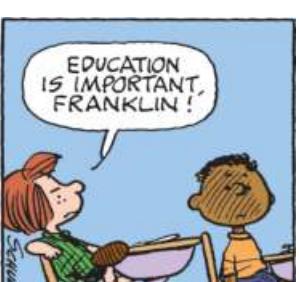
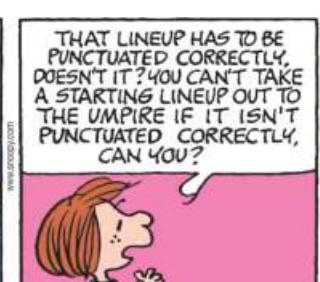
features vintage imagery to showcase and highlight the beginnings of these two renowned American brands. Dream On, named for the breakout song on the band's debut studio album, *Dream On*. Pump utilises both the brands most recognisable logos, joining the two brands with the wings of freedom. Then there is Aero Force One, an ode to the Aerosmith's devoted fan base. Toxic Twins is a graphic riff on the

nickname for the band's song-writing duo. This design features both logos encased with snakes meant to represent the strength and spirit of both brands. Draw the Line takes the art from Aerosmith's album of the same name and infuses the tire tread and exhaust pipes of a Harley-Davidson motorcycle to represent the thunderous energy that ties this genre of music and motorcycles together.

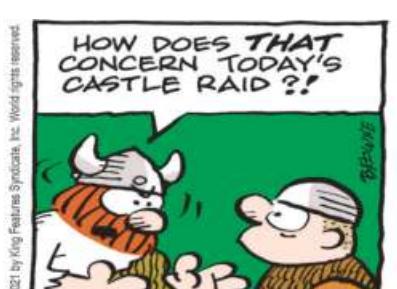
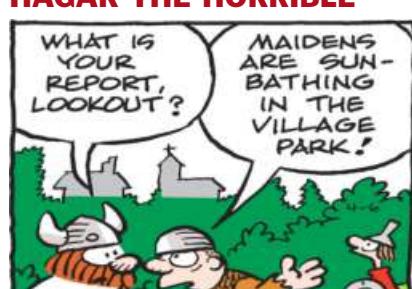
POOCH CAFE



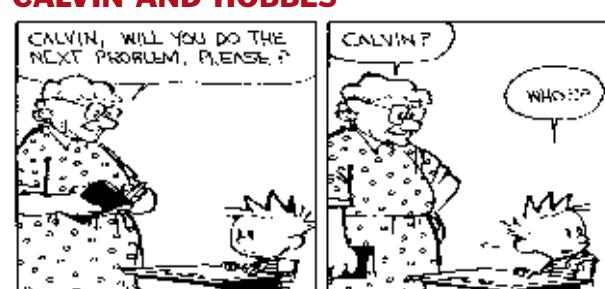
PEANUTS



HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



TIGER



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



I'm not going to obey, says Jordan Prince

In an audio message, the detained royal says he would defy limits on his movement, communications

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

AMMAN

Jordan's Prince Hamzah, accused of a "wicked" plot against his elder half-brother King Abdullah II, has struck a defiant tone, insisting he will not obey orders restricting his movement.

The government has accused Prince Hamzah of involvement in a seditious conspiracy to "destabilise the kingdom's security", placed him under house arrest and detained at least 16 more people.

But 41-year-old Hamzah, who says he has been ordered to stay inside his Amman palace, vowed he would defy limits on his movement and communications, in an audio recording posted on Twitter late on Sunday.

"I don't want to make moves and escalate now, but of course, I'm not going to obey when they say you



Defiant mode: A file photo of Jordanian Prince Hamza bin al Hussein in the Wadi Rum desert, Aqaba. - AFP

can't go out, you can't tweet, you can't communicate with people, you're only allowed to see your family," he said.

Prince Hamzah – a former Crown Prince who was stripped of that title by King Abdullah in 2004 – has emerged as a vocal critic of the monarchy, accusing Jordan's leadership of corruption,

nepotism and authoritarian rule.

In a video he sent to the BBC on Saturday he complained "incompetence that has been prevalent in our governing structure for the last 15 to 20 years and has been getting worse".

He charged that "no one is able to speak or express opin-

ion on anything without being bullied, arrested, harassed and threatened".

'Wicked slander'

Prince Hamza denied being involved in any "nefarious" plot, but said he had been placed under house arrest, with his phone and Internet cut, by Jordan's military chief, General Youssef Hunieiti. In the recording released on Sunday, Prince Hamzah said that "when the head of the joint chiefs of staff comes and tells you this ... I think it's kind of unacceptable".

He added that when Gen. Hunieiti visited his home, "I recorded what he said and sent it to my friends abroad and to my family, in case anything happens".

According to residents, the Internet has been cut off for two days in the posh district of Dabouq, in the west

of the capital Amman, where Prince Hamzah and other royals live.

King Abdullah, 59, named Hamzah Crown Prince in 1999, in line with their father's dying wish, but stripped him of that title five years later and named his own son Prince Hussein, now 26, heir to the throne.

Prince Hamzah's mother, American-born Queen Noor, defended her son, tweeting that she was "praying that truth and justice will prevail for all the innocent victims of this wicked slander".

The crisis has laid bare divisions in a country usually seen as a bulwark of stability in West Asia. Washington, major Gulf powers, Egypt and the Arab League were all quick to pledge their support for King Abdullah and all his steps to ensure stability, and a similar message came from Russia Monday.

Afghan President to unveil new peace proposal: officials

Plan moots political settlement with Taliban and a ceasefire

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

KABUL

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has drawn up a new proposal for peace with the Taliban ahead of an international conference aimed at jump-starting faltering talks between the two warring sides, official sources said.

It comes after the U.S. – backed by Russia and other stakeholders – said in its own leaked proposal that it wants to see some form of transitional government involving the Taliban, although Mr. Ghani has insisted leaders can only be chosen at the ballot box.

According to official sources, Mr. Ghani intends to present his three-stage plan at a UN-backed conference in Turkey to be attended by the U.S., Russia and



New plans: U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul on March 21. - GETTY IMAGES

other key regional countries. A date for the event has not been finalised.

Early election

The U.S. is just weeks away from a May 1 deadline to withdraw all foreign troops from Afghanistan as part of a deal agreed with the hardline group last year – a date U.S. President Joe Biden has

said will be tough to meet.

Mr. Ghani's three-stage proposal includes reaching a political settlement with the Taliban and announcing an internationally monitored ceasefire.

He then proposes holding an early presidential election in which the Taliban could take part to form a "government of peace".

Netanyahu sees prospects fade as his graft trial resumes

President Rivlin begins consultations on govt. formation

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial resumed on Monday, with a key witness painting a picture of an image-obsessed Israeli leader forcing a prominent news site to flatter his family and smear his opponents.

The testimony came as Mr. Netanyahu's chances of securing another term in office following last month's parliamentary elections appeared to be dwindling as President Reuven Rivlin began consultations with the various parties elected to

Parliament before choosing a candidate to form a new government.

With a majority of lawmakers opposed to giving Mr. Netanyahu another term, Mr. Rivlin could give the task to a different candidate.

Taken together, the court testimony and political consultations pointed to an increasingly uphill struggle for Mr. Netanyahu as he fights for his political life.

The consultations "make it more difficult for the President to give the mandate to Mr. Netanyahu," said Yohanan Plesner, President of the

Israel Democracy Institute.

The session focused on the most serious case against Mr. Netanyahu – in which he is accused of promoting regulations that delivered hundreds of millions of dollars of profits to the Bezeq telecom company in exchange for positive coverage on the firm's popular news site, Walla.

Ilan Yeshua, Walla's former chief editor, described a system in which Bezeq's owners, Shaul and Iris Elovitch, repeatedly pressured him to publish favourable things about Mr. Netanyahu and smear his rivals.

Philippines slams China over continued 'incursion'

Manila warns of 'unwanted hostilities'

REUTERS

MANILA

Aides of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday criticised China for what they called territorial incursions by hundreds of its vessels, which his legal counsel warned could damage ties and lead to "unwanted hostilities".

Mr. Duterte's lawyer Salvador Panelo called the prolonged presence of boats an unwelcome stain on relations that risked "unwanted hostilities that both countries would rather not pursue". "We can negotiate on matters of mutual concern and benefit, but make no mistake about it – our sove-

reignty is non-negotiable," Mr. Panelo said.

Mr. Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque echoed the view: "We will not give up even a single inch of our national territory or our exclusive economic zone (EEZ)."

The comments from the presidential palace are unusually strong given Mr. Duterte's reluctance to confront Beijing, which he has sought to befriend.

Foreign Ministry also rejected China's view that Whitsun Reef was a traditional fishing ground in its waters, and said it would send a diplomatic protest each day that China boats stayed there.

Japan expresses concerns to China on Hong Kong, Uighurs

Foreign Minister also raises the issue of maritime incursions

REUTERS

TOKYO

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi on Tuesday expressed strong concerns to his Chinese counterpart about Chinese incursions into territorial waters, the situation in Hong Kong and the human rights situation of China's Uighur minority.

China's extensive territorial claims in the East and South China Seas have become a priority issue in an increasingly testy Sino-U.S. relationship and are a security concern for Japan.

In a phone conversation



said in a statement.

"He also strongly called for concrete action," the statement said.

China claims a group of uninhabited Japan-controlled islets, called the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. The issue has plagued bilateral relations for years.

The two also discussed a broad range of regional issues and agreed on the importance of international cooperation to solve the situation in Myanmar, where a coup has been followed by a brutal military crackdown on street protests.

Putin signs law that could keep him in office till 2036

He can run for two more terms after his stint ends in 2024

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW



Vladimir Putin

would decide later whether to run again in 2024.

He has argued that resetting the term count was necessary to keep his lieutenants focused on their work instead of "darting their eyes in search for successors."

The constitutional amendments also emphasised the primacy of Russian law over international norms, outlawed same-sex marriages and mentioned "a

belief in God" as a core value. Nearly 78% of voters approved the constitutional amendments during the balloting that lasted for a week and concluded on July 1. Turnout was 68%.

Following the vote, Russian lawmakers have methodically modified the national legislation, approving the relevant laws.

The opposition criticised the constitutional vote, arguing that it was tarnished by widespread reports of pressure on voters and other irregularities.

In January, Russia imprisoned the country's most prominent opposition figure, Alexei Navalny upon his return from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Authorities have rejected the accusation.

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Vietnam's PM Phuc sworn in as President

He won praise for pandemic response

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HANOI

The man behind Vietnam's successful handling of the coronavirus pandemic, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, was formally sworn in as President in Hanoi on Monday.

Mr. Phuc, 66, was Vietnam's PM for the last five years, a period in which the economy boomed, and his government's COVID-19 response won plaudits at home and abroad.

Following secret voting on Monday, Mr. Phuc scored the maximum votes among the almost 500-member rubber-stamp national Assembly. "This is his well-deserved award," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a Vietnamese



Nguyen Xuan Phuc

politics expert.

Palma 'safe' from jihadists, says Mozambique Army

IS-linked militants had seized the town

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

MAPUTO

Mozambique's military has said a "significant" number of militants were killed in fighting for the northern town and gas hub of Palma, seized by Islamic State-linked jihadists last month.

Palma was taken in a coordinated attack on March 24, in a major escalation of an insurgency that has been raging in Cabo Delgado province for more than three years.

Thousands have fled the town of some 75,000 people and dozens killed, according to an early government toll, and French energy giant Total has abandoned a site where a multi-billion-

MARKET WATCH

	04-04-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	49,159	-1.74
US Dollar	73.30	-0.24
Gold	44,949	0.55
Brent oil	62.8	-1.3

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE	
Adani Ports	742.25	6.00	
Asian Paints	2510.65	-41.10	
Axist Bank	685.25	-27.75	
Bajaj Auto	3598.50	-144.55	
Bajaj Finserv	9481.65	-307.85	
Bajaj Finance	4962.50	-309.65	
Bharti Airtel	528.25	7.45	
BPCL	428.05	-9.35	
Britannia Ind	3700.35	81.85	
Cipla	819.75	1.45	
Coal India	129.80	-2.35	
Divis Lab	3611.05	-5.05	
Dr Reddys Lab	4556.60	-31.05	
Eicher Motors	2517.20	-113.95	
Grafix Ind	1446.50	-8.00	
HCL Tech	1033.50	30.90	
HDFC	2445.85	-85.60	
HDFC Bank	1449.60	-37.15	
HDFC Life	682.15	-8.85	
Hero MotoCorp	2886.90	-69.20	
Hindalco	350.65	0.40	
Hind Unilever	2373.20	-25.90	
ICICI Bank	571.25	-23.15	
IndusInd Bank	937.35	-55.95	
Infosys	1409.90	24.70	
Indian Oil Corp	90.75	-2.40	
ITC	212.55	-7.50	
JSW Steel	517.50	8.75	
Kotak Bank	1759.20	-45.35	
L&T	1403.80	-40.80	
M&M	774.45	-33.15	
Maruti Suzuki	6768.55	-155.35	
Nestle India Ltd.	16880.55	-202.60	
NTPC	106.30	-1.60	
ONGC	103.45	-0.90	
PowerGrid Corp	214.15	-4.55	
Reliance Ind	1992.60	-29.25	
SBI Life	872.55	-10.90	
State Bank	353.55	-17.10	
Shree Cement	30358.25	406.30	
Sun Pharma	608.80	-1.95	
Tata Consumer	Products Ltd.	644.95	-5.20
Tata Motors	305.05	-2.70	
Tata Steel	867.75	4.70	
TCS	3238.90	73.90	
Tech Mahindra	997.70	5.55	
Titan	1535.00	-24.35	
UltraTech Cement	6795.80	-103.05	
UPL	646.25	-7.35	
Wipro	425.45	9.05	

EXCHANGE RATES

	TT BUR	TT SELL
US Dollar	73.09	73.41
Euro	85.97	86.37
British Pound	101.35	101.83
Japanese Yen (100)	66.14	66.44
Chinese Yuan	11.13	11.18
Swiss Franc	77.57	77.92
Singapore Dollar	54.38	54.62
Canadian Dollar	58.27	58.52
Malaysian Ringgit	17.65	17.73

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



SBI increases home loan rate to 6.95%
NEW DELHI
Country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has revised its home loan rate to 6.95% effective April 1. With the revision, the lowest rate of 6.70% regime for limited period ended in March 31. During the limited period, the bank offered home loans starting from 6.70% for loans up to ₹75 lakh and 6.75% for loans in the range of ₹75 lakh-₹5 crore. PTI

Parag Milk Foods to raise ₹316 cr. via equity, FCCB

NEW DELHI
Parag Milk Foods Ltd., a dairy-FCCB company, plans to raise ₹316 crore by way of preferential issue of equity shares, convertible warrants and foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCB). International Finance Corporation (IFC) has proposed to invest up to ₹155 crore in equity shares and FCCBs. Sixth Sense Venture Advisors LLP proposes to invest ₹50 crore in equity. The promoters would further invest ₹111 crore via preferential allotment, the company said.

BYJU'S to acquire Aakash in \$1-bn 'strategic' deal

Future of learning is hybrid: CEO Byju

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU
Edtech platform BYJU'S on Monday entered into a strategic partnership with test preparatory services firm Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL) to acquire the latter for approximately \$1 billion.

The company declined to reveal details about the valuation and other financial details. "The future of learning is hybrid and this union [with Aakash] will bring together the best of offline and online learning," Byju Raveendran, founder, and CEO, BYJU'S said.

This partnership would bring together Aakash's pedagogic expertise in the test-prep segment with BYJU'S

Manufacturing PMI dips to 7-month low

Tighter curbs amid the COVID-19 resurgence suggest factories could be in for a tough April: IHS Markit

REUTERS

BENGALURU

India's factory activity grew at its weakest pace in seven months in March as renewed lockdowns to curtail a resurgence in COVID-19 cases dampened domestic demand and output, a private survey showed, forcing firms to cut headcount again.

Last week, the Indian government advised States to try and control the rapid spread of the virus. Tighter restrictions on activity suggest factories could be in for a tough April.

Expansion slows

The Nikkei Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, compiled by IHS Markit, declined to a seven-month low of 55.4 last month from February's 57.5, but remained above the 50-level separating growth from contraction



Cost pressures: Both input and output prices increased at a slower pace last month, the survey shows. ■ REUTERS

for an eighth straight month.

Despite foreign orders growing at a faster pace in March, a sub-index tracking overall demand declined to its lowest since August 2020.

Output also grew at its weakest pace in seven months. "Survey participants indicated that demand growth was constrained by the escalation of the COVID-19 pan-

demic, while the rise in input buying was curtailed by an intensification of cost pressures," said Pollyanna De Lima, economics associate director at IHS Markit.

"With COVID-19 restrictions expanded and lockdown measures re-introduced in many States, Indian manufacturers look set to experience a challenging month in April," she added.

Rate of lay-offs intensify

Although Asia's third-largest economy was predicted to grow at a faster pace this fiscal year than previously thought, according to a Reuters poll published last week, a significant majority of economists said a surge in coronavirus cases was the biggest risk to the outlook.

After a year-long spree of job cuts, factories intensified the rate of lay-offs to its

strongest in six months in March.

Both input and output prices increased at a slower pace last month, signalling overall inflation that accelerated to a three-month high in February might ease and stay within the RBI's inflation target of 2-6%.

That would help the central bank maintain its accommodative policy stance to support economic growth but optimism about the year ahead waned.

"While predictions that the vaccination programme will curb the disease and underpin output growth in the year ahead meant that business confidence remained positive, growing uncertainty over the near-term outlook due to a rise in COVID-19 cases spooked sentiment to a seven-month low," Ms. De Lima said.



TCS and Infosys were among the gainers. ■ REUTERS

Sensex slides 1.7% as surge in COVID-19 cases spooks investors

Financials drag but techs buck trend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex tacked 871 points on Monday, dragged by a sell-off in financial stocks as spiking COVID-19 cases spooked investors and fanned concerns about sustainability of the economic recovery.

After plunging more than 1,400 points earlier in the day, the 30-share BSE index pared some losses to finish at 49,159.32, down 870.51 points, or 1.74%. The broader NSE Nifty sank 229.55 points, or 1.54%, to 14,637.80.

head of research at Geojit Financial Services. "High valuation added further concern due to a possible downgrade in Q1 earnings," Mr. Nair added.

A policy decision in the upcoming MPC announcement and Q4 earnings will define the market volatility in the coming days, he said.

The rise in COVID-19 cases in India is a sobering reminder that challenges to recovery still remain, said Lalitabh Srivastava, AVP research, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

The provisional numbers of key banks indicate a consolidating trend in terms of advances' growth but encouraging performance on the deposit and CASA front, he added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Seoul and Tokyo ended on a positive note. Markets in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Australia were closed for holidays.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also closed.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 2.2% lower at \$63.43 per barrel.

Flexible inflation targeting working well, says FinMin

Headline inflation averaged 3.9% over Oct. 2016 - Mar. 2021

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The flexible inflation targeting monetary policy regime has been successful in lessening the inflation rate within a range along with providing a favourable environment for economic growth, the finance ministry said, explaining its decision to stick to the same 'tried and tested' model.

The government last week retained the 4% inflation target with upper and lower tolerance bounds of 6% and 2% respectively, adopted first in 2016, for the five-year period from April

Volatility in interest, exchange rates decreased during 2017-20

2021 to March 2026. While the repo rate dipped from 6.5% in October 2016 to 4% by March 2021, headline inflation averaged 3.9% during this period compared with 7.5% during 2013-16, the ministry pointed out.

The flexible inflation targeting led to a decline in price fluctuations, halved the volatility of core inflation, and moderated the median inflation expectations of urban households over a

one-year ahead horizon. Volatility in interest rate and exchange rate also decreased during 2017-20, the ministry said in its monthly economic report for March.

"Until the pre-COVID period, there was only one occasion [Q4 of 2019-20] when inflation exceeded the upper tolerance level," the ministry said. "The breach was due to a sharp spike in food inflation [9.7%] on a combination of adverse developments, i.e., the late withdrawal of the monsoon, unseasonal rains and associated supply disruptions," the ministry added.

As per the ordinance, it is considered expedient to provide an alternative resolution process to ensure quicker and value-maximising outcomes for all stakeholders, in a manner least disruptive to the continuity of their businesses and which preserves jobs.

The market witnessed a huge sell-off today as India's second wave of COVID-19 is getting bigger than anticipated and is expected to ruin the pace of economic recovery," said Vinod Nair,

Macrotech Developers unveils ₹2,500-cr. IPO

Firm to reduce borrowings, buy land

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

Macrotech Developers Ltd. (formerly Lodha Developers Ltd.) proposes to raise ₹2,500 crore via an initial public offering.

The issue will open on April 7 at price band of ₹483 - ₹486 per equity share of face value of ₹10 each. The issue will close on April 9.

The company proposes to utilise the proceeds for reduction of aggregate outstanding borrowings amounting up to ₹1,500 crore, acquisition of land or land developmental rights aggregating up to ₹375 crore and the balance for general corporate purposes.

Affordable housing Abhishek Lodha, managing director, said the company would focus on affordable and mid-income housing for which there was tremendous demand.



Abhishek Lodha

He said the company's debt which was ₹16,700 crore as on December, would reduce to ₹12,700 crore post the IPO.

Mr. Lodha said the money was borrowed to complete ongoing projects for timely delivery.

The firm has 54 ongoing and planned projects with approximately 73.8 million square feet of developable area. Macrotech Developers has land reserves of approximately 3,803 acres in Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Less-industrialised States lead power demand recovery

Usage grew more than 10% in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, U.P., Punjab

REUTERS

CHENNAI

Can CSK rise from unaccustomed darkness to more familiar light?

The Chennai outfit, under M.S. Dhoni, will want to banish memories of a disastrous 2020 and perform in a manner befitting its status as three-time champion

IPL COUNTDOWN

S. DINAKAR

Hauling yourself up from a hole is never easy. It not just examines the strength and flexibility of your frame as you try to emerge from the dark pit but also asks questions of your character.

Chennai Super Kings, following a disastrous 13th edition, finds itself in a similar situation.

It has to plug the holes that punctured its campaign the last time around and present a fresh outfit that can land weighty blows.

CSK has the ability to hit back under its charismatic skipper M.S. Dhoni. And do so hard.

Addressing the issue

Batting was a major problem area for CSK last season and the franchise has addressed the issue.

Crucially, Suresh Raina, the franchise's most successful batsman, is back. His shock departure ahead of the last IPL hurt the side. The left-handed Raina at No. 3 will provide the innings the momentum it requires.

But then, he hasn't played much cricket of late. In fact, several CSK cricketers suffer from the same drawback and this is a worry for the franchise.

Simulating match situations and the CSK players dividing themselves into two teams in practice games are two quick-fix solutions.

X-Factor

Sam Curran: An impact player, the 22-year-old Curran can leave the opposition bleeding. A left-arm swing bowler who operates with verve and an attacking lower middle-order batsman whose astonishing 95 not out for England almost derailed India in the recent ODI series decider. He's got shock value.



Influential: Dwayne Bravo and Sam Curran can swing games with bat and ball. ■ SPORTZPICT/BCCI

The smooth-stroking Ruturaj Gaikwad, a 'find' for CSK last season, could open with the more explosive Moeen Ali.

One of the two big buys along with K. Gowtham for CSK this season – both off-spinning all-rounders – Moeen will also lend variety to the attack and be handy against southpaws.

CSK has roped in the experienced heavy hitter Robin Uthappa. He adds value to the side along with the strokeful Ambati Rayudu.

It will be interesting where CSK slots Faf du Plessis, among Dhoni's favourites for his commitment. He could be asked to surface in the middle-order and shore it up in the event of a crisis.

And Dhoni's form will be critical for CSK. He is someone who can surprise the doubters.

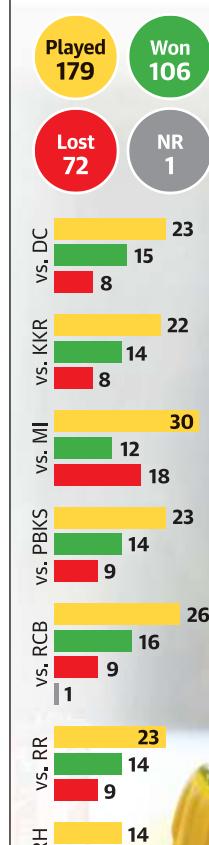
The pulling out of Aussie paceman Josh Hazlewood is bad luck; Lungi Ngidi too will miss early games. However, Sam Curran and Dwayne Bravo are capable seamers who can also lend batting depth.

And the Indian duo of Deepak Chahar and Shardul Thakur are wicket-taking pacemen.

Mitchell Santner, the left-arm spinning all-rounder, can be used better by CSK. Imran Tahir and Karn Sharma are the leg-spinners.

CSK is a well rounded side but the wheels have to move in cohesion.

OVERALL*



* Super Kings' remaining matches were against Deccan Chargers (10), Kochi Tuskers Kerala (2), and Pune Warriors (6)



CHAMPION
2010
2011
2018

THE SUPER KINGS DUGOUT

TOP GUNS IN CURRENT SQUAD

BATSMEN	M	Inns	Runs	HS	Avg.	SR	50s/100s
Suresh Raina	164	160	4527	100 n.o.	33.28	137.34	32/1
M.S. Dhoni	174	155	4058	84 n.o.	42.71	138.64	21/0
Faf du Plessis	76	70	2088	96	33.14	129.52	14/0
ALL-ROUNDERS	M	Runs	HS	50s/100s	Wkts.	BBI	4W/5W
Ravindra Jadeja	116	1097 (80 inns)	50	1/0	87 (103 inns)	5/16	3/1
Dwayne Bravo	95	934 (66)	68	2/0	110 (92)	4/42	1/0
Sam Curran	14	186 (11)	52	1/0	13 (13)	3/19	0/0
BOWLERS	M	Inns	Wkts.	BBI	Avg.	Econ.	4W/5W
Deepak Chahar	43	43	44	3/15	26.27	7.47	0/0
Shardul Thakur	32	31	34	2/18	29.02	9.05	0/0
Imran Tahir	26	26	33	4/12	21.06	7.23	2/0

FACTFILE

MOST MATCHES AS CAPTAIN

M.S. Dhoni
Total 174 | Won 105
Lost 68 | NR 1

HIGHEST SCORE#

Suresh Raina
100 n.o.
(vs. Kings XI Punjab, 2013)

BEST BOWLING#

Ravindra Jadeja
5/16
(vs. Deccan Chargers, 2012)

BEST BOWLING STRIKE RATE#

Lungi Ngidi (12.6)
Overs 42 | Wickets 20
(#CURRENT SQUAD)

SUPER KINGS' 2021 FIXTURES

April 10	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 5	vs. RR	7.30 p.m.	Delhi
April 16	vs. PBKS	7.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 7	vs. SRH	7.30 p.m.	Delhi
April 19	vs. RR	7.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 9	vs. PBKS	3.30 p.m.	Bengaluru
April 21	vs. KKR	7.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 12	vs. RR	7.30 p.m.	Bengaluru
April 25	vs. RCB	3.30 p.m.	Mumbai	May 16	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Bengaluru
April 28	vs. SRH	7.30 p.m.	Delhi	May 21	vs. DC	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata
May 1	vs. MI	7.30 p.m.	Delhi	May 23	vs. RCB	7.30 p.m.	Kolkata

SOURCE: ESPNCRICINFO | COMPILED BY G. PRASAD

ALL-ROUNDERS:
BATSMENT: Dwayne Bravo, Karm Sharma, Bhagath Varma, K. Gowtham, Mitchell Santner, Moeen Ali, Ravindra Jadeja, Sam Curran.

BOWLERS: Deepak Chahar, Imran Tahir, K.M. Asif, Lungi Ngidi, M. Harisankar Reddy, R. Sai Kishore, Shardul Thakur.

Aces Awards: the stars who picked the winners

SPORTS BUREAU

The first-ever virtual ceremony of the Sportstar Aces Awards was successfully held between April 1 and 4. The annual event had 31 winners, across sporting disciplines.

The winners were selected by a jury headed by World Cup-winning batting maestro Sunil Gavaskar.

The other jury members were Olympic gold medal-winning former hockey player M.M. Somaya, nine-time National badminton champion Aparna Popat, five-time World chess champion Viswanathan Anand, Commonwealth Games gold medal-winning shooter Anjali Bhagwat and veteran In-



Sunil Gavaskar.

■ NAGARA GOPAL



M.M. Somaya.

■ K.R. DEEPAK



Viswanathan Anand.

■ FILE PHOTO: K.V.S. GIRI

dian footballer Bhaichung Bhutia. "The experience of jury discussions virtually was certainly different, but under the leadership of Mr. Gavaskar, we were able to have a meaningful debate and arrive at our winners this year," said Bhutia, the

newest member of the jury, describing his experience.

"The decision-making process was tough and it's a good problem to have. Being athletes ourselves, we know the amount of hard work these players put in. Picking one over the other was har-

der than you would imagine," said Popat.

"A lot of data was made available to the jury, courtesy the Sportstar and *The Hindu* team, and it made our jobs easier," noted Somaya.

"We considered the possibility of sharing the awards for a few categories – it goes to show you the level of competition this time," said Bhagwat.

Gavaskar listed the categories rewarding corporates, public sector undertakings and States as the hardest ones to adjudicate. "It's difficult to assess the impact of corporates, PSUs or State on sport if you're not there in that State or area of work to see it for yourself. So, these three were definitely the har-



dest to pick," he said.

With the award process having ended, Anand is optimistic about India sustaining performances at the highest level, especially in 2021 which has a packed itinerary.

"What I'd like to see is India excelling in sports we don't do much in. The more sports I'm surprised by, the happier I'll be," said Anand, who had recused himself from decision-making during the jury meet for the two categories he was nominated for.



Maharashtra government gives permission for Mumbai matches

Wants scrupulous adherence to the bio-bubble

AMOL KARHADKAR
MUMBAI

On a day when severe restrictions were imposed all over Maharashtra to curb the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government of Maharashtra made an exception for the Mumbai leg of the IPL.

The Wankhede Stadium is scheduled to host 10 matches, including three afternoon games, from April 10 to 25. With a Statewide night curfew to be implemented from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. till April 30, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had sought special permission to allow matches to be conducted and the training of other teams to be held.

Besides, the BCCI had also requested vehicular movement for the teams, broadcast crew and staff involved in the league.

"Accordingly, permission is being hereby accorded for the said request subject to scrupulous adherence to the bio-bubble," Srirang Ghosh, Under-Secretary of the Disas-

ter Management, Relief and Rehabilitation department, wrote in a letter to the BCCI on Monday.

The letter, accessed by *The Hindu*, states that the teams will train at the Cricket Club of India and Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA). The four teams that will play in Mumbai have been training at the CCI, MCA's facility at Bandra Kurla Complex besides Jio Stadium and Dr. D.Y. Patil Sports Stadium, both in Navi Mumbai.

However, the BCCI and MCA officials are confident that it will not affect the conduct of games.

Two more test positive

Meanwhile, two more staffers at the Wankhede Stadium have tested COVID-19 positive. It is learnt that a groundsman and a casual labourer have contracted the virus on Monday.

Anjali Bhagwat, a staffer at the stadium, tested positive for COVID-19 on Sunday. She is the second staff member to test positive after a cleaner tested positive on Saturday.

Krishna's leelas began even before the avatara began, said V.S. Karunakarachari in a discourse. Parikshit refers to Yadu as the embodiment of dharma. Yadu was the first son of Yayaati, through Devayani, daughter of Sukracharya, guru of the asuras. Because of a quarrel, Devayani asked the asura king to make his daughter Sharmishtha her servant. Later Yayaati married Sharmishtha too. When Yayaati was cursed to become an old man, he asked Devayani's eldest son Yadu to exchange his youth for Yayaati's old age, but Yadu and his brothers refused. Sharmishtha's son Puru agreed to his father's request.

Sons are classified into four – those who guess their father's thoughts and act accordingly; those who guess a father's wish from his body language; those who fulfil the father's wishes when asked; and those who turn down their father's request. Sons of the fourth category are looked down upon. Yadu belonged to the fourth category. How could Parikshit then refer to him in positive terms? The answer is simple. Would the Supreme One have chosen to be born in Yadu's lineage, if it had not been a good one? Yadu's refusal of Yayaati's request made

TV PICKS

UEFA Champions League:
Sony Ten 1, 2 & 3 (SD & HD),
12.30 a.m. (Wednesday)

IN BRIEF



Lahiri grabs first top-5 since 2017

SAN ANTONIO
Anirban Lahiri notched up his best finish in over three years by signing off fifth at the Valero Texas Open, carding a three-under 69 in the final round on Sunday. Similarly, Jordan Spieth won a title after 1351 days. PTI



Tavatanakit wins first Major; Aditi T-67

RANCHO MIRAGE (USA)
Aditi Ashok shot an even par 72 in the final round for a tied 67th place at the 2021 ANA Inspiration here on Sunday. Aditi finished four-over 292, while Thailand's Patty Tavatanakit claimed her first Major victory with an 18-under 270. PTI

Indian women lose to Uzbekistan in football friendly

TASHKENT
The Indian women's football team slumped to a 1-0 defeat in its first friendly against Uzbekistan, courtesy a late strike by Maftuna Shoyimova, here on Monday. While both sides created ample scoring opportunities, Uzbekistan found the back of the net with a late free-kick by Shoyimova in the 87th minute to grab the bragging rights. PTI



Herkacz and Barty take Miami titles

Miami
Poland's Hubert Hurkacz defeated Italian teenager Jannik Sinner in 7-6(4), 6-4 at the Miami Open and claim the first ATP Masters title of his career on Sunday. World No. 1 Ashleigh Barty took the women's title on Saturday when Bianca Andreescu retired in the final because of a foot injury while trailing 6-3, 4-0. AFP

Remainder of Mumbai's racing season cancelled

MUMBAI
In view of the notifications issued by the Government of Maharashtra dated April 4, 2021, the Royal Western India Turf Club (RWITC), is unable to continue with racing and thus the remainder of the Mumbai racing season 2020-21 stands cancelled.

BAI advises postponement of tourneys

V.V. SUBRAHMANYAM HYDERABAD

The Badminton Association of India has advised postponement of the All-India ranking tournaments scheduled over the next few weeks, including the Senior ranking tournament in Bengaluru from April 18 to 25 in the wake of increasing number of COVID-19 cases.

This was conveyed by Ajay Kumar Singhania, general secretary of the BAI, in a communication to all the secretaries of the affiliated units of BAI, on Monday.

The management of the Pulela Gopi Chand Academy and the SAI Gopi Academy has decided, as a precautionary measure, to shut down the hostels and training sessions to break the chain of positive cases.

Fakhar run-out stirs a hornet's nest

MCC leaves it to umpires to decide whether deception was involved

CRICKET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman's run-out in the second One-Day International against South Africa has sparked a debate on spirit of the game with Marylebone Cricket Club saying it was "up to the umpires to decide" whether Quinton de Kock had attempted to mislead the batsman.

In a stiff chase of 342, Fakhar smashed a spectacular 193 before being run-out in controversial fashion.

The controversy

Wicketkeeper de Kock pointed towards the bowler's end, but Aiden Markram broke the stumps at the 'keeper's end with a direct hit. Fakhar had slowed down at the end of his second run and was out of his crease.

Replays showed that de



Foul play? Fakhar Zaman's run-out at the Wanderers on Sunday has raised questions whether there had been a breach of the spirit of the game. ■ AFP

Kock had seemed to convince Fakhar into believing that the throw was going to the non-striker's end.

"Law 41.5.1 states: It is un-

fair for any fielder wilfully to attempt, by word or action, to distract, deceive or obstruct either batsman after the striker has received the

ball," the MCC, custodians of the game, tweeted.

The debate around de Kock's gesture was whether he was intentionally attempt-

ing to deceive Fakhar into thinking that the throw was headed for the other end, leading to the batsman slowing down.

Many in Pakistan cricket circles blamed de Kock for "deliberately distracting" Fakhar, leading to his dismissal.

Former captain Waqar Younis and fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar have raised questions on Twitter.

My fault'

However, Fakhar, who made the highest score by a batsman in an ODI chase, refused to blame de Kock.

"The fault was mine as I was too busy looking out for Haris Rauf at the other end. I felt he'd started off a little late from his crease, so I thought he was in trouble.

"The rest is up to the match referee, but I don't think it's Quinton's fault," he said.

April 2018 and his term ended on March 31. He confirmed that he will be around for sometime to help his successor settle into the role.

Shabir, a 1973 batch IPS officer, has been appointed ahead of the IPL beginning April 9.

Shabir is new ACU chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Former Gujarat DGP Shabir Hussein Shekhadam Khawwala has taken over from Ajit Singh as the head of the BCCI's Anti-Corruption Unit.

Ajit Singh, a former DGP of Rajasthan, had joined in

Varun & Ganapathy emerge on top in 49er

SAILING

SPORTS BUREAU

The pair of Varun Thakkar and K.C. Ganapathy emerged on top in the 49er class of the Asian Olympic sailing qualification championships here on Monday.

The duo finished first, second and third in races seven, eight and nine, respectively. Nethra Kumaran continued to remain in the

first position in the laser radial section as she finished first in races five and six.

The results (overall, placings of Indians): 49er: Men: 1. Varun Thakkar & K.C. Ganapathy; 49er FX: Women: 4. Ekta Yadav & Ritika Dangi; Laser radial: 1. Nethra Kumaran, 3. Ramya Saravanan, 7. Harshita Tomar.

Laser standard: 3. Vishnu Saravanan, 7. Upamanyu Dutta; Windsurfing: RS: X: Men: 5. Jerome Kumar; 6. Ebad Ali; RS: X: Women: 3. Ishwariya Ganesh.

LaLiga title race split wide open

Stuttering Atletico falls to Sevilla; United stages another fightback

EURO LEAGUES

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Body blow: Sevilla's Marcos Acuna winner against Atletico has effectively opened the door for Barcelona and Real Madrid. ■ REUTERS

Atletico Madrid stumbled again in LaLiga on Sunday as it was beaten 1-0 by Sevilla. Marcos Acuna headed in the winner for Sevilla at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan, with Atletico's grip on first place loosening even further and its in-form rivals primed to take advantage.

It means Spain's title race suddenly appears wide open, two months after Atletico sat 10 points clear of both Barcelona and Real Madrid, with a game in hand. It has managed only four wins in 12 games since then, with defeats to Chelsea costing it its place in the Champions League and regular slips in LaLiga potentially squandering its shot at the title.

Not for the first time this season, United needed a second-half fightback after a dismal first 45 minutes to all three all three points thanks to goals from Marcus Rash-

ford and Mason Greenwood.

The results: Premier League:

Aston Villa 3 (Trezequet 78, 81,

Watkins 87) bt Fulham 1 (Mitrovic 61); Manchester United 2 (Rashford 62, Greenwood 83)

bt Brighton 1 (Welbeck 13).

LaLiga:

Elche 1 (Milla Pena 36)

drew with Real Betis (Iglesias 14- pen); Cadiz 2 (Cal 14, Mau-

ro 88) bt Valencia 1 (Gameiro 19); Sevilla 1 (Acuna 70) bt At-

letico Madrid 0.

Bundesliga:

Stuttgart 1 (Au-

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Sevilla deserved its victory and it might have been more comfortable had Lucas Ocampos not missed a first-half penalty.

Manchester United came from behind to beat Brighton 2-1 on Sunday to cut Manchester City's lead at the top of the Premier League to 14 points.

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Encouraged by the 2-1 win over Argentina the last time they met in the 2018 Champions Trophy in Breda, Harmanpreet believes India will give the hosts a run for their money in the upcoming matches. He also feels the return of senior players, including skipper Manpreet Singh, had added teeth to the squad.

"We are grateful to be getting more games under our belt and need to make the most of it. To play the Olympic champions will be challenging but I believe we have the experience and the talent in our ranks to come out victorious," he added.

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