



Pages 12 | ₹ 5.00/LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR



'LDF & UDF MADE
KERALA A DEN OF
CORRUPTION'



GANDHI AND POLITICS

P4



NETANYAHU FALLS
SHORT OF MAJORITY
AMID VOTE COUNT

P6

QUESTION: JUST
HOW FRIENDLY
WILL OMAN BE?

P12

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WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Strong surface winds during the day. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 33 and 17 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 74% Min: 33%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 34.2°C (+3) Min: 16.0°C (-1)
SUN RISES 06:18 hrs MOON RISES 15:00 hrs SUN SETS 18:35 hrs MOON SETS 04:50 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Gardeners check flowers, a day before the opening of the Tulip garden, in Srinagar on Wednesday.

AGENCIES

Vexed Delhi Bill clears RS hurdle: After two back-to-back adjournments as Opposition members trooped in the well of the House raising slogans, Rajya Sabha passed the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 while the Congress staged a walkout. Lok Sabha had passed the Bill on March 22nd. The Bill seeks to make it clear that the "government" in Delhi means the "Lieutenant Governor" and mandatory for the Delhi government to take the opinion of the LG before any executive action

Bengal security advisor removed: Three days prior to Assembly elections, the West Bengal government on Wednesday removed state security advisor Surajit Kar Purkayastha, a retired IPS officer. He was appointed as the state security advisor in 2018. The move comes on a day when tension erupted after BJP leader's body was found hanging in Dinhata with the party workers blaming TMC for murdering the worker.

Issues raised in plea against Deshmukh quite serious: SC

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said there was no doubt that the issues raised by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh in his plea against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh were "quite serious" but asked him to approach the Bombay High Court with his grievances. The court allowed Singh to withdraw his plea seeking direction for an "impartial and fair" CBI probe into alleged corrupt practices of Deshmukh.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and R S Reddy granted liberty to Singh to approach the Bombay High Court with his grievances.

There is no doubt that the matter is quite serious, the bench observed.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Singh,

said they would file a petition in the high court today itself and the apex court can say that the high court should take it up on Thursday.

At the outset, the bench told Rohatgi that there are two preliminary questions, one is why Article 32 petition has been filed in the top court and the petitioner has not approached the high court under Article 226, and why Singh has not impleaded the state home minister as a party in his plea.

Rohatgi said that he will implead Deshmukh as a party in the matter and the application in this regard is ready.

The bench said the court is of the view that the petitioner should approach the high court and if he wants investigation by an independent agency, the high court can deal with this. Rohatgi submitted that there was evidence in the form of CCTV footage, which

was in the possession of ATS and that has not been handed over to the NIA.

NIA is probing the case related to the February 25 incident in which a car with explosives was found outside the house of India's richest man Mukesh Ambani leading to a bomb scare.

"In view of the aforesaid,

the petitioner seeks to withdraw the petition with liberty to approach the High Court," the bench said while granting liberty to Singh to approach the high court.

On Rohatgi's submission that the high court be asked to take up Singh's plea on Thursday, the bench said the petitioner can make this request before the high court.

Singh has also sought quashing of the order transferring him from the post of Mumbai's Commissioner of Police alleging it was arbitrary and illegal.

SC dismisses complaint of Andhra CM against judge

NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it has dismissed the complaint of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy against a senior top court judge after giving it "due consideration".

It said however that all the matters dealt with under the in-house procedure being "strictly confidential in nature, are not liable to be made public".

On October 6, in an unprecedented move Reddy wrote a letter to Chief Justice of India Bobde alleging that a senior Supreme Court judge has been influencing the sittings of Andhra Pradesh High Court and acting in the interests of Telugu Desam Party.

Reddy had requested the CJI to look into the matter. PTI

ROUSING RECEPTION



Artists perform during Union Home Minister Amit Shah's election campaign for the upcoming state Assembly elections, at Thirupunithura in Kochi on Wednesday. ■ AGENCIES

Karnataka minister seeks monogamy test for legislators

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, 24 MARCH

Karnataka health minister, K Sudhakar called for a monogamy test for all the state legislators to check how sincere they were to their spouses, thus creating a stir. He said an appropriate probe would help expose their private lives and illicit affairs.

His demand did not go down well with most of the legislators, including some from his own party. One of his party colleagues said the minister should immediately withdraw his statement. It would have been appropriate if he had taken specific names instead of generalising, he added.

CONTROVERSIAL

The health minister was responding to Opposition Congress' demand for his resignation, along with that of his five colleagues, after they had approached the court for an injunction against any defamatory publication or broadcast against them.

The plea came after a sex tape, allegedly involving their former colleague and water resources minister, Ramesh Jarkihalli, was released

The health minister was responding to Opposition Congress' demand for his resignation, along with that of his five colleagues, after they had

approached the court for an injunction against any defamatory publication or broadcast against them.

The plea came after a sex

tape, allegedly involving their former colleague and water resources minister, Ramesh Jarkihalli, was released.

He also lashed out at the Opposition for not allowing the Assembly to function properly and claimed that the Opposition parties are not interested in development and did not have any concrete agenda.

Today's development followed the ensuing controversy over a sex scandal allegedly involving Ramesh Jarkihalli and the Opposition's demand for a probe into the matter by a judge of the high

court. The state government has defended its move to set up a Special Investigation Team even as the minister concerned resigned from his post, which chief minister B S Yediyurappa claimed, was on moral grounds.

Referring to former chief ministers, Siddaramiah of Congress, H D Kumaraswamy of JDS, besides D K Shivakumar, state Congress president, the minister said that as they "embodied the idea of truth", they should accept the challenge.

This drew a quick reaction from D K Shivakumar, who said, "I have one wife and one family", adding that the matter would be discussed in the Assembly.

CJI Bobde recommends Justice NV Ramana as his successor

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

Chief Justice of India SA Bobde has recommended senior-most judge Justice NV Ramana as his successor and the 48th Chief Justice of India in keeping with convention and norms of seniority, according to sources.

CJI Bobde, who is set to retire on April 23, has sent the recommendation to the government and handed over a copy to Justice Ramana, the sources said.

As per norms, a written communication from the incumbent Chief Justice is sent a month before his retire-

ment. If the recommendation is approved by the government, Justice Ramana till take charge as the next Chief Justice of India on April 24. He is set to retire on August 26, 2022.

CJI Bobde's recommendation, which marks the start of process for appointment of the next Chief Justice of India will be forwarded to the President by the government for approval. PTI



Give three-day notice to Arnab in case of arrest: HC to police

MUMBAI, 24 MARCH

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Mumbai Police to give the advance notice of three days to Republic TV's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami if it wanted to arrest him in the Television Rating Point (TRP) scam case.

A bench of Justices SS Shinde and Manish Pitale also dismissed the submission of state counsel Deepak Thakre that Goswami had to face the investigation and could not claim any special status.

The bench noted the police had been investigating the case for three months now and was yet to name Goswami as an accused in the case.

Goswami is named as a suspect in the chargesheet, and therefore, the "sword" of impending arrest is left hanging over his head, it said.

Goswami's counsel Ashok Mundargi had argued that the criminal law in the country did not provide for the police to name someone merely as a suspect and not name him or her as an accused in the chargesheet. He had said the probe by the police against Goswami and other employees of ARG Outlier Media, which runs all Republic TV channels, was malafide.

In the chargesheet, the police had named Goswami and all owners, managers, and all persons associated with Republic TV or ARG media under the category of "suspects", Mundargi had said.

Mundargi said the police had reopened a 2018 (Anvay Naik) suicide case in which Goswami had been named as an accused and arrested him last year. Goswami was released on bail by the Supreme Court, he said. PTI

Modi sounds 'real parivartan' bugle in Contai, attacks Didi



BISWABRATA GOSWAMI
CONTAI, 24 MARCH

dra Chatto padhyay, Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose and on this land, no Indian was or will be an outsider, he said.

He said that if voted to power, "a son of the soil" will be made the BJP chief minister of the state.

The prime minister said that Mamata insulted the people of Nandigram with false accusations, and people would give her a befitting reply.

You are maligning Nandigram and its people before the entire country. This is the same Nandigram that gave you so much. The people of Nandigram will not forgive you," he said, apparently referring to the 10 March incident in which Mamata was injured.

Modi said that if voted to power, the BJP would make every scheme in the state scam-free and bring in transparency.

"The relief for Amphan was looted through the 'bhainpo' (nephew) window," he alleged, slamming the TMC over 'cut money', 'tolabaji' (extortion) and ground-level corruption.

With 1,254 cases, Delhi sees highest spike since 18 Dec

Capital records 6 fatalities, active cases mount to 4,890, positivity rate rises to 1.52 per cent

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

Delhi today saw a fresh spike in coronavirus infections, recording 1,254 Covid cases ~ highest in more than three months ~ even as 6 more people succumbed to the contagious, deadly virus, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

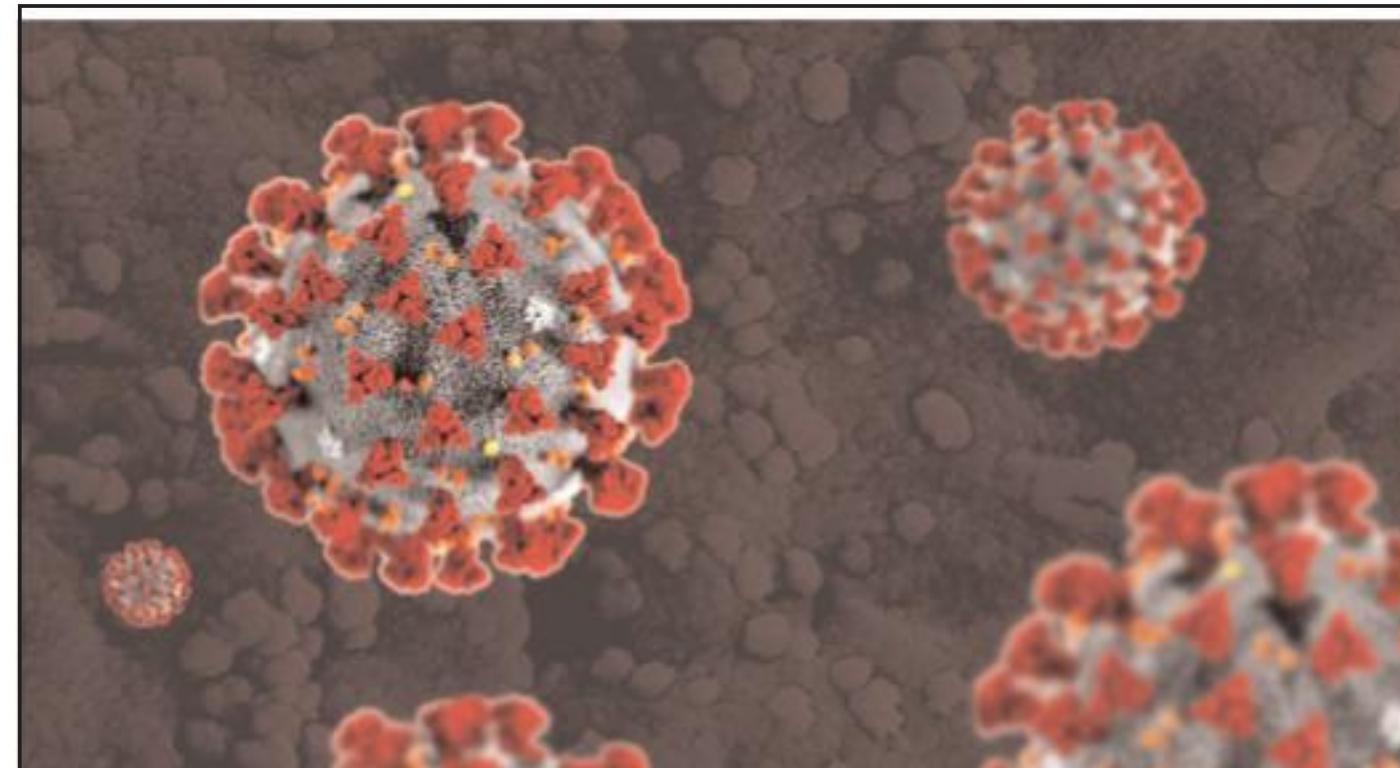
This is the highest number of coronavirus cases since 18 December last year when 1,418 people tested positive for the virus, according to official data.

Delhi had yesterday reported 1,101 coronavirus infections and 4 Covid deaths. It was the first time since 24 December that Delhi recorded more than 1,000 Covid cases.

The city had recorded 888 cases last Monday, 823 on Sunday, 813 on Saturday, 716 on Friday, 607 on Thursday, and 536 on Wednesday.

Today, Delhi's active Covid cases rose to 4,890 from 4,411 a day ago. The positivity rate increased to 1.52 per cent, the health bulletin said.

The positivity rate was 1.31 percent yesterday, 1.32 per cent



on Monday and 1.03 per cent on Sunday.

The new infections pushed Delhi's caseload to 6,51,227, while over 6.35 lakh patients have recovered from the virus in the city so far. Delhi's Covid toll rose to 10,973, the bulletin stated.

A total of 82,331 tests, including 52,224 RT-PCR tests, were conducted to detect today's cases, the bulletin said.

The number of people under home isolation rose to 2,560 from 2,316 a day ago. The

containment zones increased to 976 from yesterday's 871, the bulletin added.

The total number of Covid cases in Delhi on 1 January had stood at over 6.25 lakh and the fatalities tally was 10,557.

The number of daily cases had started to come down in February. On February 26, the month's highest daily count of 256 cases was recorded.

However, the daily cases began to rise again in March and it has been steadily increasing over the past several days.

Amid a sharp rise in coronavirus cases in the national capital, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) yesterday ordered that there will be no public celebrations in the city during upcoming festivals such as Holi, Shab-e-Barat, and Navaratri.

Meanwhile, over 23,000 beneficiaries received the Covid vaccine in Delhi by 6 pm today, officials said.

The number of beneficiaries was less as compared to

previous days as dispensary-based session sites are not functional on Wednesday and Friday, an official said.

In the age bracket 45-59 years, 2,454 beneficiaries received the shots, while 10,481 senior citizens also got their first jabs by 6 pm, an official said.

The second dose of vaccine was given to 6,852 people, he said, adding, 1,835 frontline workers and 1,645 healthcare workers got their first shots.

A total of 23,267 people were vaccinated across the city and one case of minor AEFI (adverse events following immunisation) was recorded by 6 pm, officials said.

The vaccination centres in the city have been operating from 9 am to 9 pm since Monday.

Last week, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had said that the number of vaccination centres will be doubled to 1,000 from about 500 at present, spanning both government and private facilities.

He had announced that the number of daily inoculations in Delhi will be augmented from 30,000-40,000 to 1.25 lakh.

'Sad day for Indian democracy': CM on passage of GNCTD Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH



Despite the Opposition's strong demand for its Select Committee scrutiny, and walkouts by several parties, the Rajya Sabha tonight passed the GNCTD amendment Bill, which "enhances" powers of the Lt Governor in Delhi's governance. The Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

In his hard-hitting reaction, Kejriwal, in a Twitter post, said: "RS passes GNCTD amendment Bill. Sad day for Indian democracy. We will continue our struggle to restore power back to the people. Whatever be the obstacles, we will continue doing good work. Work will neither stop nor slow down."

Delhi records maximum temperature of 34.2 deg C; air quality 'moderate'

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

settled at 16 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal, it said.

The mercury is predicted to rise to 38 degrees Celsius by Monday amid clear skies, the weather office said.

On Tuesday, the maximum temperature stood at 29.6 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal.

It was 33.6 degrees Cel-

sium on Monday and 35.2 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

The air quality in the national capital improved to the "moderate" category due to a favourable wind speed. The 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) was 175, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

Delhi Cong holds protest against AAP govt's new excise policy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH



DPCC activists protesting against Delhi's new excise policy near CM Kejriwal's residence in the Capital on Wednesday.

SNS

The workers of the Delhi Congress, led by its chief Anil Kumar, today held a demonstration outside the residence of chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to protest against the Delhi government's new liberalised excise policy, especially its bid to lower the drinking age from 25 to 21 years, demanding its immediate rollback.

They said the Aam Aadmi Party had pledged to provide jobs to the youths. "Instead the Kejriwal government is ensuring easy availability of liquor in the city, just for the sake of increase in sale of liquor and in turn providing huge profit to the liquor mafia," they charged.

Addressing the Congress protesters, Kumar said, "When the unemployment rate had surged through the roof, and a fourth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is gripping the Capital, the Arvind government gave priority to net more revenue from excise, by lowering the drinking age, which will ruin the future of

the youth."

The DPCC president reminded CM Kejriwal that before the last Assembly elections in Punjab, which he had fought against "Majithia vowing to make Punjab nasha mukt". But Kejriwal "seemed to have been intoxicated by

the Majithia example to make Delhi 'nasha ki rajdhani', he alleged.

Kumar said that when the Congress was in power in Delhi, it took the opinion of the local people before giving licence for new liquor vends, due to which, he claimed, no

liquor shop was opened in 80 of the 272 MCD wards in the city.

"Congress will intensify its agitation if the new excise policy is not rolled back, and thwart any attempt to open new liquor vends in the Capital," he said.

Kejriwal Cabinet clears nameless scheme for doorstep ration after row with Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

involving the Centre and the Delhi government.

The Delhi Cabinet headed by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today approved the doorstep

delivery of ration scheme

to be rolled out in the city without any name.

The scheme, originally

called the "Mukhyamantri

Ghar-Ghar Ration Yojana",

which was expected to be

rolled out on 25 March, will

not have any name now due

to a controversy that arose

kind of credit for this scheme and that is why the name of the scheme will be removed."

He had then said: "No mention of Mukhyamantri will be there. We have called a Cabinet meeting in the coming week where this idea will be passed. This will not be any new scheme and this will not have any name. After the Cabinet nod, we will send the decision to the Central government and I am very hopeful that this time they will approve of our decision."

Under the new scheme, wheat flour, rice and sugar will be delivered to people's homes in bags.

The doorstep delivery of ration scheme in Delhi was expected to be rolled out on 25 March. Moreover, taking ration at subsidised rates from a public distribution system (PDS) shop will become optional.

The BJP-led Centre had apparently objections over the scheme's naming as Mukhyamantri Ghar Ghar Ration Yojana.

Delhi riots: HC vacates stay on trial in conspiracy case under UAPA

PTI
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

The Delhi High Court has vacated its interim order staying trial in a case relating to alleged conspiracy which led to the north-east riots in February last year after the police informed that the hard copy of the charge sheet is ready and the accused are at liberty to collect it.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait, who had stayed trial in the case on November 10 last year,

noted in its order on Tuesday the statement made by the prosecutor that the hard copy of the charge sheet is ready and accused are at liberty to collect it.

Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad, appearing for the state, submitted that complete hard copy of the charge sheet is ready and the accused are at liberty to collect the same from the trial court on March 25, the next date fixed there.

To this, the high court said,

In view of above, no further

order is required to be passed and the same is, accordingly, disposed of with pending application. Accordingly, the interim order is vacated.

The high court was hearing a plea by Delhi Police challenging a trial court's order directing it to provide to the accused hard copies of the voluminous charge sheet filed in a case related to the north east Delhi riots in February last year.

The police had sought to set aside trial court's Sep-

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SILIGURI

13A, Dabgram Industrial Growth

Centre,

Meena

Judgment-Holder

Smt. Meena, d/o Afshan,

r/o Property No. J-3, Mulla

Colony, Gharoli Extension,

Delhi

—Plaintiff

Versus

Pawan Kumar Sinha, d/o Sh. Chitrangan Singh Sinha, r/o 193, Main Palam Vihar, Road, Bawaliyan Village, Biawasian, Delhi-110061.

Whereas you are intentionally evading service of summons, it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 27th day of March 2021, the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex parte.

Given under my hand and

the Seal of the Court on this 27th day of February, 2021.

Senior Civil Judge-cum-Rent Controller

South-East District

District Courts, Saket,

New Delhi

Case Reg: No. CS

SC/1020/2018



Of course, we want Dada (Sourav Ganguly) to join the BJP, because if he comes, it will be a landslide victory for us

BJP'S NOMINEE FROM MOYNA SEAT ASHOK DINDA
ON GANGULY'S REPORTED LINKS WITH THE BJP

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 25 MARCH 2021

03

Punjab CM opposes DBT for procurement of farmers' crops

Writing to PM to seek its deferment for 1 year, Capt says 'arhtiyas' and farmers have long-standing relations, questions the need to change this system that has been working 'very well'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 24 MARCH

Strongly opposing the direct bank transfer (DBT) scheme for procurement of farmers' produce, Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh today said he had written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking early resolution of the matter in view of the Rabi season.

The CM, who has also sought time from PM Modi for a meeting on the issue, sought his intervention in issue of appropriate directions to the Union ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution, for deferring the implementation of this scheme for at least one year. The arhtiyas (grain commission agents) and farmers have long-standing relations, the



CM pointed out, questioning the need to change the system when it was working very well. Around 50 per cent farmers give their land on contract, so how will those who till the land get their money under this scheme, the CM said at a media event.

In his letter to PM Modi, Capt Amarinder drew the PM's

attention to the Union ministry's directions, asking the Government of Punjab to ensure direct payment to farmers along with online submission of the details of land owners or cultivators for procurement of their crops.

Pointing to the age-old relationship between commission

agents, i.e. arhtiyas, who are licensees under the Agriculture Produce Market Committee Act 1961, and farmers in Punjab, the CM noted that for the past many decades, the state procurement agencies and Food Corporation of India have been procuring foodgrains for the Central pool.

The farmers have never complained of non-receipt of payment of minimum support price (MSP), and the state government has been ensuring online payment to farmers, albeit through these Arhtiyas, Capt Amarinder said. Further, he said, the land ownership and tenancy issues may give rise to various avoidable legal complications, especially during the ongoing farmers' agitation. This, the CM said, "may also cause avoidable unrest and anguish among the farm-

ers". He also noted that bringing the software in line with the proposed directions will take considerable time. Meanwhile, ruling out any threat from other major political parties in the next Assembly elections, Capt Amarinder said he believed that his experience of governing the state and also in the Army will help him handle the challenges of the state beyond 2022. The CM trashed the C-voter survey, that gave the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) a lead in the 2022 Assembly polls, as an alleged "paid job" for Arvind Kejriwal.

As regards the Akalis, "they are a divided lot and the party is splintering, with nobody to hold them together," he charged. He said the BJP has no support base in the state, where "the people have been in fact angry with them".

Ajay Kumar sworn in as HPPSC chairman



Ajay Kumar taking oath as HP Public Service Commission chairman in Shimla on Wednesday.

SNS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SHIMLA, 24 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatraya administered the oath of office and secrecy to Ajay Kumar as Chairman of Himachal Pradesh Public Service Commission in a simple but impressive ceremony held at Raj Bhawan, Shimla, on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur was also present on the occasion.

The Governor also administered the oath of office and secrecy to Jai Prakash Kalta as member of Himachal Pradesh Public Service Commission. Ajay Kumar retired as head of the state forest force a few months ago and Kalta as Managing Director of Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board

Limited. Secretary to Governor, Rakesh Kanwar conducted the proceeding.

Talking to media persons later, the new chairman of the HPPSC said his effort would be to bring in more transparency in the recruitment process. "I will set my priorities once I settle down. The HPPSC is already doing a good job and is known for its fair approach towards recruitments. I would try to contribute my bit in making the things better in the best interest of the state," he said.

Ajay Kumar, a retired Indian Forest Services (IFS) officer is an alumnus of Himachal Pradesh Agriculture University, Palampur. He will hold the office of Chairman of HPPSC till August 2022 on attainment of 62 years of age.

HP plans to involve folk artists to highlight 50-yr statehood journey

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday said the state government was contemplating to involve folk artists and singers in a big way to highlight the 50 years of HP's statehood journey through folk songs, music, skits, one act play and short plays.

Interacting with folk artists of the state through video conferencing from Shimla, Thakur said this was first such occasion when government interacted with folk artist to promote the culture of the state.

The state government is celebrating 50 years of Statehood in a befitting manner which would be marked by organizing 51 State level events throughout Himachal to educate and inform the people about the developmental achievements.

The Swarnim Rath Yatra would be organized from 15th April, 2021 and would cover all the areas showcasing the development journey of the state in the last 50 years," he added. Thakur further stated that the state government was planning that in order to make Swarnim Rath Yatra and Golden Jubilee celebrations more attractive and effective in driving home the

mation and Public Relations Department by 5 April.

He said that this would help the government in making an attractive and meaningful event besides promoting rich culture of the state.

A State level Committee would be constituted to scrutinize the compositions received from the artists which would be finalized to be used during the Swarnim Rath Yatra and other events.

The folk artists of the state have also played a major role in this developmental journey in Himachal by preserving the rich culture and traditions. The state government is committed towards welfare of the artists and was giving them preference in cultural events organized during the local festivals and functions," he added.

Noted artists of the state Dr K L Sehgal, Vicky Chauhan, Kuldeep Sharma, Daleep Sirmauri, Thakur Dass Rathi, Inderjeet Singh, Vidyanand Sarai, Suresh Sharma, Prabhu Negi, Dheeraj Sharma, Parmjeet Pammy and Rajneesh Bhardwaj also gave their suggestions on the occasion. Additional chief secretary Information and Public Relations J C Sharma, Information and Public Relations director Harbans Singh Branson, joint directors Arti Gupta and Mahesh Pathania were also present on the occasion.

By not defusing farm crisis, BJP govt allowing Pak to take advantage: Capt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, 24 MARCH

Terming the growing economic and military collusion between Pakistan and China as New Delhi's "failure of diplomacy", Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Wednesday said that by delaying resolution of the farmers' crisis, the BJP-led government at the Centre was allowing Pakistan to take advantage of dissatisfaction emerging in the state. Urging the Centre to repeal the farm laws in the inter-

est of the nation's security, if for no other reason, the Chief Minister asked, "Have you not thought of what Pakistan will do in this scenario?"

Warning that they will take advantage of the dissatisfaction among the youth in Punjab, as they had done in the past, he stressed the need to "learn from history." Is Delhi sleeping? he asked, citing figures on increase in arms smuggling into Punjab through drones since the farmers had intensified their stir. The CM urged the Central government not to sit on

ego or prestige but to withdraw the farm laws immediately. "This is not Hitler's Germany or Mao Zedong's China. The people's will has to be heard", he stressed, adding that those at the helm should understand that the agitation of the farmers is not a political issue but a matter of their survival.

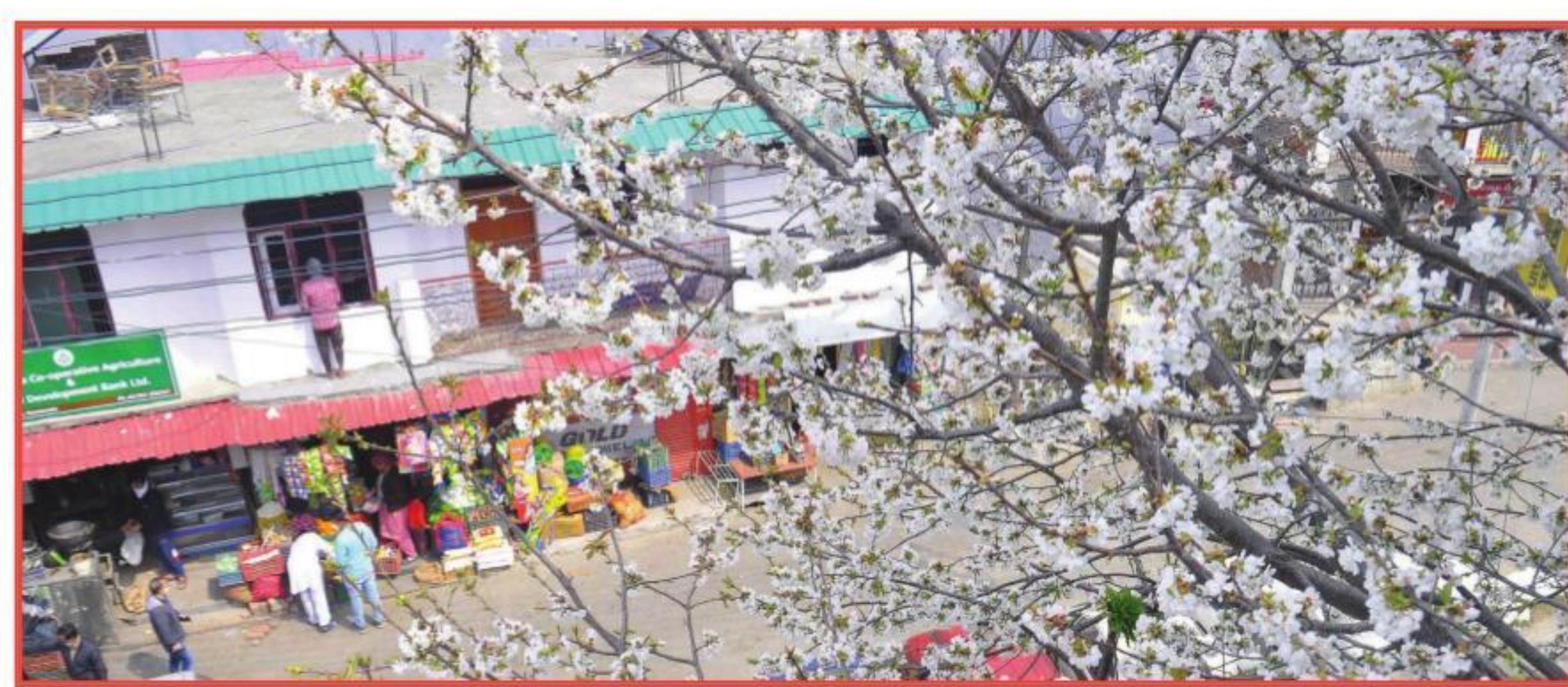
Pointing to his 52 years of experience in politics, Amarinder said he had seen the build-up of terrorism, and also the assassination of a CM of Punjab. The situation was worse today because of eco-

nomic and military collusion between Pakistan and China, which was "very ominous for India", he said, at a media event.

"While the Indian Army is equipped to handle any situation, the question is why the Indian government is allowing the country's two big enemies to get together?" he asked. If there is a war, Pakistan and China will be in it together, and Punjab, which shared a 600-km long border with Pakistan, will be at the battle front, the CM said. Amarinder warned against

trusting Pak Army Chief General Bajwa's offer of peace and termed it Islamabad's double-faced policy. "Pakistan has been at our throats since 1947, how can they bury the past?", he remarked, adding that the Pak Army and ISI have a vested interest in fanning tensions with India and will never let peace prevail. "Bajwa is, in fact, not fit to be an Army man, he is a liar," remarked Amarinder, adding that the day the General made the peace offer seven encounters happened at the borders.

TIME OF RENEWAL



Flowers start growing afresh in apple orchards on the outskirts of Shimla. On Wednesday.

LALIT KUMAR

Steps taken to curb corona resurgence in HP: Jai Ram

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday said the government is fully aware of the Covid situation and has taken appropriate steps to check the resurgence of such infections in the state.

After a review meeting on the Covid-19 situation in Mandi district at Sundernagar, Thakur said till date, total sampling of 1,25,881 persons had been done in Mandi district and 10,382 cases were reported positive out of which 10,197 have been cured while 129 died. "The positivity rate per sample in the district is 8.25 percent and fatality rate 1.24 per cent.

The total bed capacity in the district for Covid-19 patients is 583 which includes 150 beds in Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Medical College Nerkowch," he said.

The CM said as many as 69,483 doses of Covid vaccine have been administered till



date and there was adequate stock of Covid-19 logistics such as N-95 masks, triple layer mask, infrared thermometer, pulse oximeter, hand sanitizers etc.

"The upcoming prefabricated Covid-19 hospital at Nerkowch would be completed at the earliest and the patients would be admitted in the hospital after 15th April.

Mandi district is the top rank district of the state in providing vaccination to the senior citizens and till date, about 37,794 senior citizens have been vaccinated," he said.

Thakur urged the people of the state to ensure complete

observation of SOPs so that resurgence of the Covid-19 cases could be curbed.

He also requested the people to use face masks and hand sanitizers to check the spread of this virus.

Deputy Commissioner, Mandi, Rukhsar Thakur made a detailed presentation on the status of Covid-19 in the district.

Shimla MP and State BJP chief Suresh Kashyap, Nagar Parishad Sundernagar President Jagtar Singh, Director Technical Education Vivek Chandel, Chief Medical Officer Dr Devender Sharma among others were also present at the meeting.

HP focusing on developing neglected areas: CM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 MARCH

The Himachal Pradesh government is committed towards welfare and balanced development of every area of the state with special thrust on those areas which remained neglected so far due to one reason or another.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said this while addressing a delegation of newly elected Members of Panchayat Samiti, Pradhans, Up Pradhans of various Gram Panchayats of Rampur con-

stituency of Shimla district in 'Samwad Kaksh' here on Wednesday.

The chief minister said that although the Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected the economy of the state, the state government is ensuring that the pace of development goes uninterrupted even during this crisis. He said that he virtually inaugurated and laid foundation stones of developmental projects worth Rs. 3,500 crore in different areas of the state.

He said that developmental projects worth crores of rupees

were dedicated to the people in Rampur Vidhan Sabha area virtually.

Thakur said that people of the state have given "whole-hearted support" to the current government which reflected in the victory of the BJP-supported candidates in the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) elections. He said that the sad demise of Ram Swaroop Sharma was a big loss to the Mandi Parliamentary area and that people of Rampur area had given their full support to the BJP in the Parliamentary elections.

HP Agri varsity to take farm technology to the doorsteps of farmers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 24 MARCH

CSK Himachal Pradesh Agriculture University continued with its new initiative of organising a Scientific Advisory Committee meeting amidst farmers as Krishivigyan Kendra (KVK), Dhaulakuan (Sirmour), held its programme in Kanshipur village on Wednesday.

Sitting on the ground, Prof HK Chaudhary, Vice-Chancellor chaired the meeting and later addressed the farmers in an interaction programme.

He said that he is determined to bring university research work and technology to the farmers' doorstep in the nook and corner of Himachal Pradesh. In such programmes, besides extension specialists of the concerned Krishivigyan Kendra, Deans, Directors, head of departments and scientists of various departments participate. They freely interact with the farmers, listen to their farm-related issues and answer their questions related to agriculture, veterinary science, home science, etc.

The Vice-Chancellor spoke on the importance of animal husbandry and university initiatives in preservation and conservation of local breeds. He discussed problems of farm produce marketing in remote and less accessible areas and assured the farmers to take up such issues with the government.

Shastri, Ram Bhajan Chauhan, Rakesh Kumar, Chaman Lal, Ravi Swarup, Harjit Singh, Piyusha, etc. Prof Chaudhary also planted a sapling of 'Chandan' at KVK premises.

Director of Extension Education Dr Madhumita Singh said that due to high variation in altitude varying from 400 meters at Paonta Sahib to 3700 meters at Churdhar, Agriculture is much diversified in Sirmour district enabling farmers to produce a variety of agriculture and horticulture crops.

He also elaborated about various extension education-related activities. Deans Dr. Manjeet Sharma, Dr. RK Kataria and Dr. VS Dhaliwal informed the participants about the academic and other activities of their colleges. Heads and some scientists also interacted with farmers and many of their questions were also answered in the 'Question-Answer Session.'



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- JANAKPUR B-1/2, Main Najafgarh Road, Opp. Metro Pillar 543
- NOIDA, Nirula's Sec-2, Near Metro Station, Sec-15, Noida, UP
- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing



The people of Tamil Nadu must and will punish the AIADMK-BJP alliance for this grievous blow to the interests of the Tamils.

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER P CHIDAMBARAM

AFTER INDIA ABSTAINED FROM THE UNHRC VOTE ON SRI LANKA.

India

THUMBNAILS



Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee workers protest against Liquor Policy by Delhi Government near CM Kejriwal's Residence. SNS

MLAs' disqualification: The Congress on Wednesday urged President Ram Nath Kovind to either recall Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla or ensure she discharges her constitutional duties, alleging that she has been sitting on the party's demand of disqualifying 12 BJP MLAs and not deciding the matter expeditiously. PTI

EC seeks report: The Election Commission has sought a report from Cochinbar district administration into Dinhata incident where BJP mandir president's body was found hanging. BJP workers have accused TMC of murdering their worker. Special observer Vivek Dubey has left for Dinhata to conduct an enquiry. SNS

Cong urges govt to agree to farmers' demand: Opposition Congress on Wednesday urged the government to agree to the demands of farmers who are protesting against the agri laws and "send them home happy", warning that "making fun" of them would prove very costly to it. PTI

LDF & UDF made Kerala a 'den' of corruption: Shah

Says 'atrocities' committed by LDF govt against Ayyappa devotees is 'deplorable'

SNS & PTI

PARAVUR/KOCHI, 24 MARCH



Union home minister Amit Shah being presented a memento during a meeting, in Chathannoor on Wednesday. AGENCIES

Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday took out a whistlestop tour of poll-bound Kerala attacking the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-headed UDF, saying the two fronts had made the state a "den of corruption".

Shah addressed two poll rallies at Kanjirapally in Kottayam district and Paravur in Kollam district, besides taking out road shows at Tripunithura in Kochi and Kanjikode in Palakkad.

"When UDF comes, then we see scandals like solar scam and when LDF is in power there are the dollar and Gold scams," he said.

Touching on the Sabarimala temple issue during his address at the Puttingal temple ground at Paravur, Shah said the "atrocities" committed by the LDF government against the Ayyappa devotees was "deplorable" and not seen in any other part of the country.

"The communist party is hellbent on finishing our culture and tradition...the BJP government believes that in matters related to temples, the government should not interfere and let the devotees handle the issues," he said at the temple ground, where 114 people had been killed and over 300 injured on 10 April, 2016 when a stray firework landed on a stockpile of crackers triggering a massive blast.

The state had witnessed violent incidents after the state government decided to implement the 2018 Supreme court verdict allowing women of all age groups to offer prayers at the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa in Sabarimala.

Targeting Congress leader and Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, the Union Home minister said: "Rahul baba came to Kerala on a picnic. The people should ask him how Congress is fighting Communists in Kerala and are partners in West Bengal."

Shah also wanted to know from Vijayan why no probe was ordered on the alleged attack against officials of Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Customs.

If it was any other Chief Minister, he would have resigned long back, Shah said. Shah pointed out when Congress was in government at both the Centre and in Kerala, then in five years, the state received only Rs 45,395 crore, but the Narendra Modi government during the past five years had allocated Rs 1,34,848 crore to the state.

The Union minister also took out a roadshow at Kanjikode in Palakkad this evening where the BJP has fielded E Sreedharan as its candidate. Targeting Congress leader and Wayanad MP Rahul Gandhi, the Union Home minister said: "Rahul baba came to Kerala on a picnic. The people should ask him how Congress is fighting Communists in Kerala and are partners in West Bengal."

According to officials in Jhansi, the nuns were detained on March 19 after local Bajrang Dal activists complained that two women were allegedly being taken forcibly for religious conversion.

The police said there was no basis in the complaint and all four women later took the next train to their destination in Odisha.

Shah, in the state to campaign for the party ahead of the 6 April Assembly polls, said,

"I want to assure the people of Kerala that the culprits behind this incident will be brought to justice at the earliest."

The issue was raised before Shah by BJP's Kanjirapally assembly candidate K J Alphonse, who said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has

in various meetings with the Christian community, "has assured equality for all."

Shah promises action against nuns' harassment.

The alleged harassment of nuns belonging to a Kerala-based congregation in Uttar Pradesh recently had its echo in the poll-bound southern state on Wednesday, with chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan taking it up with the Centre and home minister Amit Shah promising strong action.

While Vijayan flagged concerns of freedom of individual rights in the incident, Shah pointed out that Uttar Pradesh was a BJP-ruled state and promised to bring before the law, those behind the incident.

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in various meetings with the Christian community, "has assured equality for all."

Double votes also exist in voter's list: Chennithala

KANNUR, 24 MARCH

Raising fresh allegations of fraud in preparation of voters' list in Kerala ahead of 6 April assembly poll, Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala said many votes have been created in the name of a single voter in multiple constituencies and they should not be allowed to exercise their franchise.

Earlier, he had pointed out that there were about four lakh bogus voters in the electoral rolls published by the Election Commission and stated that a "clear conspiracy" was behind such an attempt. All of them also have separate voter ID cards. This facilitates a voter to cast a second or third vote in other constituencies.

Chief electoral officer Tikaram Meena had admitted that a preliminary investigation on a complaint by the leader of opposition in the assembly had revealed the presence of double entries in the voter's list and an electoral officer had been suspended, pending enquiry.

The CEO had also instructed the district collectors to further investigate and find similar anomalies. SNS & PTI

AP govt to give Covid vaccine to one crore people in 4-5 months

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD, 24 MARCH

Following spurt in Covid-19 cases, Andhra Pradesh government has decided to expedite the ongoing vaccination drive targeting to complete inoculation of one crore people in the next 4-5 weeks.

The state today recorded 585 new cases with four deaths, leading to concern over the sudden increase.

During a review meeting on vaccination plan at the camp office chief minister directed health officials to start the vaccination in urban areas from 29 March since civic polls were over and take up two villages each day in a mandal while working four days a week.

This will ensure eight villages recovered every week across the state. Six days are left in the poll process of MPTC and ZPTC and if elections windup, the focus can be laid on vaccination though State EC N Ramesh has

declined to hold elections citing his imminent retirement. The CM rued the uncertainty over polls and directed officials to expedite vaccination process.

The government plans to launch awareness campaigns ensuring that people get vaccinated without fear. The list of those who are yet to be vaccinated includes 3.97 lakh health and frontline workers, 59.08 lakh people who are either 60 plus or above 45 with co-morbidities. The Centre has decided to provide vaccine to those above 45 from 1 April. Covid tests should continue to be conducted through RT-PCR method with focus on regions where cases were on rise.

Meanwhile, though the Telangana government has closed all educational institutions after spurt in the number of cases barring medical colleges it has assured that the states will run with 100 per cent occupancy following pandemic rules.

Madras HC takes action after voters' records leaked

CHENNAI, 24 MARCH

Taking serious note of the complaint that the BJP Puducherry unit has accessed the personal records of citizens such as WhatsApp numbers and is sending campaign messages, Madras High Court today questioned how the individual information of the voters was made available to political parties. The court directed the Election Commission to file a detailed report within two days.

The court also observed it was a grave charge and the commission cannot pass the buck to the cyber cell authorities to investigate.

Hearing a petition filed by Puducherry Democratic Youth Foundation of India (DYFI) president Anand, the Court wanted to know on what basis the information was shared.

In his petition, Anand had mentioned that the political parties are getting the numbers of the voters illegally. The next hearing has been postponed to 26 March. SNS

Nandigram demands 'change' once again

SOUMYADIP MULLICK

NANDIGRAM, 24 MARCH



A makeshift toilet near Bhangabera bridge at Nandigram in East Medinipore. SAILENDRA MAL

Once the epicentre of a revolution that propelled Trinamul supremo Mamata Banerjee to power in 2011, Nandigram once again is on the cusp of another revolution.

More than two lakh people there are closely watching the political parties thrusting and parrying on its soil for reign, having completely shoved aside the needs of the people.

The Bhanga Bera Bridge between Khejuri and Sonachura, Nandigram in 2007 was a silent witness to a bloody battle between members of Bhumi Uccered Pratirodh Committee (BUPC) and the police where 14 lives were lost in firing on 14 March. The clashes were over land acquisition to set up a chemical factory. Today, Nandigram is shouting out "Shilpo Chai, Chakri Chai" (We want industry, we want jobs) as the same bridge now stands witness to the abject poverty in the adjacent Pyke Para colony where toilets are just makeshift arrangements using torn and tattered pieces of cloth and access to drinking water is a distant dream.

Madan Pyke, a resident of the colony was disappointed when asked whether Nandi-

gram will vote for "Banglar Meye" Miss Banerjee who is contesting for the seat. He retorts, "Why should we? We are living in poverty while her government pretends to remain oblivious. There are at least 100 women in this colony but not a single toilet that was supposed to be constructed with the central funds that arrived long back.

Doing the rounds of the local Panchayat offices yielded no result." Among the shabby makeshift toilets, a newly-made cemented one stands out. He remarked, "This one was made yesterday since this work was covered to ensure the Model Code of Conduct is not violated.

Even as the searing summer heat cracks open the dry fields of Nandigram, Pyke Para locals have to cover



A street at Nandigram dotted with BJP flags and posters of its Nandigram candidate Suvidhu Adhikari. SAILENDRA MAL

unimaginable distances to fetch potable water. "Is drinking water, not a necessity?" asked Madan's neighbour who complained he was not even compensated after Amphan blew away his hut's roof.

"We will vote for 'Bhoomiputra' (Suvendu Adhikari). He at least spared a thought for us by ensuring the construction of the road in the colony when he was the chairman of Haldia Development Authority." The poster that bears testimony to this work was covered to ensure the Model Code of Conduct is not violated.

Meanwhile, the mercury soared high in Satengabari in the far end of Nandigram II where CPI-M candidate

Minakshi Mukherjee reminded people how Trinamul and BJP are deluding them and turning the knife inside as Nandigram bleeds from a thousand cuts. Mukherjee's message was: the time has come again for people to strike back through their votes. That she is being considered a formidable opponent against the 'titans' finds evidence in the murmurs of the crowd where some even compared her with 'Banglarmeye', remarking that she may be the next woman lead-

ing Bengal.

In 2016 Assembly polls, the CPI-M alliance finished second in Nandigram with 53,393 votes; Adhikari, then a Trinamul candidate, won with 13,623 votes. The broad consensus among the local populace is CPI-M, which earlier had a stronghold in this area has good chances if it manages to bag both the anti-incumbency votes and those of its supporters who had voted for the BJP in 2019 parliamentary elections due to lack of a "third option" in the Trinamul-BJP binary equation.

In Nandigram, farmlands on either side of the road are dotted with rows of structures resembling trees with bright red, green, and saffron flags symbolising the leaves. A 70-year-old Panchanan Samanta was looking at it with curiosity when he remarked to The Statesman, on the day of election results on 2 May, Bengal will know who played the ultimate prank on whom. Nandigram is going for polls on 1 April (April Fool's Day).

have an adverse bearing on the polls because they could be biased towards the BJP and could also call the EC's neutrality into question. Hence, we have written to the CEO urging him to take the matter with the EC for putting a stop on inducting cops from Uttar Pradesh with immediate effect".

The Trinamul Congress's letter to the EC regarding force deployment assumed significant as the poll panel, which is uncompromising regarding security to ensure free and fair polls and whose full bench had only yesterday at a meeting with DMs, SPs, and CPs of eight districts of North Bengal had asked the officers concerned to commission the process of "web casting" and had also hinted at ramping up force deployment to at least 1,000 companies when the polls begin.

In what could be seen as mounting pressure on the EC, the Trinamul Congress had already given a deputation at the EC headquarters in Delhi recently for the deployment of state police alongside the central forces within the 100m of polling centre.

TENDER

HIMACHAL PRADESH PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

The Executive Engineer HPPWD Division Bhoranj Distt. Hamirpur H.P. on behalf of Governor of H.P. re-invites the item rate bids, in electronic tendering system from the eligible class for the works as detailed in the table.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Starting Date for downloading Bid	Deadline for Submission of Bid
1.	Periodical renewal on Hamirpur Jahu road SH/PL 30 mm thick bitumen concrete at Rd 15.0 to 23.0 for the year 2021-22MDR Road.	1,13,64,723/-	1,45,200/-	07-04-2021	16-04-2021
2.	Periodical renewal on link road to village Arman (SH- PL) 30 mm thick bitumen concrete at Rd 0/0 to 2/05 for the year 2021-22 (PMGSY).	23,43,906/-	42,700/-	07-04-2021	16-04-2021
3.	Periodical renewal on Patta to Ladwon road Km 0/0 to 1/0 (II) Periodical renewal on Link road to Harzan Basti Kharwan Km. 0/0 to 2/700 (III) Periodical renewal on Patta Awah Devi road Km 0/0 to 2/0 3/0 to 4/0 (IV) Periodical renewal on Link road Shalwin Km 0/0 to 0/750 (I) Periodical renewal on link road to village Dhadu Km. 0/0 to 2/0 (IV) Periodical renewal on Tikkor Km 0/0 to 0/720 (VI) Periodical renewal on Link road Kuleth road Km 0/0 to 1/0 (VII) PL 30 mm thick bitumen concrete on various road for the year 2021-22 (Village road).	78,55,336/-	1,11,100/-	07-04-2021	16-04-2021
4.	Periodical renewal on Link road to village Hanoh via Co-operative Society Km 0/0 to 0/750 (II) Periodical renewal on Dhadu to Kharwan Km 0/0 to 1/0 (III) Periodical renewal on Link road to village Dhadu Km. 0/0 to 2/0 (IV) Periodical renewal on Dhadu to Kharwan via Dhadu Temple Km 0/0 to 3/170 (V) Periodical renewal on Link road Shalwin Km 0/0 to 0/720 (VI) Periodical renewal on Tikkor Km 0/0 to 0/750 (VII) PL 30 mm thick bitumen concrete on various road for the year 2021-22 (Village road).	57,69,401/-	90,200/-	07-04-2021	16-04-2021
5.	Periodical renewal on Link road Thalwani Kehalwan Km. 0/0 to 0/650 (I) Periodical renewal on Dhadu to Kharwan Km 0/0 to 1/				

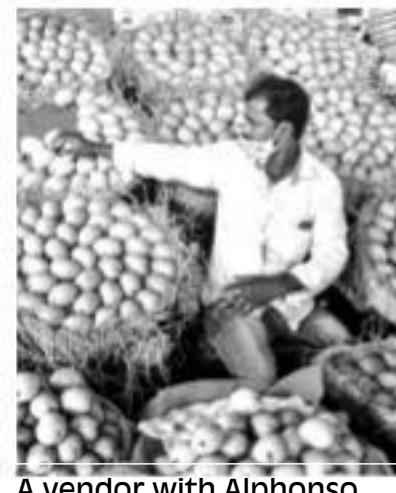


I am not after CM's post, not in politics for personal ambition...

SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER GAURAV GOGOI

SAVING HE WILL NOT REPRESENT FATHER'S CONSTITUENCY TITABAR AS PER HIS LAST WISH

THUMBNAILS



A vendor with Alphonso mangoes at Crawford Market in Mumbai on Wednesday. PTI

Rajya Sabha adjourned: Rajya Sabha proceedings witnessed two brief, back-to-back adjournments as Opposition members trooped in the well of the House in protest against the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021, saying the proposed legislation was unconstitutional and demanded that it be referred to a select committee for scrutiny. PTI

Tarun Tejpal rape case: A sessions court in Goa will on 27 April pronounce its verdict in the 2013 rape case registered against Tarun Tejpal, former Editor-in-Chief of Tehelka magazine, a police officer said on Wednesday. Tejpal is accused of raping his journalist colleague inside an elevator of a five-star hotel in Goa in 2013 during an event organised by the news magazine. PTI

Infant deaths in Gujarat: Over 13,000 infants have died during treatment in the sick newborn care units of government-run hospitals in Gujarat in the last two years, the state Legislative Assembly was told on Wednesday. PTI

CORRECTION
In the report titled "Chaos in Bihar House, Patna streets over 'draconian' Police Bill" that appeared on Page one in our edition dated 24 March, it has been inadvertently attributed to the Press Trust of India. It should have been attributed to our staffer Manoj Chaurasia. The error is regretted.

Govt allows use of military ranks by retired SSC officers

NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

The government has decided to allow retired Short Service Commission (SSC) officers of the Army to use military ranks as applicable.

The SSC officers, after completion of their mandated terms and conditions of service, had not been authorised to use the military ranks.

This had been causing dissatisfaction and discontent among the retired SSC officers, but will also serve as a big boost to the young aspirants. In addition, this decision will act as morale booster for the existing SSC officers, the ministry of defence (MoD) said in a press release. SNS

Tejashwi calls Kumar 'C-grade, undemocratic' chief minister

He threatens to boycott entire House session if chief minister doesn't tender apology

MANOJ CHAURASIA

PATNA, 24 MARCH

Angry Opposition members today reached the Bihar Assembly blindfolded and held protests in the portico of the House to protest the use of police force against the protesting legislators.

The Special Armed Police Bill, 2021 which was passed by the state assembly Tuesday evening amid heavy presence of police force empowers the police force to arrest people without a warrant.

The legislators said they reached the state Assembly blindfolded since the chief minister Nitish Kumar was acting like "Dhritrashtra".

"The state government is unable to take proper decisions since it remains blindfolded. It has failed to understand what is wrong and what is right for the people of the state, and hence we have reached the house covering our eyes with black clothes," an opposition legislator told newsmen today.

The Opposition legislators also held a parallel assembly session in the portico of the House during which the chief minister was "dismissed".

An unsavory incident was



averted in the legislative council today when the two legislators from the rival camp came face to face after a RJD legislator Subodh Kumar showed bangles to the chief minister.

The Opposition legislator also allegedly used objectionable words against the chief minister for the yesterday incident during which the protesting opposition legislators, including female members, were allegedly assaulted, kicked and punched by the police forces before being literally thrown out of the House.

Opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav in the meanwhile has threatened to boycott the assembly session for the remaining tenure of the House if the chief minister doesn't tender

Nitish party MLA Maheshwar Hazari elected deputy speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

PATNA, 24 MARCH

Senior JD(U) leader Maheshwar Hazari was elected Deputy Speaker of the Bihar legislative assembly amid boycott by opposition on Wednesday, accusing the ruling NDA of having throttled their voice and rammed down a "draconian" Bill on the previous day amidst unprecedented chaos.

Hazari was chosen deputy speaker by voice vote in the absence of opposition members in the house.

der an apology.

Describing Kumar as the "C-grade and undemocratic" chief minister, Tejashwi threatened to boycott proceedings for full five if the government remains adamant on its stand.

He also warned of severe punitive action against the police officials who were accused of assaulting, humiliating and hurling abuses at the opposition legislators yes-

terday.

"My Name is Tejashwi. CM Nitish & his puppet officers must know that no govt is permanent. MLAs were abused and beaten inside the Assembly. They have set an unparliamentary trend. If CM does not apologise for the incident, we may boycott the Assembly for the remaining tenure," Tejashwi tweeted today.

Cong says democracy has been murdered in Bihar.

The Congress on Wednesday alleged that democracy has been murdered in Bihar after opposition legislators were allegedly roughed up by the police inside the state Assembly.

The Bihar Assembly witnessed unprecedented turmoil on Tuesday and the police was called in to physically evict legislators who had laid siege to the Speakers chamber.

Members of the opposition Grand Alliance, comprising RJD, Congress and the Left, were agitated over the Bihar Special Armed Police Bill, 2021.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said those stripping democracy have no right to call themselves a government.

He said the opposition will continue to raise issues in public interest and do not fear anything.

"It is clear from the shameful events in Bihar Assembly that the chief minister is firmly under the influence of BJP and RSS.

Those stripping democracy have no right to call themselves a government," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

Catch goons giving cash, get a job, offers Mamata

KANCHAN SIDDIQUI

BANKURA, 24 MARCH

party in 2019 and said: "I felt very sad that you voted for BJP last time. They won several seats and are now dancing on my head, dictating me and also injuring me. They are trying to prevent my access to your neighbourhood areas but they cannot estimate my courage, they don't know that I'm unstoppable."

She also ridiculed the influx of the forces from outside saying: "The BJP is sending policemen to the state from Uttar Pradesh. The entire central forces assigned for the Bengal polls are controlled by the Centre. Why? They are supposed to be governed by the Election Commission only."

Miss Banerjee also talked about 5 lakh government and semi-government jobs for the Bengal youths in the next five years. She said: "Call back the members of your families working in other states. We are set to create ample jobs in the small-scale and cottage industry segment. We shall have Rs 72,000 crore investment in the Barjora-Bankura-Raghunathpur cluster soon," she said.

While her party has labelled BJP leaders coming from other states for canvassing as outsiders, she said that those originally hailing from other parts of India but residing in West Bengal for ages are not outsiders but her "own people".

TALENT DISPLAY



Folk artists from Tripura perform Hojagiri dance during a week-long Handloom Expo at Press Club of India in the capital on Wednesday. SNS

LS clears National Commission for Allied & Healthcare Professions Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

Lok Sabha today cleared the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, a Bill to set up a commission for regulating and prescribing uniform education standards for allied and healthcare professionals. Passed by voice vote, the bill seeks to provide for regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services by allied and healthcare professionals.

"The paramedics and allied healthcare workers are critical part of the medical profession and their contribution is similar to doctors, if not more. The group of allied professionals is large and the bill is trying to regulate this field by providing dignity to their roles," said Union Health

Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, while replying the debate.

The bill has already been passed by Rajya Sabha last week. While talking about the bill Vardhan mentioned that the legislation is aimed at fulfilling long-pending demands of the sector, and enhance employment opportunities for professionals. The minister also appreciated the work of paramedics and allied healthcare workers lab technicians, radiographers, dieticians during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The Bill aims to establish a statutory body or commission that frames policies and standards, regulate professional conduct and qualifications for allied healthcare professionals, besides providing uniformity of service standards across institutions," said Vardhan.

The chairman and vice-chairman of the body will be selected for two years and they would be eligible for re-nomination for further two terms.

"All standards have been coded by international yardsticks and there will be representations from all states and union territories on this commission with each state having state-level commissions. This will help in enhancing their standard and skills," shared Vardhan.

Congress member Balabhadra Narayanrao Dhanorkar said his party supports the bill as allied healthcare workers are a key to providing treatment to patients. BJP member Subhash Bhambhani said the bill reflected that the Modi government is dedicated to the service of the poor and through the bill the government wants

to bring over 50 types of professionals under the regulatory network.

In the Question Hour minister of Communications and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad said the government is working to provide optical fibre connection to 6.5 lakh villages, adding that the country was kept going by the Information Technology mobile infrastructure during the lockdown.

"This is the communication strategy of the Modi government to provide optical fibre connection to 6.5 lakh villages... The country was kept going by the Information Technology mobile infrastructure during Covid-19 lockdown period," said Prasad.

The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2021 also introduced in Lok Sabha today.

Negative Covid report must for entry in Kumbh Mela: HC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DEHRADUN, 24 MARCH



The SOP issued by the central government clearly states that visitors with a negative Covid-19 report, done 72 hours prior to the date of visit, shall only be allowed to enter the Kumbh Mela area.

Rajesh Bhushan, Union secretary, ministry of health and family welfare recently wrote a letter to chief secretary Uttarakhand strongly highlighting the concerns raised by the high level central team in its visit to Uttarakhand and about the need of stringent measures to control the spread of Covid-19 during Kumbh Mela.

A high level central team led by director NCDC which visited Uttarakhand recently, fears that there is a potential of an upsurge in cases in the local population after the auspicious Shahi Snan days during the Kumbh Mela.

Residents of the areas along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir have been the real victims of the bitter relations as many among them lost their

Thaw in Indo-Pak relations has changed narrative in Kashmir

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 24 MARCH

The thaw in the relations between India and Pakistan has changed the narrative in Kashmir with the valley-centric mainstream political parties and also the Hurriyat Conference appreciating the shift wherein Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Pakistani PM Imran Khan have started taking steps to restore friendly relations.

The Hurriyat and other Kashmir based political parties that were for the past 20 months loud in criticising the BJP government for scrapping the Article 370, were now in the forefront suggesting a credible dialogue between the two countries to bring sustainable peace in the region.

Residents of the areas along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir have been the real victims of the bitter relations as many among them lost their

lives or were seriously wounded due to frequent shelling and exchange of fire between troops of the two countries. Restoration of the ceasefire that was initially ordered by both countries 18 years ago during the Vajpayee era in 2003 has come as a relief for residents on both sides of the border.

There was expectation that Pakistan would respond positively to Modi on Monday writing a letter to Imran conveying greetings to the people of Pakistan on their National Day.

Modi also expressed the desire of India for cordial relations with the people of Pakistan for which "an environment of trust, devoid of terror and hostility, is imperative".

PDP leader and former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti, with whose party the BJP had forged an alliance to share power but later dumped her, on Wednesday appreciated Modi for writing to Imran.

The ongoing meeting of India and Pakistan in New

Delhi on the Indus Waters after a gap of two years was also being seen as a friendly gesture. These steps have come after relations between India and Pakistan further nose-dived in 14 February 2019 when the suicide terror attack at a CRPF convoy in Pulwama resulted in martyrdom of 40 soldiers and this was retaliated by the Indian air strike at terrorist training camps in Balakot on 26 February.

The Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has welcomed the shift towards good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan.

The Mirwaiz sees this as the "first step" in the direction of meaningful dialogue for peaceful resolution of the Kashmir conflict. He said Hurriyat is ready to extend full support to all initiatives between the two countries that aim at bringing peace and prosperity to all people of the subcontinent and seek a fair and peaceful resolution of the "Kashmir dispute".

BJP worker found dead; clash erupts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DINHATA, 24 MARCH

A local BJP leader was on Wednesday found hanging in the groundfloor corridor of a veterinary hospital here triggering protests across Cooch Behar district in poll-bound West Bengal, police said.

BJP Dinhata town mandal president Amit Sarkar did not return to his home on Tuesday night and his body was found hanging outside the balcony of Dinhata Animal Hospital on Wednesday morning, the police said.

The local BJP claimed that TMC was behind the killing.

The BJP workers staged

agitations by burning tyres, blocking roads and vandalizing a number of TMC party offices in the area.

When the police tried to disperse the agitators and take the body for post mortem, there was a clash with the saffron party workers.

The police resorted to baton charge to disperse the mob, who brickbatted the force.

There were complaints of a number of media persons being assaulted by the protesters.

Local TMC MLA Udayan Guha staged a dharna outside the local police station to protest against the attacks on the party's offices.

APPOINTMENT

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

APPOINTMENT UNDER JUNIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

Eligible candidates are requested to send a copy of resume along with the attested copies of the certificates by 30th April 2021 at the address given below for the one temporary position of Junior research fellow (JRF) for the period of one year, extended till the end of operation of research project under SERB sponsored project of Prof. Akhilesh Kumar Verma (PI) entitled "Design of Novel Approaches for the Synthesis of highly functionalized N-heterocycles: An application in Total Synthesis of Isoquinoline Alkaloids"-EMR/2017/003218" sponsored by SERB.

Eligibility: M.Sc. in Chemical Science
The interested candidate can send their application by email at the following address.
Email : akvresearchgroup@gmail.com
Salary : As per SERB Norms

Address : Dr. Akhilesh Kumar Verma (Professor), Room no. 115, Block B, Department of Chemistry, University of Delhi, Delhi-110007

UNIVERSITY OF DELHI DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

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Eligibility: M.Sc. Degree in Chemical Science
The interested candidate can send their application by email at the

A talk with Austin

Neither India nor the United States had expected either Defence minister Rajnath Singh or the US Secretary of Defence, Lloyd Austin, to dwell on specifics during their interaction on human rights and values. Yet the fact that the subject was discussed was in itself a striking feature of their talks. The approach on either side of the high table was riveted to generics, arguably in the aftermath of the recent killing of eight Asian Americans in Atlanta. The critical issue of human rights was largely confined to "shared values"; there were no interlocutors to discuss the situation in either country. The rights of the minorities were of course alluded to when the focus shifted to Afghanistan. The external affairs minister, Mr S. Jaishankar, is reported to have told Mr Austin that the "US should not let down the minorities in Afghanistan". Nor for that matter in Pakistan ~ with its hideous laws on blasphemy ~ or Bangladesh where Hindu dwellings are attacked by Islamist fundamentalists, as happened in Sylhet last week. Mr Austin is reported to have told the Defence minister that "as the two largest democracies in the world, human rights and values are important to us and we will lead with these values". The US Defence secretary was suitably evasive when asked whether he had discussed the persecution of Muslim minorities in the North-east. "I did not have an opportunity to talk to the Prime Minister about that. Yet I did have a conversation with other members of the Cabinet on this." Markedly, he did not go into details. As regards "shared values" Mr Austin was a mite more explicit. "You have heard the Prime Minister say that human rights and the rule of law are important to the United States." He took care to remind his host that "India is a democratic country and you treasure your values as well. There are a number of things on which we can and will work on together."

Once again, the head of the Pentagon stopped short of specifics. Suffice it to say that both leaders utilised the opportunity to evaluate the US-India Major Defence Partnership, which has suitably been accorded priority by the administration, helmed by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. The essay towards achieving the goal can arguably be initiated through three critical parameters ~ regional security cooperation, military-to-military interaction, and defence trade.

The full potential of the global strategic partnership can perhaps be fulfilled through defence cooperation, expansion of military-to-military engagement across services, sharing of information, and sharing of data in the emerging sectors of defence, and mutual logistics support. There has, therefore, been a certain forward movement in matters of defence. Human rights is too hot a potato for both India and the United States of America. George Floyd personifies the worst instance of man's inhumanity to man in recent times. The killing of eight people, including six women of Asian descent in Atlanta, lengthens the hideous loop.

Don't worry, be happy

Happiness is a state of mind, was the old adage. But it is now nation-state specific. That, at least, is the takeaway from the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network 'World Happiness Report 2021' released earlier this week. According to its findings, Finland finds perpetual joy in the morning as it continues to top the global happiness index for the fourth time in a row while India is as grumpy as ever coming in at number 139 of the 149 countries surveyed. The World Happiness Report mainly uses data received from the Gallup World Poll to reach its conclusions. Gallup tracks key areas in countries including business and economic conditions, communication and technology access, citizen engagement, educational opportunities, family ties, emotional state of citizens, availability of food and shelter, and prevalence of law and order.

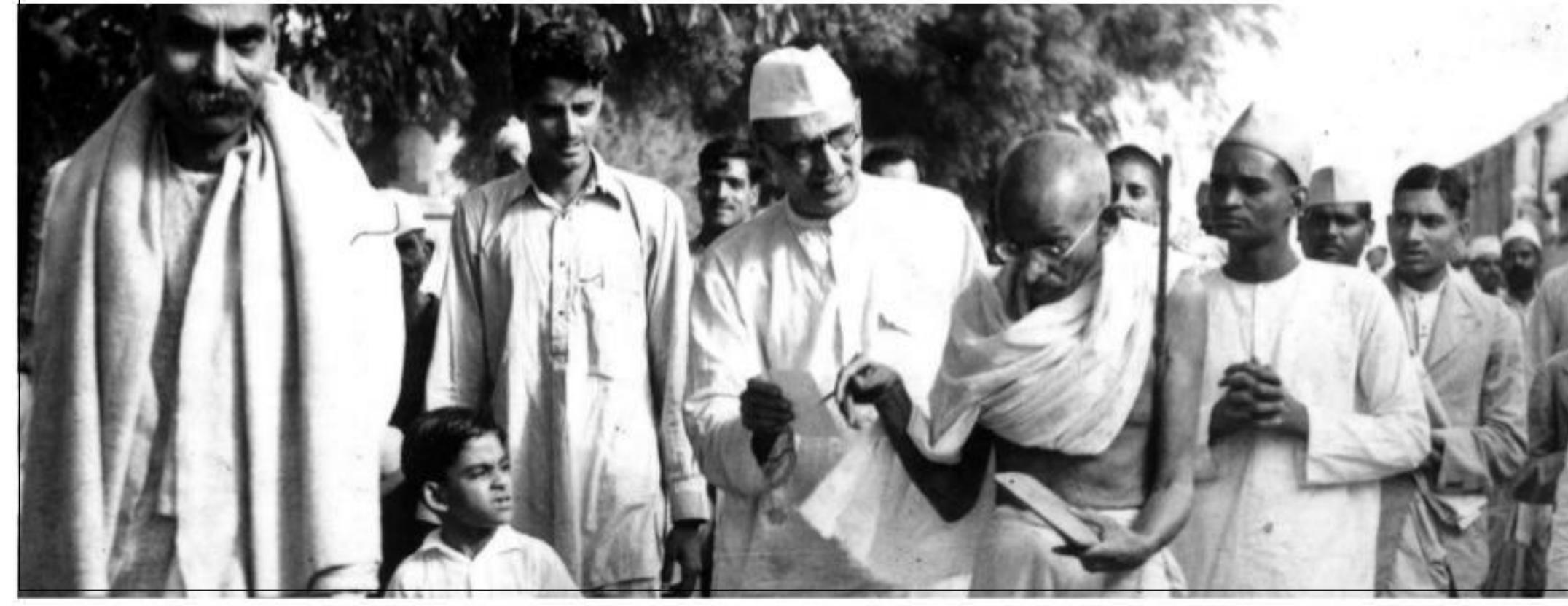
The focus of this year's report is obviously on the impact of Covid-19 and the ways in which people have fared in times of the pandemic across the globe. Even a cursory look at the countries that figure at the top of the World Happiness List, however, would tend to confirm that while money may or may not buy love it certainly can help in the pursuit of happiness or approximations thereof. Nordic and Antipodean nations ~ Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and Australia among them ~ all would appear to be populated by some of the happiest souls on the planet.

That nearly all of them run welfare states and are among the most gender-equal in the world may have something to do with it. A surprise inclusion is that of Germany which also figures in the top 15, perhaps demolishing forever the stereotype of the dour German which has dominated popular culture for decades. The Swiss are there, of course, at No. 3, their centuries-old neutrality and discreet banking practices having obviously paid them a whopping happiness dividend. Israelis, on the other hand, despite living in a 'pretty rough neighbourhood' as King Hussein of Jordan once described West Asia, also make it to the happiness list at No. 12 proving that their country is truly its neighbours' envy and owners' pride.

As for India, the world's largest democracy with an ancient cultural ethos, ranks 139th out of 149 countries which is neither here nor there. The problem is that Pakistan is at No. 105. But every dark cloud has a silver lining; if the decision of the Delhi government to lower the legal age for consumption of alcohol to 21 years is emulated by other states, the 2022 Happiness List may well see

Gandhi and politics

Gandhi, like Hobbes and Machiavelli, recognized that the pursuit of power is a basic human characteristic. All political institutions are merely instruments for the pursuit of power, whether directly or by the indirect manner in which they maintain and foster the ownership of property and provide the psychological incentives that they are connected with power



On 18 July, 1914 Mahatma Gandhi sailed for England, leaving South Africa for the last time, and finally reached India (Bombay) on 19 December 1914. At the time of his return to India, he was a mature man of forty-five who had done his essential thinking on morals and politics in South Africa between 1913 and 1914. All his important concepts ~ satya, ahimsa, satyagraha, sardarvada, even swaraj and swadeshi ~ had been formulated in his mind and in his writings before he embarked upon the political activities which brought him into the lime-light. He did not see the goal of political action as the immediate capture of office. According to him, the basic condition of political action was the elimination of violence, because violence was a sign of the failure of a legitimate political power. The chief task which he set before himself was the collective organization of the working people in terms of non-violence, keeping in mind that "A non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power', but it is a programme of transformation of relationships." Of course, he also added to this a few ancillary aims like the political independence of India, the removal of untouchability and the like.

For the accomplishment of these objectives, Gandhi tried to work through a suitable organization. His first choice seems to have fallen upon the Servants of India Society in Poona. But eventually he withdrew his application for membership following a sharp division of opinion with the existing members and joined the short-lived organization named All India Home Rule League, founded by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant, and became its President. Nearly a year passed by. In the meanwhile, he had succeeded in changing the creed as well as the name of the organization. The Indian National Congress (INC) was then the single most popular party, and aims and methods of operation of the party had also been 'constitutional' since its inception in 1885. Gandhi soon became the member of the INC, and then to know India he embarked on a country wide journey under the command and wish of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, his political mentor. However, in 1920, the All-India Home Rule League merged with INC which elected Gandhi as its President. Indeed, Gandhi joined one orga-

nization after another with the objective to put his ideas into practice. At the same time, the primary objective was also to organize the masses for satyagraha in an uninterrupted manner in India. Actually, South Africa provided the laboratory for Gandhi's experiments and now India was a clean slate to him for writing and also to try out almost any methods he chose.

Gandhi's central contribution to modern politics was the invention of Satyagraha. Tolstoian non-resistance and Thoreau's civil disobedience inspired his ambition to make satyagraha a universal political method. But Gandhi's greatest innovation was to turn satyagraha into a new kind of mass politics. As a tool of resistance, its power was most unyielding when enacted on a large scale. Its mass quality was also important for how it was practiced, and by whom. The weapon was universal in a second sense; it could be taken by anyone ~ women, men, children, peasants. Political scientists Erica Chenoweth and Nancy Stephan, in When Civil Resistance Works, argued that this inclusiveness had given non-violent movements a 'participation advantage' over armed movements, making them twice as likely to succeed in overthrowing authoritarian regimes. The theory and practice of satyagraha exemplified another general truth about politics that Gandhi underlined ~ this was the importance of means. He followed the maxim that in politics 'means are after all everything'. He never subscribed to the principle that the end justified the means. He compared the means to a seed and the end to a tree, and emphatically said: "There is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree".

Gandhi, like Hobbes and Machiavelli, recognized that the pursuit of power is a basic human characteristic. All political institutions are merely instruments for the pursuit of power, whether directly or by the indirect manner in which they maintain and foster the ownership of property and provide the psychological incentives that they are connect-

ed with power. Gandhi used the term 'politics' in two ways. According to him there is a distinction between 'Sattvic' (derived from the Sanskrit term sattva which means "Truth", "Goodness" "purity") politics and "so-called politics" centered on power. He regarded politics as a moral effect on the part of the individual to establish justice in social relations rather than as a drive for power. It is borne out by the fact that he wanted every non-violent worker to take five vows of truth, Brahmacharya, non-violence, poverty and non-possession. He told his followers of the freedom movement: "Ours is not a drive for power, but merely a non-violent fight for India's Independence."

A few days before his assassination, Gandhi said at a prayer meeting: "I wonder if we can remain free from the fever of power politics or the bid for power, which afflicts the political world in the East and the West." The day before his assassination, in one of the many unsuccessful attempts of his last days to keep the leaders of the Congress on the straight and narrow path, he advised the disbandment of the Congress and its conversion into a Lok Sevak Sangh for which he also drafted the constitution the same evening. Only a few minutes before the shots were fired, he was engaged in a discussion with Sardar Patel regarding the latter's differences with Nehru; Nehru and Azad had an appointment with him after the prayer meeting regarding the same issue. Gandhi's last fight was thus against power politics.

Gandhi was not a system builder in the academic sense. He was also not a political philosopher. For all his sayings were pouring from his deep feelings and sincere realization of truth. In his book Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule (1909) Gandhi expressed systematically his views on Swaraj, modern civilization, mechanization etc. His indictment of modern civilization represents a moral and spiritual standpoint that is witnessed more clearly in his attitude to politics. Gandhi always resisted power politics and realized that politics today encircles us like the coils of a snake from which one

can hardly get out. According to him, the only way of wrestling with the snake is to introduce religion into politics. As early as 1915, the year of his return from South Africa, Gandhi declared his aim 'to spiritualize' political life and political Institutions. In the following year he told a Missionary Conference at Madras: "I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried." He also emphatically wrote in his Autobiography: "Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is."

The presentation of his social and political thought is saturated with religious spirit and frequently punctuated with the assertion that politics is inextricably linked with religion. It is also argued that both true religion and true politics have to concern themselves with human life and action, and both must have a common basis in a common morality determined by a common set of values. In the preface to his autobiography, Gandhi declared that his devotion to truth had drawn him into politics, that his power in the political was derived from his spiritual experiments with himself, and those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.

In 1947, while answering the criticism that he was utilizing his prayer meetings for the propagation of his political views, Gandhi admitted that this was true, and added that he never had any feeling of guilt on this account. Human life being an undivided whole, no line could be drawn between its different compartments, nor between ethics and politics. It was impossible to separate the everyday life of man, he emphasized, from his spiritual being.

The Gandhian appeal to the ethical part in politics was not only a way to seek Truth, but also of coming to know oneself in ever greater depth. Gandhi considered politics as a work of the heart and not merely of reason. This recalls French philosopher Blaise Pascal, who said: "The heart has its reasons which reason itself does not know." In the same manner, Gandhi believed that the heart, and not reason, is the seat of morality. His morality was not denial of politics. He wrote: "I feel that political work must be looked upon in terms of social and moral progress."

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES
Abetting human trafficking

After last year's "pastillas" corruption scandal that involved illegally bringing in Chinese nationals to work in Pogos, the Bureau of Immigration is once again in hot water, this time over the trafficking of Filipino women to such countries as Syria. Sen. Risa Hontiveros, chair of the Senate committee on women, children, family relations, and gender equality, will lead an investigation next week on allegations that corrupt BI officers have been collecting "outbound pastillas," a reference to the money ~ at least P50,000, five times higher than the P10,000 bribe paid by Chinese individuals entering the Philippines ~ that every Filipino woman is reportedly charged to be allowed to pass through airport immigration without question.

Most of these women were promised jobs in the United Arab Emirates, according to a report in The Washington Post, only to end up sold as "modern-day slaves" in war-torn Syria, where they were subjected to physical and sexual abuse by their employers. One victim the Post was able to interview was only 12 years old when she was recruited from Cotabato City three years ago. The young woman said she was promised a job in Dubai, only to be trafficked to Syria under a falsified age.

At Hontiveros' online briefing last Tuesday, "Alice," one of the women presented, recounted how she was escorted by immigration officers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport from inspection to boarding when she left the country in 2018: "Someone met us at the gate, then another per-

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
son at line No. 1... until we reached the plane, (then) another person accompanied us."

She was eventually "bought" by a Syrian employer for \$1,000, while another victim, "Belen," was sold for \$9,000 in 2019. Belen said she was escorted by a certain "Karlo" at Naia, who instructed immigration officers to let her leave without problems. Another victim, "Carol," said the BI officers did not question her papers despite her having presented only a tourist visa to the UAE. At least 25 Filipino women are now staying at the Philippine Embassy's shelter in Damascus after having run away from their abusive Syrian employers, according to Hontiveros. The senator said she would request the BI to furnish the names of the immigration officers who stamped the women's passports, as this was a violation of Republic Act No. 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003. "There's a huge penalty for this and it is nonbailable. This is a case of large-scale trafficking, and trafficking in syndicate. The punishment here is life imprisonment," she warned.

Aside from life imprisonment, RA 9208 further provides that government employees who illegally issue or approve the issuance of travel exit clearances, passports, and other similar documents should be dismissed from service and barred permanently from public office, and their retirement and other benefits forfeited. The illegal recruitment and trafficking of Filipino workers has been a decades-long concern. A 2001 report published by the United Nations Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings noted that, with millions of Filipinos seeking employment opportunities as skilled construction workers, engineers, nurses, caregivers, entertainers, and domestic helpers in the Middle East, Europe, and the United States.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Vaccine age bar of 45 years

SIR, Apropos 'Vaccine for all above 45 yrs from 1 April' (March 24). Spiking Covid infections across multiple states have raised the fears of a second wave in India. Maharashtra's second wave is almost on. Others like Punjab, MP, Karnataka, TN, Bengal and Kerala are also reporting an abnormally high number of cases. Governmental response has been predictable. A number of Maharashtra districts have opted for lockdowns while night curfew has been clamped in many cities of MP, Gujarat and Punjab.

A lockdown doesn't prompt people to be more public health conscious or the coronavirus doesn't spread predominantly in the night hours. Govt must carry aggressive official campaigning on the safe, viable, inexpensive option of universal masking. Vaccines are finally here and supply is also no constraint. The return of the lockdown and night curfew combination is indeed worrying as the same had shaved off a quarter of the national GDP in April-June



2020. Inter-state travel restrictions are also fast cropping up. Some states have mandated covid tests and quarantining for out-of-state travellers. If masking was enforced, none of these destructive ideas would've been needed.

The process of vaccinations

DELAYED JUSTICE

SIR, The article 'Rule of law' by Devendra Saksena (17 March), made an excellent evaluation of our legal system. Judiciary is the foundation of the country. Unfortunately, it was neglected by every government for the last fifty years. Our legal system is falling apart. All correctional centres are overcrowded. As per prison statistics report, 67 per cent of inmates are undertrials, kept there for years. For example, just a few days ago, Deepak Joshi from east Nepal got released from prison after 40 years. Some common problems because of trial delays are unavailability of witnesses and investigating officers. Shortages of judges, inadequate infrastructure of courts and correctional centres are other problems.

Every neighbourhood in every city has houses falling apart, deserted by owners because they are in litigation for many years. Civil partition suits go on for twenty to thirty years. Many litigants die before the verdict. Fragile legal system encourages criminal behaviour. If we cannot expedite the legal process, foreign portfolio investors and foreign direct investors won't get confidence to invest in the country. It's about time we fixed the system.

Yours, etc., Ratan Chakraborty, Kolkata, 24 March.

Though the Covid-19 crisis has multiplied publisher pressure on policymakers as marketing budgets nose-dived globally and media companies are staring down the barrel of a revenue crunch. ('Lesson from Australia', Mar. 22).

As for India, it must learn from the ongoing global agitation among the technology giants over the growing moral argument that they should be made to pay the media companies for the reuse of the news content on their platforms and aggregation services ~ is not something new, though the internet and social media have not been very kind to the free press. In India, there has been hardly any debate over the impact of intermediary platforms on the health of news media outlets. The 2019 European Union copyright rules, which formed the basis for the media publications to secure royalties for online use of their content must be studied by India so that a similar model can be replicated here.

Yours, etc., Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai, 24 March.

THE TECH GIANTS

SIR, The debate around compensation for tech-giants reusing others' editorial contents ~ by displaying snippets of news stories on their platforms and aggregation services ~ is not something new,

SWAMI SANDARSHANANANDA

He appeared in a society where the educated were spineless, religiously repugnant, thinkers myopic, and rulers rude. He had no truck with them. He was rather independent and original. He ingeniously left his mark on everything he did. He was, in a word, unprecedented in character. He was matchlessly non-conventional, intelligent, spiritual, thinker and lover. He was overwhelmingly dynamic and amazingly adventurous in his endeavours. He drew knowledge directly from Nature, grew religious out of his rigorous Sadhana, developed into an intensive thinker in the wake of his keen search after truths, and was above all, loving by dint of the Love of God he had accomplished. His wisdom was complete and comprehensive by virtue of the knowledge of God he acquired working extremely hard putting his life at stake. Consequently, there was no room for confusion and conundrum in him. He held men essentially equal and society graded, religion one and paths to reach it many. The space and scope of his contribution to the world was boundless for the riches he possessed were sublime. He is believed to have retrieved India's lost self esteem and glory, uniquely grappling with ominous odds. Scholars think humanism found its finest expression in him. That's how one perhaps paints Sri Ramakrishna in plain words.

He is, indubitably, invincible. Now there is no power on earth to reckon with his power. He is fast occupying the mental arena of all and sundry everywhere. He is unstoppable because his way is not destructive but impeccably constructive, having to do with the participation of all classes, communities and countries. Its hallmark is "acceptance". He has thus been able to create an ethos of trust across his admirers from various faiths and nations.

Rise of Sri Ramakrishna happened from the midst of the masses of rural India. But he exploded among the rootless "denationalized" intellectuals of the city of Calcutta. He jolted them out of their cosy zone of exclusiveness. So they recoiled to malign him taking resort to untruth variously.

For example, one B. Mazoomdar said in his book "Prof. F. Max Muller on Ramakrishna" that Ramakrishna was not a scholar of religion, knew neither English nor Sanskrit, nor even his mother tongue Bengali properly; and, before coming in touch with Keshav Chandra Sen, he was an idolater. But writers like Mazoomdar, though too proud of their education and learning, could never gauge that

what they perceived as Sri Ramakrishna's weakness was his strength in fact. The same tomfoolery is being still ironically pursued occasionally by some authors such as Kripal, as he did, although to no effect, in his book "Kali's Child" a few years ago! Sri Ramakrishna doesn't react and follows, as it were, the policy of silence, considering silence a supple repartee to eliminate them summarily.

Sri Ramakrishna was established as a world teacher in his lifetime itself. He left no stone unturned to see a truth, whether it was social or religious. Right from his childhood to his demise he was an open book to read and learn. His twelve long years of arduous spiritual expedition through numerous domains of typical faiths and encounters with countless men and women of different natures and walks of life, hitherto untried by any other, concluded on the invention of a truth that was panacea for a world of rancour and strife. That truth was, indeed, a distinct repetition of India's age-old forgotten message of harmonious coexistence and peaceful social progress in other words, upon which his chief disciple had afterward elaborated for the benefit of mankind at large.

Interpreting him, Swami Vivekananda had said with all confidence: "Ramakrishna has no peer; nowhere else in this world exists that unprecedent perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage." He had also said that "his life is a searchlight of infinite power thrown upon the whole mass of Indian religious thought".

If it be so, Sri Ramakrishna's practice of Islam and Christianity were legitimately as per the Indian religious thought and action. But what is unprecedent about him is that none before him dared to do so in the modern time or earlier. He was born an orthodox Brahmin in a conservative milieu and worshipped gods and goddesses with all devotion. Yet, he didn't have the slightest hunch if he was doing anything incorrect and contrary to the Indian way of life which is popularly known as Hinduism. This was proof enough that there is absolutely no place for religious parochialism in the perennial culture of India. There was certainly an urgent need for its emphatic reminder in the modern time with evidence that Indians were convinced in the light of their realization that faiths are only paths to the same goal.

India is a multi-racial and multi-religious nation, a multi-purpose civi-

A searchlight of infinite power



lization founded on the principle of "give and take" from the ancient period. Besides, the liberty to practice one's faith in one's own way was never curbed in India in the past. Accepting another's faith to examine its content had also not given one to feel that one was betraying one's mother faith in any way. One was never looked down upon by one's co-religionists for it. Everyone believed that one had the right to satisfy one's curiosity.

Sri Ramakrishna's Islam sadhana was therefore in no way peculiar and un-Indian. It was radical from the point of view of the cocooned Hindus who forgot to look beyond their nose. The fact that he had no hesitation and was determined to try it was a clear vindication of the truth that it was very much within the purview of Indian tradition. Sri Ramakrishna thought: "It (Islam) too is a path to attain God. The infinitely sportive Divine Mother has shown Herself to many people through this sadhana too. I must see how She fulfills the aspirations of the followers of this path. I shall take initiation ... and practise this path of Islam." When he did it what was his attitude? He himself had narrated it as: "I then devoutly repeated the holy name of Allah dressed like the Muslims, and said

their prayers several times a day." And what happened to him as a result of all that he did? He said, "I had the full realization of the sadhana of their faith." He "first had the vision of a radiant Being who looked grave and had a long beard; then he experienced the cosmic Saguna Brahman; and finally his mind merged into absolute Nirguna Brahman." Evidently, he first experienced God according to monotheism which is being practised by Islam, and then his experience culminated into God the Absolute which is the inevitable end point of all religious journeys that he lastly attained achieving Nirvikalpa Samadhi in conclusion of every other faith he undertook to practice.

However, the moot question is - did he lose his own faith by his Islam sadhana or did anyone think he became a convert? Of course not! On the contrary, it was a practical demonstration of what should be the spirit of a serious Hindu aspirant, giving out the message of inclusiveness of the Indian ideal. Each and every effort of Sri Ramakrishna was thus a reification of Hindu idea of religion which remained undermined for centuries unfortunately. Sri Ramakrishna exhibited by his life what it means to be a Hindu, how India nurtured her

religious thought letting her children to do as they wished, and how her children used to explore the realm of religion to observe for themselves how it looks like really. And that's how the greatest proclamation India made to the world - that Truth is one but scholars interpret it differently - came from Sri Ramakrishna.

India was not so oblivious of this basic truth even earlier as it is in the recent time. Swamiji therefore declared, "He (Sri Ramakrishna) had lived in one life the whole cycle of the national religious life in India." He knew that India's individuality was firmly embedded in Sri Ramakrishna and believed Sri Ramakrishna was the most perfect living image of real India. When he talked about regaining India's lost individuality for the country to rise again, he meant for us to learn from the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. He found Sri Ramakrishna a burning example of India's perpetual national ideal "Unity in Diversity" in blood and flesh. Which is why, his concluding remark in this regard was: "India can alone rise by sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna."

The writer is associated with Ramakrishna Mission, Narendrapur.

When people dropped their guard

J ALEXANDER NAVARRO

Picture the United States struggling to deal with a deadly pandemic.

State and local officials enact a slate of social-distancing measures, gathering bans, closure orders and mask mandates in an effort to stem the tide of cases and deaths.

The public responds with widespread compliance mixed with more than a hint of grumbling, pushback and even outright defiance. As the days turn into weeks turn into months, the strictures become harder to tolerate.

Theatre and dance hall owners complain about their financial losses.

Clergy bemoan church closures while offices, factories and in some cases even saloons are allowed to remain open.

Officials argue whether children are safer in classrooms or at home.

Many citizens refuse to don face masks while in public, some complaining that they're uncomfortable and others arguing that the government has no right to infringe on their civil liberties.

As familiar as it all may sound in 2021, these are real descriptions of the U.S. during the deadly 1918 influenza pandemic. In my research as a historian of medicine, I've seen again and again the many ways our current pandemic has mirrored the one experienced by our forebears a century ago.

As the Covid-19 pandemic enters its second year, many people want to

know when life will go back to how it was before the coronavirus. History, of course, isn't an exact template for what the future holds. But the way Americans emerged from the earlier pandemic could suggest what post-pandemic life will be like this time around.

Like Covid-19, the 1918 influenza pandemic hit hard and fast, going from a handful of reported cases in a few cities to a nationwide outbreak within a few weeks. Many communities issued several rounds of various closure orders – corresponding to the ebbs and flows of their epidemics – in an attempt to keep the disease in check.

These social-distancing orders worked to reduce cases and deaths. Just as today, however, they often proved difficult to maintain. By the late autumn, just weeks after the social-distancing orders went into effect, the pandemic seemed to be coming to an end as the number of new infections declined.

People clamoured to return to their normal lives. Businesses pressed officials to be allowed to reopen. Believing the pandemic was over, state and local authorities began rescinding public health edicts. The nation turned its efforts to addressing the devastation influenza had wrought.

For the friends, families and co-workers of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who had died, post-pandemic life was filled with sadness and grief. Many of those still recover-

ing from their bouts with the malady required support and care as they recuperated.

At a time when there was no federal or state safety net, charitable organizations sprang into action to provide resources for families who had lost their breadwinners, or to take in the countless children left orphaned by the disease.

For the vast majority of Americans, though, life after the pandemic seemed to be a headlong rush to normalcy. Starved for weeks of their rights on the town, sporting events, religious services, classroom interactions and family gatherings, many were eager to return to their old lives.

Taking their cues from officials who had – somewhat prematurely – declared an end to the pandemic, Americans overwhelmingly hurried to return to their pre-pandemic routines. They packed into movie theatres and dance halls, crowded in stores and shops, and gathered with friends and family.

Officials had warned the nation that cases and deaths likely would continue for months to come. The burden of public health, however, now rested not on policy but rather on individual responsibility.

Predictably, the pandemic wore on, stretching into a third deadly wave that lasted through the spring of 1919, with a fourth wave hitting in the winter of 1920. Some officials blamed the resurgence on carelessness Americans. Others downplayed the new cases or turned their attention to more rou-

tine public health matters, including other diseases, restaurant inspections and sanitation.

Despite the persistence of the pandemic, influenza quickly became old news. Once a regular feature of front pages, reportage rapidly dwindled to small, sporadic clippings buried in the backs of the nation's newspapers. The nation carried on, inured to the toll the pandemic had taken and the deaths yet to come. People were largely unwilling to return to socially and economically disruptive public health measures.

Our predecessors might be forgiven for not staying the course longer. First, the nation was eager to celebrate the recent end of World War I, an event that perhaps loomed larger in the lives of Americans than even the pandemic.

Second, death from disease was a much larger part of life in the early 20th century, and scourges such as diphtheria, measles, tuberculosis, typhoid, whooping cough, scarlet fever and pneumonia each routinely killed tens of thousands of Americans every year. Moreover, neither the cause nor the epidemiology of influenza was well understood, and many experts remained unconvinced that social distancing measures had any measurable impact.

Finally, there were no effective flu vaccines to rescue the world from the ravages of the disease. In fact, the influenza virus would not be discovered for another 15 years, and a safe and effective vaccine was not avail-

able for the general population until 1945. Given the limited information they had and the tools at their disposal, Americans perhaps endured the public health restrictions for as long as they reasonably could.

A century later, and a year into the Covid-19 pandemic, it is understandable that people now are all too eager to return to their old lives. The end of this pandemic inevitably will come, as it has with every previous one humankind has experienced.

If we have anything to learn from the history of the 1918 influenza pandemic, as well as our experience thus far with Covid-19, however, it is that a premature return to pre-pandemic life risks more cases and more deaths.

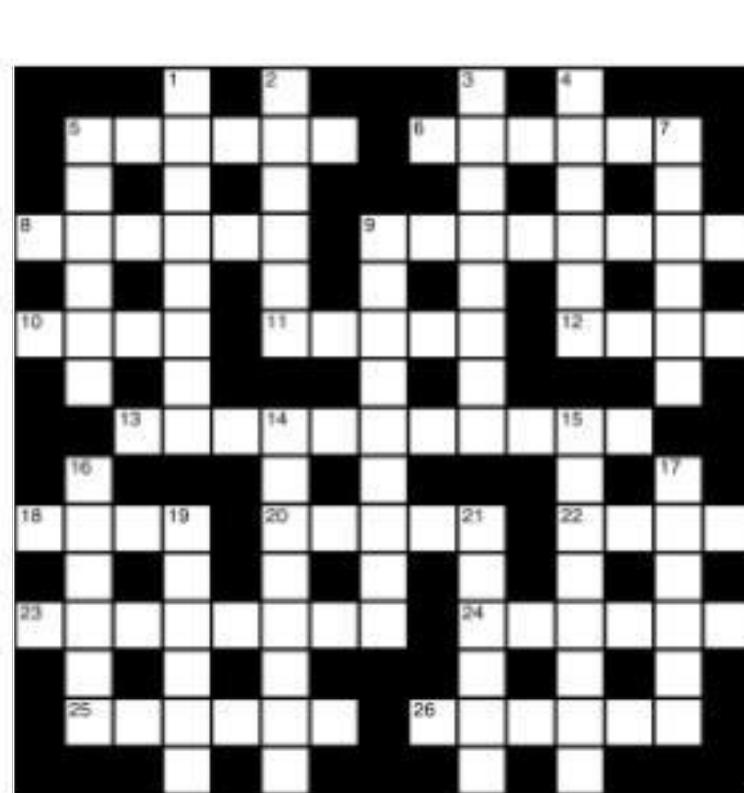
And today's Americans have significant advantages over those of a century ago. We have a much better understanding of virology and epidemiology. We know that social distancing and masking work to help save lives. Most critically, we have multiple safe and effective vaccines that are being deployed, with the pace of vaccinations increasingly weekly.

Sticking with all these coronavirus-fighting factors or easing off on them could mean the difference between a new disease surge and a quicker end to the pandemic. Covid-19 is much more transmissible than influenza, and several troubling SARS-CoV-2 variants are already spreading around the globe. The deadly third wave of influenza in 1919 shows what can happen when people prematurely relax their guard.

The writer is Assistant Director of the Center for the History of Medicine, University of Michigan. This article was published on www.theconversation.com

NO 28864

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

C	B	R	B	F	D
M	A	C	A	R	O
N	B	O	I	L	I
C	A	R	E	M	A
P	I	H	A	Y	I
I	S	I	I	C	C
W	I	G	E	H	E
E	N	O	M	R	S
S	O	R	I	H	R
C	O	A	T	H	A
M	H	C	Y	O	C
R	E	V	E	A	D
R	R	E	T	U	E

ACROSS

- 5 Provides a racy form of security, perhaps via rock covers of Blondie (11)
- 6 Two short pieces bearing fruit (6)
- 8 Move giving assist ultimately to scorer (6)
- 9 Clearance for Max? (8)
- 10 People fine with some 21, now out of step (4)
- 11 Numbers of children welcoming first appearance of grandchild (5)
- 12 Figures taking lead parts in original Nine Enchanted Stags (4)
- 13 Barman drinking Coke with added sodium (inter alia) in orgiastic rites (11)
- 18 Waltz back briefly to see East European (4)
- 20 Dress up right, with solicitor around

(5)

- 22 Star in film I rated (4)
- 23 Two retiring setters: one Araucarian, extremely unconventional (8)
- 24 Message that's hidden behind the Italian water cooler (2,4)
- 25 Cans drunk with Ed Balls? (6)
- 26 Bluebeard's home neat? Yes, finally, for the first time (6)

DOWN

- 1 Heading out of capital, a king enters 6A country (8)
- 2 Series of 11, perhaps those describing a short day in a Greek island group (6)
- 3 Country 11 replacing what's at heart of The Sound of Music problem (8)

4

- Left during no-score draw for City (6)
- 5 Producer of musical scores? Yes! (6)
- 7 Lifeless ode, now rewritten (6)
- 9 Like SD, kept in suspense by one born the same day? (9)
- 14 Overturns indicators of available 9A? (8)
- 15 Freedom from obligation to include first pieces from Miraculous Mandarin in one concert (8)
- 16 Old man stewing fruit, usually known by another name (6)
- 17 Big orchestral piece provides a clue to one such former musician (6)
- 19 English name used in vain around capital (6)
- 21 Two US presidents, one not mad about 23 25 (6)

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 25 MARCH 2021

07

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

The Department of Statistics has issued its annual report on the production of tea in India in 1919, and the figures are presented in the usual convenient form for record and reference. Writing under the date of October 13, 1920, Mr. D.N. Ghosh, as officiating Director of Statistics, bears his testimony to the fact that the present position of the tea industry is "anything but satisfactory." He points to the heavy stocks on hand in all consuming countries and the plethora of undesirable common sorts; to the large balance of the last year's crop remaining unsold at a time when the new crop was coming into the market; the counting-out of Russia as a consumer; the disappointment in regard to the anticipated demand from the European continent; and the exchange difficulties. On the whole, as the officiating Director of Statistics concludes, the prospects of the industry appear to be "decidedly gloomy" - a fact already painfully familiar to all concerned. For the present, as he points out, the industry can only look for the development of increased demand from India itself, from America, Canada, and the Colonies - which, after all, ought to afford a tolerably wide field. As our Calcutta tea correspondent pointed out this week, there is not much comfort to be found in the signature of a trade agreement between Great Britain and Russia, for the prospects of any considerable revival of Russian business are dubious.

NEWS ITEMS

GREECE AND TURKISH MENACE

Allahabad, Mar 24
M. Gounaris the new Greek Minister of War, has been prevented from leaving London for Athens by an urgent telegram from that city. Interviewed by Reuter concerning the calling out of Greek reserves he said it was a natural consequence of the attitude of Turkey, who demanded Thrace and Smyrna which were obtained by Greece as the result of the war. The Greeks also had news of a Kemalist concentration against them and as the Greeks obviously could not await the completion of the Turkish concentration a Greek offensive was probable. M.P. Padakis, the acting Greek Prime Minister, is quoted as saying that Greece has decided to fulfill the mandate of the Allied Powers for the enforcement of the Sevres Treaty.

INDIAN RAILWAY COMMITTEE IN BOMBAY

The Indian Railway Committee reassembled today at the Secretariat, Khan Bahadur Dalal in the course of his written evidence as regards the management of railways stated that on broad principles they should unhesitatingly vote in favour of State Management, which, consciously or unconsciously, aimed at profit earning considerations which were not in the interests of the State or the public. The State alone had in its power to bestow on the people to a



Industrial activities may gather further momentum on rise in government's capital expenditure and vaccination drive

AMITABH KANT
NITI AAYOG CEO

THUMBNAILS

CAG raps FCI: Government's financial watchdog CAG on Wednesday rapped state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) for lapses in financial management to the tune of Rs 56.65 crore in financial year 2018-19. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), which examined the compliance audit of the financial transactions under 64 civil grants related to 27 government ministries and departments including FCI for the 2018-19 fiscal, presented its report to Parliament on Wednesday. In a statement, the CAG said it found lapses in the financial management of FCI as well as making avoidable expenses due to delay in issuing contracts.

TVS Motor board: TVS Motor Company on Wednesday announced the appointment of auto industry veteran and former JLR CEO Ralf Speth to its board of directors, besides bringing in Kuok-Meng Xiong as an independent director. Veni Srinivasan, chairman of TVS Motor Company, will become chairman emeritus effective January 2023. Speth will succeed him as chairman, the company said in a release.

ICICI Bank facility: ICICI Bank customers can break their high-value transactions of over Rs 50,000 into suitable EMIs directly on its internet banking platform to make their purchases more affordable, the lender said on Wednesday. The facility is the first in the industry, the bank added. It will be applicable on transactions up to Rs 5 lakh and will bear no additional cost on the customers.

Haier washing machines: Home appliances and consumer electronics maker Haier has augmented its washing machine line-up by introducing a new Super Drum Series ~ front load fully automatic washing machine. The new series is available in six variants and is specially designed to meet the evolving demands of the consumers, said a Press release.

AEPC plea: The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) on Wednesday urged cotton mill owners to cut yarn prices by Rs 20 per kg to support the growth of the sector as rising rates impact cost competitiveness. AEPC chairman A Sakthivel's request comes in the wake of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) reducing cotton prices by around Rs 1,500 per candy earlier on Monday.

Canara Bank auction: Canara Bank on Wednesday said it is organising an auction of 2,000 borrower properties in its possession on Friday. The properties, which include residential flats, apartments, independent houses and lands, will be sold through an e-auction under the provisions of the Sarfaesi Act, it said.

Stocks fall on spike in Covid-19 cases

Sensex plunges 871 points to mark its worst single-session fall in nearly a month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 24 MARCH

Equity market benchmark the Sensex plunged 871 points to mark its worst single-session fall in nearly a month today as investors moved to the sidelines amid rising coronavirus cases in the country.

At the closing bell, the BSE Sensex was quoted at 49,180.31 points, a drop of 871.13 points or 1.74 per cent ~ its biggest one-day fall since 26 February.

► At the closing bell, the BSE Sensex was quoted at 49,180.31 points, a drop of 871.13 points or 1.74 per cent ~ its biggest one-day fall since 26 February.

► Similarly, the broader NSE

Broader mid-cap and small-cap indices fell up to 1.69 per cent.

"Indian market witnessed across-the-board selling amidst high volatility owing to weak global cues and spike in Covid cases. All sectors barring pharma witnessed selling as second and third wave infections in India and Europe, respectively, are bound to hamper economic recovery," Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Nifty dived 265.35 points or 1.79 per cent to settle at 14,549.40 points.

► On the domestic forex market front, the rupee fell by another 12 paise to end at 72.55 against the US dollar.

Binod Modi, head strategy at Reliance Securities, said, "Domestic equities fell sharply on weak global cues and continued apprehensions among investors from surge in coronavirus cases in the country.

India recorded 47,262 fresh coronavirus cases in a day, the highest single-day rise so far this year, taking the nationwide Covid-19 tally to 1,17,34,058, the Union health ministry said today.

The daily rise in infections was the highest recorded in 132

days, while the country's Covid-19 death toll increased to 1,60,441, with 275 new fatalities, the highest in around 83 days.

Further, a sharp rebound in dollar index aggravated concerns despite dip in US bond yields and crude prices, he added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul plunged up to 2 per cent.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a negative note in mid-session deals.

On the domestic forex market front, the rupee fell by another 12 paise to end at 72.55 against the US dollar.

At the interbank foreign market, the domestic unit opened weak at 72.51 against the US dollar. During the session, it swung between a high of 72.51 and a low of 72.69.

The rupee finally settled at 72.55, registering a fall of 12 paise over its previous close.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 2.78 per cent higher at \$62.48 per barrel.

Tax breather for foreign e-commerce players

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

In a bid to provide a level-playing field, the government has decided not to levy 2 per cent digital service tax if goods and services are sold through Indian arm of foreign e-commerce players.

The amendment to Finance Bill 2021 clarifies that offshore e-commerce platforms don't have to pay 2 per cent equalisation levy if they have permanent establishment or they pay any income tax here.

However, foreign companies who are not paying any tax will have to pay. The digital tax introduced in April 2020, applies only to non-resident companies with annual revenues in excess of Rs 2 crore, and covers online sales of goods and services to Indians.

"Through the government

amendment... I intend to clarify that this equalisation levy is not applicable on consideration for goods which are owned by Indian residents," finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said why replying to a debate on Finance Bill 2021 in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Pointing out that this government is in favour of digital transactions, she said: "We will never do anything to undermine it. But yet, equalisation levy is a tax which has been imposed to give level-playing field between Indian businesses who pay tax in India and foreign e-commerce companies who do business in India but do not pay any income tax here." The equalisation levy became a contentious issue after the US termed it discriminatory against American firms.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) directed its investigation arm to conduct a probe into WhatsApp's updated privacy policy and terms of service on prima facie finding that the firm has contravened competition law provisions through its "exploitative and exclusionary conduct" in the garb of the policy update.

A thorough and detailed investigation is required to ascertain the full extent, scope and impact of data sharing through involuntary consent of users, the regulator said.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) directed its investigation arm, the director general (DG), to complete the investigation and submit a report within 60 days.

The order against WhatsApp LLC and parent Facebook Inc came after the Commission

took suo moto cognisance of the matter on considering media reports and the potential impact of the policy and terms for WhatsApp users and the market.

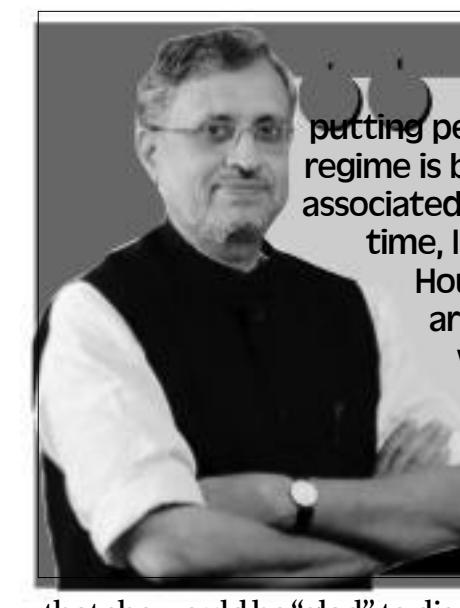
The fair trade regulator noted that WhatsApp has updated its privacy policy and terms of service for users.

It also noted that users will have to mandatorily accept the new terms and policy in their entirety, including the terms with respect to sharing of their data across all the information categories with other Facebook companies.

"The Commission is of prima facie opinion that the "take-it-or-leave-it" nature of privacy policy and terms of service of WhatsApp and the information sharing stipulations mentioned therein, merit a detailed investigation in view of the market position and market power enjoyed

Not possible to bring petrol, diesel under GST: Sushil Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH



Repeatedly, the issue of putting petrol and diesel in the GST regime is being raised up. I have been associated with the GST for a long time, I want to know from the House, that if petrol and diesel are put under the GST regime, who will compensate for the loss of revenue of over Rs 2 lakh crore to states.

SUSHIL MODI
FORMER FINANCE MINISTER OF BIHAR

that it is not possible to put petrol and diesel under the GST in the next eight to 10 years, as no state is ready to lose Rs 2 lakh crore revenue, be it the Congress or any other government," he said.

Fuel prices cut: In the first reduction in rates in over a year, petrol price today was cut by 18 paise per litre and diesel by 17 paise a litre as international oil prices tumbled to the lowest since early February.

"Repeatedly, the issue of putting petrol and diesel in the GST regime is being raised up. I have been associated with the GST for a long time, I want to know from the House, that if petrol and diesel are put under the GST regime, who will compensate for the loss of revenue of over Rs 2 lakh crore to states," he asked.

"I want to tell this House

that there appears to be no justifiable reason as to why users should not have any control or say over such cross-product processing of their data by way of voluntary consent, and not as a precondition for availing WhatsApp's services.

"However, it appears from the privacy policy as well as terms of service (including the FAQs published by WhatsApp), that many of the information categories described therein are too broad, vague and unintelligible," it said.

Users have not been provided with appropriate granular choice, neither upfront nor in the fine print, to object to or opt-out of specific data sharing terms, which prima facie appear to be unfair and unreasonable for WhatsApp users.

On a careful and thoughtful consideration of the matter, the conduct of WhatsApp in sharing of users' personal data with other Facebook companies, in a manner that is neither fully transparent nor based on voluntary and specific user consent, appears prima facie "unfair to users", CCI said.

CCI orders probe into WhatsApp's privacy policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

Fair trade regulator CCI today directed its investigation arm to conduct a probe into WhatsApp's updated privacy policy and terms of service on prima facie finding that the firm has contravened competition law provisions through its "exploitative and exclusionary conduct" in the garb of the policy update.

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It also noted that users will have to mandatorily accept the new terms and policy in their entirety, including the terms with respect to sharing of their data across all the information categories with other Facebook companies.

"The Commission is of prima facie opinion that the "take-it-or-leave-it" nature of privacy policy and terms of service of WhatsApp and the information sharing stipulations mentioned therein, merit a detailed investigation in view of the market position and market power enjoyed



by WhatsApp," it said.

As per WhatsApp's submissions, the 2021 update does not expand its ability to share data with Facebook and the update intends to provide users with further transparency about how WhatsApp collects, uses and shares data.

However, CCI said the veracity of such claims would also be examined during the investigation by the DG.

The Commission further said that users, as owners of their personal data, are entitled to be informed about

the extent, scope and precise purpose of sharing of such information by WhatsApp with other Facebook companies.

"However, it appears from the privacy policy as well as terms of service (including the FAQs published by WhatsApp), that many of the information categories described therein are too broad, vague and unintelligible," it said.

As per WhatsApp's sub-

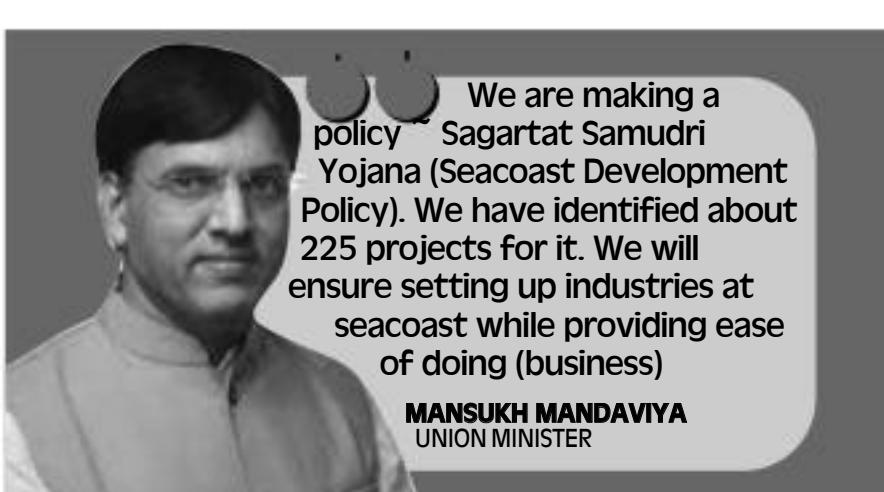
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Seacoast development policy on anvil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH



We are making a policy Sagartat Samudri Yojana (Seacoast Development Policy). We have identified about 225 projects for it. We will ensure setting up industries at seacoast while providing ease of doing (business)

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA
UNION MINISTER

up industries, industrial parks, etc. where the government can also take equity.

He said India has a rich history of coastal trade which dates back to Lothal era when trades were done with Gulf countries through Gujarat ports, etc.

Focus is also on industrialisation of India's coastline under Aatmanirbhar Bharat, he said.

Land and logistics policy will help boost trade along

coasts, he said, adding the private sector will be encouraged to set up industries along ports.

"Industrialisation of coastlines should happen... mapping every mile has been done," he said, noting that specialised programmes for ports will be made as much reforms are needed.

He said even if the prices are high, the world is looking at Indian goods and export has to increase.

At the same time, Mandaviya stressed on the need to reduce high logistics cost of 14 per cent and bring it on par with global standard of about 9 per cent.

ty is linked, industrialisation is associated," he said highlighting the need to develop entire 100-150 km area in the vicinity of ports.

Mandaviya said port service model is in practice but the present requirement is of the landlord model, and there is a need to fill the gap between \$500 million exports and \$300 million imports.

Urging industry players to come forward, he said it is time for Indian industries to bank on the Indian credibility which it showed by supplying quality medicines to 120 countries without compromising on quality.

He said even if the prices are high, the world is looking at Indian goods and export has to increase.

At the same time, Mandaviya stressed on the need to reduce high logistics cost of 14 per cent and bring it on par with global standard of about 9 per cent.

ers and violated the provision of the LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, Sebi had said in the order.

Markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India today ordered attachment of bank accounts as well as share and mutual fund holdings of Rana Kapoor, former MD and CEO of Yes Bank, to recover dues of over Rs 1 crore.

The decision has been taken after Kapoor failed to pay the fine imposed on him.

Sebi, in September 2020, had levied a fine of Rs 1 crore on Kapoor for not making disclosures regarding a transaction of Morgan Credit, which was an unlisted promoter entity of Yes Bank.

Further, the regulator has directed the banks to attach all accounts, including lockers, held by the defaulter.

"Whereas no amount has been paid by the defaulter

(Kapoor). There is sufficient reason to believe that the defaulter may dispose of the amounts/ proceeds in the banks accounts held with your bank and realisation of amount due under the certificate would in consequence be delayed or obstructed," Sebi said.

In a notice to all banks in the country, the regulator ordered to "attach with immediate effect... all accounts by whatever name, including lockers singly or jointly with any other person, in your bank".

The regulator has also asked banks, depositories and mutual funds to provide details of all accounts held by Kapoor, including copy of account statements for the past one year. It has also sought complete information of all loan accounts and advances.

Inconsistency in improvement of unemployment rate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

India is still not out of the woods as far as unemployment is concerned after a year when the lockdown was imposed to contain the spread of deadly Covid-19 on 25 March last year as pandemic-induced job losses have not tapered off consistently.

The government had imposed a lockdown to curb the spread of the pandemic but this impacted economic and commercial activities and resulted in job loss and later on the exodus of migrant workers which rocked the entire nation.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data, the unemploy-

ment rate was recorded at 6.9 per cent in February 2021 which is slightly better than 7.8 per cent in the same month last year and 8.8 per cent in March 2020, during which lockdown was imposed.

The data showed that the unemployment rate had peaked at 23.5 per cent in April and remained at 21.7 per cent in May. It started tapering off from June onward when it was recorded at 10.2 per cent and further improved to 7.4 per cent in July.



We don't know what a changed Taliban looks like yet because we have not seen that change

WHILE ALLEGING THAT TALIBAN HAVE EVADED, DRAGGED, AND AVOIDED SUBSTANTIVE ENGAGEMENT

The Statesman
NEW DELHI, THURSDAY 25 MARCH 2021

09

Netanyahu falls short of majority amid vote count

The election turnout of 67.2 per cent was a drop of 4.3 per cent since last March's election

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JERUSALEM, 24 MARCH

The future of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the helm of Israeli politics looked "uncertain" on Wednesday after nearly 90 per cent of votes counted, raising the possibility of a continued political impasse and even an unprecedented fifth election.

Netanyahu's Likud party has emerged as the single largest with 30 seats, but the right-wing bloc led by the 71-year-old leader still does not have the 61-seat majority needed to form a coalition in the 120-member Knesset (Israeli parliament).

The election turnout of 67.2 per cent was a drop of 4.3 per cent since last March's election when the turnout was 71.5 per cent, and the lowest of the four elections of the past two years. The Arab communities



Supporters of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party react following the announcement of the exit polls in general elections, Jerusalem. ■ AGENCIES

particularly witnessed "voter apathy," probably because of infighting, but it was also a shade lower among the Jews.

Some observers attributed this to "election fatigue" and also people choosing to engage in "Passover cleaning" at home in preparation for the festival over the weekend, instead of turning up to vote.

As Central Election Committee data continued to come in, the anti-Netanyahu bloc, a motley crew of left, right and centrist factions, was also shy of a majority signalling continued political gridlock.

The exit polls on Israel's leading TV channels released on Tuesday evening imme-

diately after the polling ended at 10 PM indicated that both Netanyahu and his committed religious and nationalist allies did not have the required numbers to form a government. However, political analysts thought that the right-wing Yamina party led by an old ally of Netanyahu could join hands, despite having bitterly opposed each other during the election campaign, giving him a slight edge and a possible razor thin majority.

The political equation on

Wednesday morning took a new twist with the Islamist United Arab List (UAL) party crossing the electoral threshold, contrary to the exit poll.

In an address to supporters early Wednesday, a visibly subdued Netanyahu boasted of a great achievement but stopped short of declaring victory.

The mellowed Prime Minister instead appeared to

reach out to his opponents and called for formation of a stable government that would avoid another election.

We must not under any circumstances drag the state of Israel to new elections, to a fifth election, he said adding, "We must form a stable government now."

The bloc led by Netanyahu now has 59 seats, two short of a majority, even if Yamina's Naftali Bennett, who in the past has served as Defence Minister under Netanyahu, joins him.

In an interview earlier this morning to Kan Radio, UAL leader Mansour Abbas said that he is not beholden to either bloc, and will not rule out joining any coalition, but will rule out any party that rules out the list.

According to the Central Elections Committee, Likud currently has 30 Knesset seats, followed by former scribe Yair Lapid led Yesh Atid party at 17.

Pak educational institutes to stay shut till 11 April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, 24 MARCH

Pakistan has decided to keep the educational institutions closed until 11 April in coronavirus hotspot areas, Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood said on Wednesday.

Addressing a media briefing after a key meeting of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), Mahmood said authorities have reviewed the situation caused by infection in the country and decided to keep educational institutions in the hotspot areas shut till 11 April.

"It was decided that educational institutions in select-

ed areas, where restrictions were imposed previously, will continue to be closed till 11 April," he said. The minister made it clear that educational institutions include schools, universities, academies, seminaries etc would be closed in designated areas.

He said that the situation in Sindh, Balochistan, and Gilgit Baltistan was relatively better as compared to the other parts of the country. The educational institutions were closed from 15 March for two weeks in seven cities of Punjab including Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Lahore, Gujrat, Sialkot, Multan and Rawalpindi as well as

in Peshawar and Islamabad.

However, in the latest decision the closure had been increased to nine cities of Punjab where Sargodha and Sheikupura were added to already seven cities. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in addition to Peshawar, nine cities including Mardan, Charsadda, Swabi, Kohat, Lower Dir, Malakand, Swat, Nowshera and Buner were added where schools will be closed.

He said that local board examinations will take place according to their timetable. The decision to extend the shut came as the 3,301 new cases were added in the last 24 hours taking tally to 637,042.

North Korea conducts short-range missile test

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 24 MARCH

North Korea fired short-range missiles this past weekend, just days after the sister of Kim Jong-Un threatened the United States and South Korea for holding joint military exercises.

The missile tests were confirmed by two senior Biden administration officials who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

They come as North Korea has ignored offers from the new administration to resume negotiations, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken last week pressed China to use its

tremendous influence" to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear program.

The officials, however, sought to downplay the significance of the missile tests, noting that they are not covered by UN Security Council resolutions meant to deter North Korea from pursuing a nuclear program.

Relations between the US and North Korea, once hailed as potentially promising after former president Donald Trump's three meetings with the North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, have been tense with no substantive contact for more than a year.

US to hold trilateral NSA-level talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 24 MARCH

The United States is planning to hold the NSA-level trilateral talks with Japan and South Korea next week on issues related to North Korea, making them among the most senior foreign officials to visit Washington since the start of the Biden presidency, officials here said.

We're in the final stages of that (North Korea policy) review, and next week



The vaccines from the batch comprise a total of 585,000 doses, with the other batch number 210104 holding 758,000 doses, according to Hong Kong's Director of Health Constance Chan.

Fosun has promised to carry out an immediate investigation so they are going to approach the manufacturer in Germany to look into their plant, Chan said. "When the vaccines arrive in Hong Kong, they will have a review of the whole logistics chain to see if that's the cause of the current situation."

She said that officials are urging manufacturers to give a report as soon as possible to check if the batches of vaccines in Hong Kong can be used, otherwise the manufacturers will have to deliver another batch of shots. Residents who are slated to receive their second Pfizer dose starting on Saturday should get the second shot administered as soon as possible.

Pak court grants pre-arrest bail to Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE, MAR 24

A Pakistani court on Wednesday granted pre-arrest bail to Maryam Nawaz, daughter of deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif, in an illegal land acquisition case till 12 April.

The Lahore High Court stopped the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from arresting Maryam, Vice President of the main Opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and granted her bail till 12 April.

It also directed her to deposit surety bonds worth 1 million Pakistani rupees (USD 6330).

The NAB is probing 47-year-old Maryam for 148 kanals (18.5 acres) of land that she allegedly purchased in Lahore illegally using official resources and for money laundering in connection with the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case.

In the money laundering investigation, she has been on bail since November 2019. The anti-graft body had also moved the Lahore High Court seeking cancellation of her bail following which the court issued her a notice for 7 April.

The NAB has accused Maryam of committing money laundering through investments of variable heavy amounts being the main shareholder of Chaudhry Sugar Mills. PTI

AP journalist released from detention in Myanmar

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YANGON, 24 MARCH

Thein Zaw, a journalist for The Associated Press who was arrested last month while covering a protest against the coup in Myanmar, told his family he has been informed he is being released from detention on Wednesday.

He has not yet left custody but was expected to be released soon. There was no official confirmation of his release.

He had been charged with violating a public order law that carries a penalty of up to three years' imprisonment.

Thein Zaw was one of nine media workers taken into custody during the 27 February street protest in Yangon, the country's largest city, and had been held without bail. About 40 journalists have been detained or charged since the February 1 coup.

Thein Zaw was arrested as he was photographing police, some of them armed, charging down a street at anti-coup protesters.

A video shows that although he stepped to the side of the street to get out of their way, several police rushed over and surrounded him.

China bashes US over racism, inequality, pandemic response

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING, 24 MARCH

China lashed out Wednesday at the US over racism, financial inequality and the federal government's response to the coronavirus in an annual report that seeks to counter US accusations of human rights abuses by China's ruling Communist Party.

The report issued by China's Cabinet said the US in 2020 saw its own epidemic situation go out of control, accompanied by political disorder, inter-ethnic conflicts, and social division.

The document released by the State Council Infor-

mation Office also highlighted the 6 January insurrectionist attack on the Capitol as well as gun violence and health disparities.

China issues the report each year in response to US criticism of its record on issues such as abuses against

minority groups in the western regions of Xinjiang and Tibet and a crackdown on opposition voices in Hong Kong. "To defeat the epidemic requires mutual help, solidarity and cooperation among all countries. However, the United States, which

has always considered itself an exception and superior, saw its own epidemic situation go out of control, accompanied by political disorder, inter-ethnic conflicts, and social division," the report said. Vulnerable groups became the biggest victims of the government's reckless response to the epidemic," it said.

The Chinese report is based

on open-source material, as opposed to the US document, which is largely drawn from work by diplomats, journalists and human rights activists who cannot always reveal their information because of threats of retaliation from the ruling Communist Party.

The report comes after the European Union joined the US, Britain and Canada in imposing sanctions on Chinese officials over accusations they abused ethnic minorities. Beijing retaliated by announcing it would penalize four European legislators, a German researcher and European-based rights organization with bans on travelling to Chinese territories or having financial interactions with Chinese institutions.

China has taken an increasingly hardline against any criticism of its domestic politics or what it sees as attempts to impede its rise as a global leader.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Whereas (5)
- 4 Shows excessive love (5)
- 7 Record (4)
- 8 Of marriage (8)
- 9 Attentive (10)
- 12 Rough (6)
- 13 Little (6)
- 15 Carry out (10)
- 18 Reduction (8)
- 20 Of similar character (4)
- 21 Odour (5)
- 22 Exhausted (5)
- 23 Peppermint (4)
- 24 Censorious (5)
- 25 Paradise, 20 Oily, 21 Try, 22 Stun.
- 26 Caprice (4)
- 27 Splendid (9)
- 28 Loud noise (3)
- 29 Faith (5)
- 30 Aquatic birds (8)
- 31 Spanish dancer's percussive instrument (9)
- 32 Filleted (8)
- 33 Foreword (7)
- 34 Rid (5)
- 35 Food regimen (4)
- 36 Behave (3)

DOWN

- 1 Lead, 12 Permit, 14 Pass out, 15 Body, 17 Obey, 18 Plan.
- 2 Amnesia, 4 Assorted, 5 Ache, 6 Laptop,
- 7 Decamp, 9 Censorious, 10 Relevant, 11 Decamp, 13 Paradise, 15 Censorious, 16 Body, 17 Obey, 18 Plan.
- 10 Relevant, 11 Decamp, 13 Paradise, 15 Censorious, 16 Body, 17 Obey, 18 Plan.
- 19 Behave (3)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

ISBT (General Inquiry):

23868836, 23865181

Deen Dayal Upadhyay

25496320, 25494403

Guru Tegh Bahadur

FLIGHT INQUIRY

AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and

Reservation 18001801407

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We've suffered so many losses and for so many people our grief has been made more acute because we have not been able to see our loved ones in their final days to hold their hands....

UK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON

PM PROMISES PERMANENT MEMORIAL TO LIVES LOST TO COVID

World

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	14°C	12°C CL
LONDON	11°C	9°C H
DUBAI	25°C	21°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	12°C	04°C H
NEW YORK	10°C	07°C S
MOSCOW	03°C	01°C CL

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

THUMBNAILS



A Bonhams employee displays a Pablo Picasso portrait unseen for nearly 40 years, in London on Wednesday. AP

Hollywood veteran George Segal dies at 87: Veteran actor George Segal (87), known for his Oscar-nominated performances in 1966 classic "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and the star of the sitcom "The Goldbergs", has died. The news was shared by his wife Sonia Segal, who said the actor passed away due to "complications from bypass surgery". AP

Queen's granddaughter has third child at home : Queen Elizabeth II's granddaughter Zara Tindall and her husband, the former rugby player, Mike Tindall, are celebrating the birth of their third child, Lucas Philip Tindall who was born at home on the bathroom floor after the couple were unable to get to a hospital in time. AP

Oz 1st flood fatality : A motorist trapped in a car in Sydney on Wednesday became the first fatality of the Australian east coast floods. The car was trapped in floodwater in northwest Sydney at dawn and emergency services recovered the car with a body inside early afternoon, officials said. AP

Cosmic mouthful: Tasters savour fine wine that orbited earth

BORDEAUX (FRANCE), 24 MARCH

It tastes like rose petals. It smells like a campfire. It glistens with a burnt-orange hue. What is it? A 5,000-euro bottle of Chateau Petrus Pomerol wine that spent a year in space.

Researchers in Bordeaux are analysing a dozen bottles of the precious liquid along with 320 snippets of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines that returned to Earth in January after a sojourn aboard the International Space Station.

They're releasing preliminary results Wednesday, as part of a longer-term effort to make plants on Earth more resilient to climate change and disease by exposing them to new stresses, and to better understand the aging process, fermentation and bubbles in wine.

At a one-of-a-kind tasting this month, 12 connoisseurs sampled one of the space-traveled wines, blindly tasting it alongside a bottle from the same vintage that had stayed in a cellar.

I have tears in my eyes, said Nicolas Gaume, CEO and co-founder of the company that arranged the experiment, Space Cargo Unlimited, as the bottles were carefully uncorked at the Institute for Wine and Vine Research in Bordeaux.

Jane Anson, a wine expert and writer with The Decanter, said the wine that remained on Earth tasted a little younger than the one that had been to space.

Chemical and biological analysis of the wine's aging process could allow scientists to find a way to artificially age fine vintages, said Dr. Michael Lebert, a biologist at Germany's Friedrich-Alexander-University. AP

'Colorado shooting suspect prone to rage'

Officials: Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, from Arvada, was booked on murder charges a day after the attack at a King Soopers grocery in Boulder

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOULDER, 24 MARCH

Law enforcement officials and former associates of a 21-year-old accused of killing 10 people at a Colorado supermarket described the suspect as someone prone to sudden rage who was suspended from high school for a sudden attack on a classmate that left the student bloodied.

Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa, who is from the Denver suburb of Arvada, was booked into jail Tuesday on murder charges a day after the attack at a King Soopers grocery in Boulder. He was due to make a first court appearance Thursday.

Alissa had bought an assault weapon on March 16, six days before the attack, according to an arrest affidavit. Investigators have not established a motive, said Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty. It was not immediately known where the suspect purchased the weapon. Among the dead was Boulder police Officer Eric Talley, 51, who was the first to arrive after responding to a call about shots fired and someone carrying a gun, said police Chief Maris Herold.

A law enforcement official briefed on the shooting said the suspect's family told investigators they believed Alissa was suffering some type of mental illness, including delusions. Relatives described times when Alissa told them people were following or chasing him, which they said may have contributed to the violence, the official said. The official was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

After the shooting, detectives went to Alissa's home and found his sister-in-law, who told them that he had been playing around with a weapon she thought looked like a "machine gun" about two days earlier, according to an

arrest affidavit.

No one answered the door Tuesday at the Arvada home believed to be owned by the suspect's father. The two-story house with a three-car garage sits in a relatively new middle- and upper-class neighborhood.

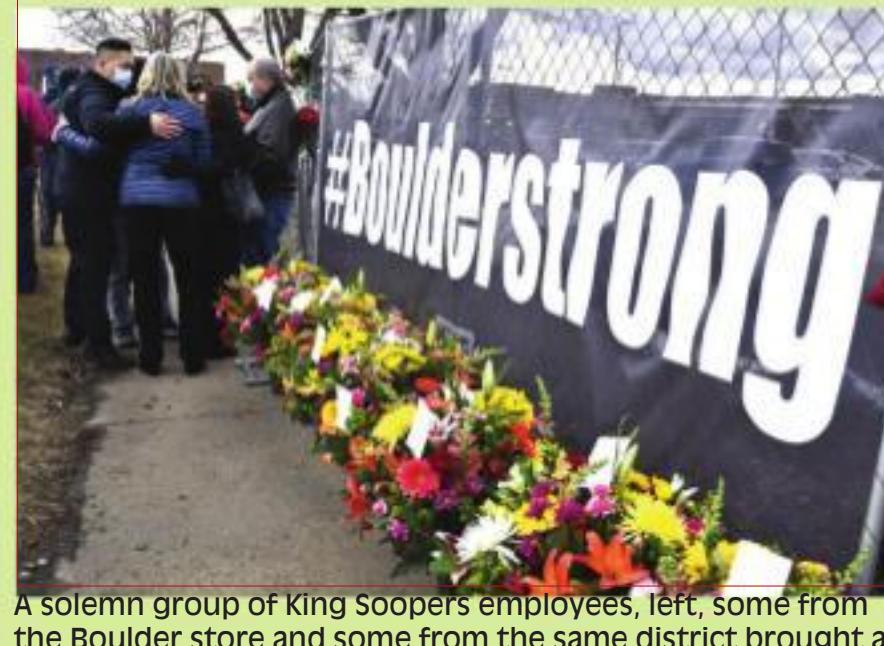
When he was a high school senior in 2018, Alissa was found guilty of assaulting a fellow student in class after knocking him to the floor, then climbing on top of him and punching him in the head several times, according to a police affidavit.

Alissa "got up in classroom, walked over to the victim & cold cocked him in the head," the affidavit read. Alissa complained that the student had made fun of him and called him "racial names" weeks earlier, according to the affidavit. An Arvada police report on the incident said the victim was bloodied and vomiting after the assault. Alissa was suspended from school and sentenced to probation and community service.

One of his former high school wrestling teammates, Angel Hernandez, said Alissa got enraged after losing a match in practice once, letting out a stream of invectives and yelling he would kill everyone. Hernandez said the coach kicked Alissa off the team for the outburst. "He was one of those guys with a short fuse," Hernandez said. "Once he gets mad, it's like something takes over and it's not him. There is no stopping him at that point."

Hernandez said Alissa also would act strangely sometimes, turning around suddenly or glancing over his shoulder. "He would say, 'Did you see that? Did you see that?'" Hernandez recalled. "We wouldn't see anything. We always thought he was messing with us." Arvada police investigated but dropped a separate criminal mischief complaint involving the suspect in 2018, said Detective David Snelling. The man also was cited for speeding in February.

Haunted by mass violence, Colorado confronts painful history



A solemn group of King Soopers employees, left, some from the Boulder store and some from the same district brought a Boulder King Soopers store.

AGENCIES
DENVER, 24 MARCH

Dawn Reinfeld moved to Colorado 30 years ago to attend college in the bucolic town of Boulder. Enchanted by the state's wide-open spaces, she stayed.

But, in the ensuing decades, dark events have clouded her view of her adopted home. The 1999 massacre at Columbine High School.

The 2012 massacre at the Aurora movie theater. On Wednesday, Reinfeld was reeling from the latest mass shooting even closer to home, after authorities say a 21-year-old gunman downed shoppers at a local grocery store. "I could see at some point leaving because of all this," said Reinfeld, a gun control

activist. "It's an exhausting way to live." Colorado has long been defined by its jagged mountains and an outdoor lifestyle that lure transplants from around the country. But it's also been haunted by shootings that have helped define the nation's decades-long struggle with mass violence.

The day after the latest massacre, many in the state were wrestling with that history — wondering why the place they live seems to have become a magnet for such attacks. Why here — again?

"People now say, 'gee, what is it about Colorado?'" said Tom Mauser, whose son Daniel was killed at Columbine High School in 1999. Colorado isn't the state with the most mass shootings — it ranks eighth in the

United States, according to an arrest affidavit. Rather, it looks like a "machine gun."

Suspect's family saw him fiddling with gun days before shooting: Two days before police say Ahmad Al Aliwi Alissa armed himself with an AR-style semi-automatic rifle and a handgun and donned a tactical vest, he sat in his Arvada, Colorado, home fiddling with a gun. The sight alarmed his family. The gun did not look like a rifle featured in old Western movies, Alissa's sis-

ter-in-law told police, according to an arrest affidavit. Rather, it looked like a "machine gun."

Alissa, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Syria who graduated from Arvada West High School in 2018. A 21-year-old man charged

Dems vow vote on gun bills; Biden says 'we have to act'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 24 MARCH

Democrats said they are pushing toward a vote on expanded gun control measures as the nation reels from its second mass shooting in a week. President Joe Biden said we have to act, but prospects for any major changes were dim, for now, in the closely divided Congress.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer vowed Tuesday morning to bring to the Senate floor legislation passed by the House that would require background checks for most gun sales and transfers.

He said the Senate must confront a devastating truth after a lack of congressional action on the issue for almost three decades.

This Senate will be different, Schumer, D-N.Y., said a day after a shooting at a crowded Boulder, Colorado, supermarket, killed 10 people, including a police officer.

The Senate is going to debate and address the epidemic of gun violence in this country.

While a Senate vote on new gun control would be the first in several years, Democrats do not have the votes to pass any significant reform.

They are not even united themselves, as Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., told reporters Tuesday that he opposes the House legislation on background checks.

The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing Tuesday on proposals for gun control. It is unclear whether any of the bills up for consideration most of them involving more restrictive background checks would have made a difference in the Colorado case.

A 21-year-old man charged

Asian Americans seek greater political power after shootings:

Speaking on the floor of the Georgia state Senate last week, Michelle Au implored her colleagues to stand up to the hatred aimed at Asian Americans that's increased during the pandemic. A day later, a gunman shook the Atlanta area by killing eight people, including six women of Asian descent. For Au, who joined the state Senate in January as its first Asian American woman, the attack was a heartbreak validation of her fears. It's also spurring her and other Asian Americans to push for greater political influence in Washington and other power centers. AP

with killing eight people in the Atlanta area last week had purchased a 9 mm handgun hours before the murders, prompting advocates to push for longer waiting periods for purchases.

In brief remarks responding to the shooting, Biden urged Congress to move quickly to close the loopholes in the background check system and to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines an effort that would be even more difficult to achieve politically.

According to a police affidavit, the Colorado shooter had purchased an assault rifle six days earlier. It should not be a partisan issue, Biden said. This is an American issue. It will save lives, American lives.

sending the message that bullying works.

But views on the way that business and trade should play out differ across the Atlantic.

The EU is China's biggest trading partner but they are also economic competitors. As Beijing has become more assertive in recent years, the 27-nation bloc has struggled to balance its commercial interests with a country that it sees as a systemic rival and has human rights concerns about.

The two sealed a major investment agreement in December giving European businesses about the same level of market access in China as those from the United States.

McCarthy, the audacious canceler of communists real and imagined in U.S. government and society, was the Kremlin's best asset."

When one of the reporters commented that the president's observation would hit page one tomorrow, Truman realized he had better soften the statement, Kumar writes. He worked with reporters and allowed the following as a direct quotation: The greatest asset that the Kremlin has is the partisan attempt in the Senate to sabotage the bipartisan foreign policy of the United States.'

Such manipulation became untenable when Eisenhower put the news conferences on the record and let broadcasters record them. Even so, segments were only televised later.

Although wanting to take advantage of the nascent medium of TV, Eisenhower did so with a partial step. Press secretary James C. Hagerty told AP at the time that live telecasts would not be allowed.

It was John F. Kennedy who ushered in the age of live, televised news conferences, and he thrived in the practice.

Smooth talking, authoritative and funny, Kennedy reached living rooms about twice a month with his news conferences.

But for all of JFK's charms and smarts, he encountered a more aggressive White House press corps, Kumar says.

14 arrests in anti-lockdown protest in UK city of Bristol

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 24 MARCH

Police in the south-west England city of Bristol said on Wednesday that 14 arrests have been made after around 200 demonstrators staged a second Kill the Bill anti-lockdown protest, just days after a similar protest had turned violent.

The local Avon and Somerset Police said the arrests were made for offences including breaches of the lockdown legislation and obstruction of a highway as officers attempted to engage with the protesters to disperse the crowds, as large gatherings remain banned in order to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Footage of the protest on Tuesday night showed crowds

Pope orders salary cuts for cardinals, clerics

VATICAN CITY, 24 MARCH

Pope Francis has ordered cardinals to take a 10 per cent pay cut and reduced the salaries of most other clerics working in the Vatican in order to save jobs of employment as the coronavirus pandemic has hit the Holy See's income.

The Vatican said on Wednesday that Francis issued a decree introducing proportional cuts starting on 1 April. A spokesman said most lay employees would not be affected by the cuts.

Francis has often insisted that he does not want to fire people in difficult economic times, even as the Vatican continues to run up deficits.

AGENCIES

The United States and countries around Europe are closing ranks to respond to aggressive and coercive behavior by China, days after the U.S. and its allies launched coordinated sanctions against Chinese officials accused of rights abuses in the far-western Xinjiang region.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that he wants to work with the U.S.'s partners on how to advance our shared economic interests and to counter some of China's aggressive and coercive actions,

as well as its failures, at least in the past, to uphold its international commitments.

On Monday, the U.S., EU, Britain and Canada imposed asset freezes and travel bans

one solo White House news conference in their first 60 days, picking up the pace to varying degrees later.

Adding in the joint, often very brief news conferences with visiting foreign leaders, Donald Trump held at least five news conferences by that point, Clinton at least four, and Barack Obama two. The pandemic has kept foreign leaders away from the White House this year.

The Biden White House is a notably tight ship, fully aware of his history of flubs, as is Biden himself, a self-described gaffe machine.

He went through the 2020 campaign with infrequent news conferences and often hunkered down in the pandemic. Yet he debated fellow Democrats a dozen times and Trump three times without apparent harm to his prospects or the country.

Depending how you count, Biden is a little or a lot behind his recent predecessors in opening himself to questions in what historian Martha Joynt Kumar calls the high-risk, high-reward enterprise of presidential news conferences.

The last four presidents, back to Bill Clinton, each held

one solo White House news conference in their first 60 days, picking up the pace to varying degrees later.

Franklin Roosevelt, a radio pioneer who mastered communications on all fronts and nearly matched Coolidge's unrivaled pace of news conferences, regularly summoned his favoured reporters to his office, consigning the ones he didn't like to his dunces club. Off the record often meant giving the president a chance to clean up his remarks, unheard of today. At a March 1950 news conference, Harry Truman declared that Sen. Joseph

EU sharpens vaccine export rules as third wave of infections rises

AGENCIES

BRUSSELS, 24 MARCH

Verbose & superfluous

Hilary Mantel's self-consciously arms' length view of her main, and ever controversial character, bars her from reaching a conclusion, even after so many books and pages, whether he was a hero, villain or neither... A review

KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN

This is an exceptionally hard review to compose, not for any technical reasons but because it departs from a nigh-universal consensus that this is a remarkable book, deserving of multiple prizes, including a third Booker for author Hilary Mantel. Accordingly this review represents a minority opinion.

It is true that Mantel excels in research which she combines with imagination in writing fictionalised history. This is the last volume of three, which trace the life of Tudor King Henry VIII's principal agent Thomas Cromwell, a low-born man at a time of entrenched nobility. He is usually regarded as Henry's hatchet man assisting in the king's separation from Papal control in Rome and building an independent church structure which became called the Church of England with the English monarch, then as now, at its head.

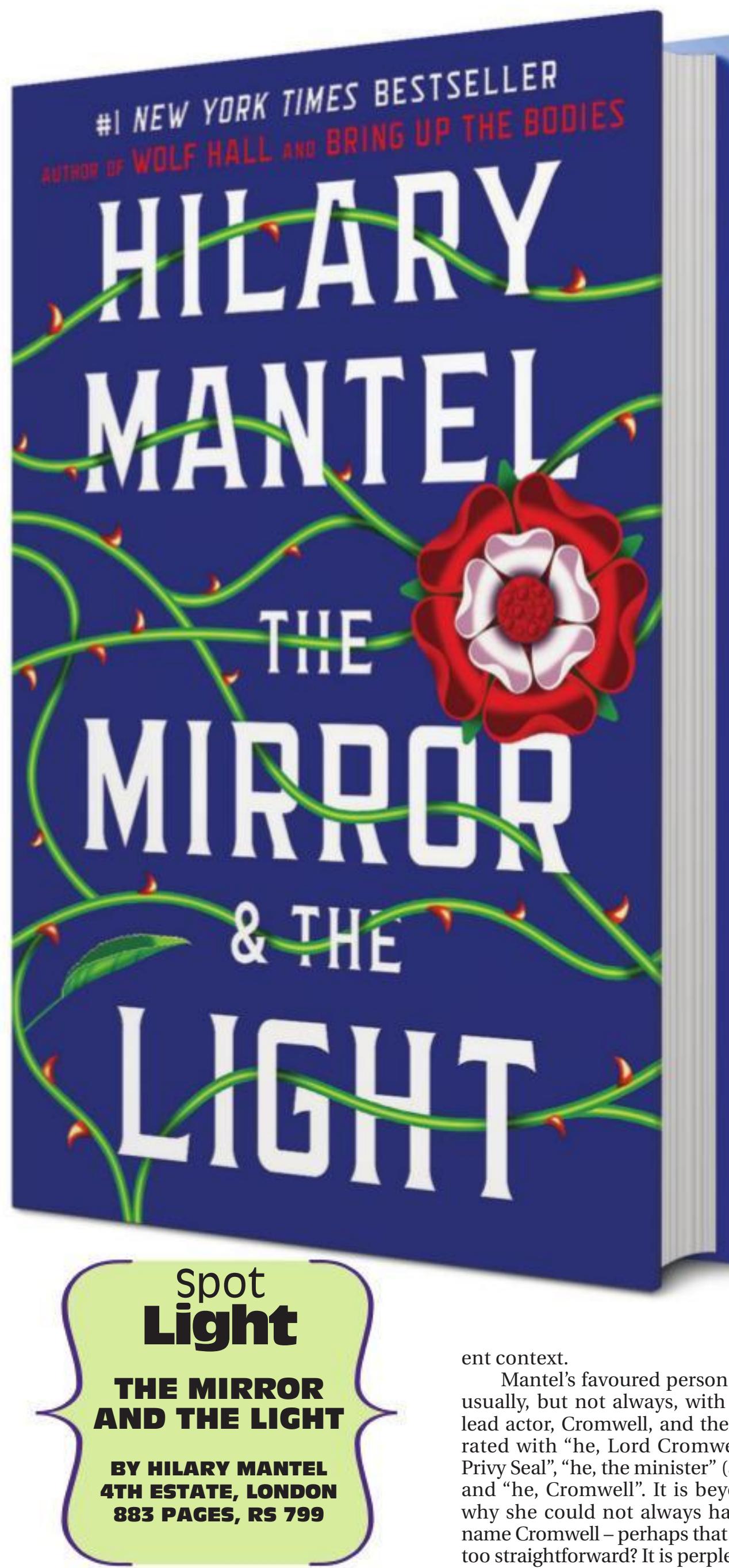
Cromwell was responsible for the dissolution of the monastic order in England more for monetary than ideological reasons, and rendered personal service to the king in respect of defaming the king's second wife, perhaps with good reason, and facilitating his third marriage. This third marriage ended in the queen's death from childbirth and led to the eventual downfall of Cromwell who over-reached himself in arranging the king's fourth marriage to a German princess, which also served the purpose of binding England with Protestantism, a movement already well under way in several of the states in Germany.

This book covers the period from Henry's second wife's execution for adultery to Cromwell's execution after his downfall, which brings the trilogy to an end.

The 900 pages deal with a large cast, with helpful lists of the main characters and family trees to begin with. Where the book fails is in its flaccid style, overwriting, obscure digressions, striving for the memorable phrase, and impenetrable allusions not excluding its title.

It is worth examining just one example *in extenso* out of numerous in a paragraph of stunning esoterism, "Lazarus of course died twice. The second time it was for good and all. Travelling east for his bank once, he visited his second and final tomb. It is guarded by ferocious monks who stick a collecting bowl in your face and make you empty your pockets to see something after all is only proof that miracles do not last. The crippled man walks but only twice around the churchyard before he collapses in a flailing of limbs. The blind man sees but the faces he knew in his young days are altered and when he asks for a mirror he doesn't recognise himself at all." The relevance of all this will escape the reader. So will 17 lines of text on plums.

Mantel revels in the intentionally hermetic, so the reader has to cope with ghosts, dreams, delusions, images and irrelevancies that intrude into the narrative. She at times uses the quaint language of the Tudors – "women who are caught must straitly be punished" and at others the current demotic, "his head hits the pillow". She uses a well known quote from Einstein about Gandhi in a differ-



Spot Light

THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT

BY HILARY MANTEL
4TH ESTATE, LONDON
883 PAGES, RS 799

ent context.

Mantel's favoured person pronoun is "he", usually, but not always, with reference to the lead actor, Cromwell, and the "he's" are elaborated with "he, Lord Cromwell", or "he, Lord Privy Seal", "he, the minister" (an anachronism) and "he, Cromwell". It is beyond explanation why she could not always have used the name Cromwell – perhaps that would have been too straightforward? It is perplexing to make out

who the "he's" are in every case when the descriptor is not given. In a passage of five print lines, "he", "him" or "his" are encountered no fewer than nine times. Another irritating trait, a man called Wriothesley, by no means a minor person in the story, is nearly invariably called Mr Wriothesley. This curiosity is never explained.

For all the words, no clear picture emerges of Cromwell. This is possibly due to Mantel taking a self-consciously arms' length view of her main, and ever controversial character, or perhaps she could not make up her mind, even after so many books and pages, whether he was a hero, villain or neither. All Cromwell's retinue of men, women and hangers-on seem equally devoid of personality or even intelligence. The most attractive and well drawn personalities are the king, the Spanish ambassador, and some of Cromwell's numerous rivals.

The verbosity is so marked that the review in the *New Yorker* delivered the book's most pithy epithet: that Mantel had said everything she had to say about Cromwell in her first two books, and all she had left was to swiftly conclude the biography. Without the superfluity, this book could have come in at 250 pages, and would have been better for it. But that is not Mantel's style and intention. Prospective buyers are nevertheless encouraged to read this book in order to judge for themselves.

The reviewer is India's former foreign secretary



Hilary Mantel

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY OPTIONS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Dinesh Kumar Srivastava
V S Ramamurthy



BIKASH SINHA

Only about 10 years ago, most people didn't believe that global climate is changing for the worse. They didn't believe the Earth is getting hotter or for that

matter, the greenhouse effect. They must have thought climate change is a fashionable phrase for an esoteric scientific phenomenon – fierce floods happen only in poor countries and large-scale forest fires are just an Australian adventure! They

Filled with stark facts

This book is eminently readable with lots of beautiful pictures explaining how we are destroying our blue planet... A review

went on comfortably burning fossil fuels and increasing pollution levels in the atmosphere.

But the Earth couldn't stomach it anymore and rebelled. Slowly but surely, the ugly face of climate change was staring back at us. It barely warrants mention that if we do not take corrective measures now and put a check on our greed, we are doomed.

By the time the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was established, the world was already wrapped up in the impenetrable blanket of greenhouse gases. For the first time in collective memory, a tsunami took place in South-east Asia.

The Intergovernmental Panel suggested that global temperatures could rise by a maximum of 1.5 to two °C of pre-industrial values. That means a reduction of greenhouse gases, primarily fossil fuels, by 40 per cent of the level in 2010, which most thought was an impossible and unrealistic task.

I have been obsessed with the disastrous consequences of climate change for quite some time. I have been arguing that an increase of the global temperature by five °C can create havoc. But that was more than 15 years ago, and nobody took notice of my arguments. When I coined the phrase, "technology owes an apology to ecology", many were startled – not by the meaning, but that it rhymed!

It is only in the last 10 years or so after the very visible catastrophe created by the tsunami and with the Intergovernmental Panel already on firm ground that climate change became a topic of serious debate and discussion across the world. It also turned political as capitalists tried to ignore the crisis while liberals strongly disagreed with them.

Dinesh Srivastava and VS Ramamurthy's book, *Climate Change and Energy Options for A Sustainable Future*, is thus extremely timely and the authors point out in bold letters that "global warming is real". It covers not only key points about the damaging consequences of climate change but also focuses on solutions for our future.

Greenhouse gases have already bored a hole deep into the ozone layer in the polar region. As a result, the Sun's ultraviolet rays have created havoc on Earth, including cancer. I feel that hasn't been discussed in enough detail in the book.

The most important source of change on the climate equilibrium is, of course, the abundant use of fossil fuels like coal, petrol and diesel. Ironically, the Earth's own resources that it nurtured over the years so tenderly has been used to destroy it.

Srivastava and Ramamurthy take the usual route, emphasising on solar, renewable and wind energy, including geothermal energy, which is completely unexplored in our country till now. One table presented by the authors titled, "Pollutants Emitted by 1300MW Thermal Power Plant using Coal" reveals all!

Expectedly, the authors dwell extensively and exhaustively on nuclear power, including fusion. In principle, nuclear power is important, but nobody can deny the danger, however slight, that is lurking in it. If I feel renewable energy will take over the world in a short time with a helping hand from solar power as we feel safe with it.

The book is eminently readable with lots of beautiful pictures explaining how we are destroying our blue planet. The authors also trace human

history and demonstrate how ancient civilisations perished, essentially because of humans destroying Nature.

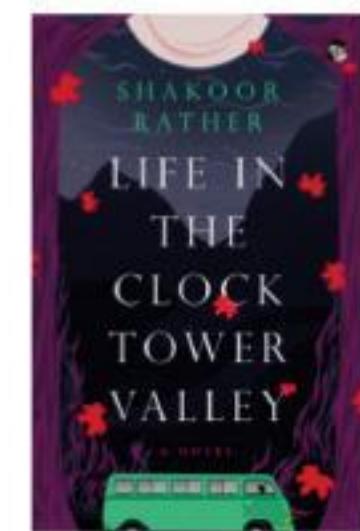
The Mesopotamians, Babylonians, Egyptians and even the Byzantine Empire perished because of deforestation in the name of progress. The Sahara Desert was created after temperatures surged. Even the highly advanced Harappan civilisation fell victim to the same malice.

I recommend the book at the school level, bit by bit, from Class IX to XII, but I imagine that's asking too much. It's a balanced book, written without any dogma but filled with stark facts. Finally, I am yet to see Wikipedia used to such an optimum level. It is indeed a pleasure reading the book.

The reviewer is a senior scientist at the Indian National Science Academy. He is a former Homi Bhabha professor, department of atomic energy, and former director, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics & Variable Energy cyclotron centre

BOOKS RECEIVED

Unusual debut



LIFE IN THE CLOCK TOWER VALLEY
BY SHAKOOR RATHER
SPEAKING TIGER
FICTION, 175 PAGES, RS 350

Srinagar, summer of 2008: the chinar trees are shedding leaves, outdated matadors are still polluting the streets and checkpoints with men in army fatigues dot the city.

Samar, a university student, is head over heels in love with Rabiya, his batch mate. Sheikh Mubarak, Samar's neighbour, is a famed metal craftsman stuck in a loveless marriage. Sana, Mubarak and Nazeefa's five-year-old daughter, is best friends with Pintooji, the neighbourhood simpleton.

Delicate and sensitive, *Life in the Clock Tower Valley* is an unusual debut novel that travels between Kashmir's pristine past, its grievous present and always-uncertain future, giving us an insider's view to everyday life and emotions in the conflict-ridden valley.

Shakoor Rather is a Kashmiri journalist based in Delhi. Having grown up in the Kashmir Valley during its most difficult decades, he writes with rare sensitivity about the different dimensions of the conflict there.

Moving portrait



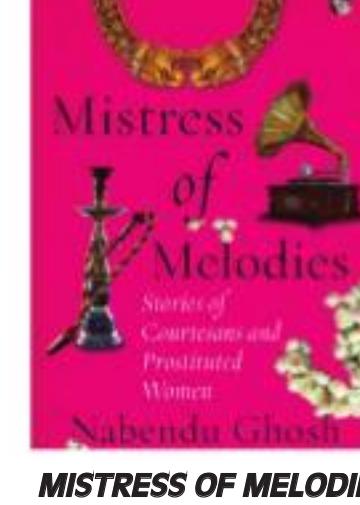
GURU DUTT: AN UNFINISHED STORY
BY YASSER USMAN
SIMON & SCHUSTER
BIOGRAPHY, 317 PAGES, RS 599

Bestselling Bollywood biographer Yasser Usman explores the man and the myth – Guru Dutt – in this definitive biography of a nonconformist star, uncovering the extraordinary lives of the rich and famous as well as the incredible toll it takes on the emotional and mental health of a human being. With cameos from close friends and colleagues Dev Anand, Waheeda Rehman, Johny Walker, SD Burman and most significantly Dutt's sister, noted painter Lalitha Lajmi, a short but compassionate, ambitious and ultimately tragic life reveals itself in the pages of this book.

This is a gripping, meticulously researched and moving portrait of an unfinished life – a tale of unrequited love, unresolved relationships and unmatched cinematic talent.

Usman bagged the Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism. He is the author of bestselling books – *Rajesh Khanna: The Untold Story of India's First Superstar*, *Rekha: The Untold Story* and *Sanjay Dutt: The Crazy Untold Story of Bollywood's Bad Boy*. This is his fourth book.

Stories of women



MISTRESS OF MELODIES
BY NABENDU GHOSH
EDITED BY RATNOTTAMA SENGUPTA
SPEAKING TIGER
FICTION, 183 PAGES, RS 350

In *Mistress of Melodies*, Nabendu Ghosh (1917-2007) traverses the streets of the ever-changing city of Calcutta to tell the stories of women – courtesans and those who engaged in sex-work – across generations.

Poignant, evocative and intensely human, the book features some of the strongest women in Indian fiction created by Ghosh, the legendary screenwriter who scripted immortal classics such as *Abhimanyu*, *Devdas* and *Bandini*, among others.

The book has been edited by Ghosh's daughter Ratnotama Sengupta. Ghosh's oeuvre of work includes 30 novels and 15 collections of short stories. His daughter teaches mass communication and film appreciation, curates film festivals and art exhibitions, and writes books.



LAST CHANCE

Gareth Bale (photo, left) is hoping to make the most of what he believes might be his final chance to make it to a World Cup as Wales begin their 2022 qualifying campaign away against Belgium. They have not played at a World Cup since 1958 and, at 31, Bale feels time is running out for him, according to *bbc.com*.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Orleans Masters: Ajay Jayaram, Kiran George and Mithun Manjunath made the second round of the Orleans Masters Super 100 badminton tournament. Jayaram beat compatriot Alap Mishra and would now face top seed and former world No 1 Kidambi Srikanth.

Copa plan: The South American football confederation, Conmebol, said it was working with Argentina and Colombia to secure enough Covid-19 vaccines to allow fans at the Copa America. Originally scheduled for 2020, it was postponed because of the pandemic.

Champs league: Real Madrid's Champions League quarter-final first leg at home versus Liverpool in April will not have to be moved abroad after the Spanish government said on Tuesday it would lift restrictions on flights from Britain at the end of this month.

Ronaldo unfazed: Criticism of Cristiano Ronaldo's performances for Juventus has had no impact on the forward's morale and he is ready to do his best for Portugal in their World Cup qualifier against Azerbaijan later on Wednesday, coach Fernando Santos said.

Coach apologises: Heiko Vogel, a German coach who told female match officials "women don't belong on a football pitch," has said he offered to train a women's soccer team by way of apology. "I wanted to apologize to the girls and women playing football," he said.

Worthington dead: Former England international striker Frank Worthington, one of the great showmen of English football, has died aged 72 after a long illness. Worthington, "the working man's George Best," won all of his eight caps in 1974 scoring two goals.

Venus loses: It has been 20 years since Venus Williams won her home tournament, and her stay at the 2021 Miami Open was brief. Williams was eliminated on the first day of play on Tuesday by 89th-ranked Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan, 6-2, 7-6 (10).

Murray out: Former world No 1 Andy Murray of Britain has withdrawn from the 2021 Miami Open due to a left groin injury. His place in the draw will be filled by a qualifier or lucky loser. Murray, who has a 28-9 record in Miami, won the trophy in 2009 and 2013.

Coe's claim: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe says, in Global Conversation, his sport can have a huge influence on helping the post-pandemic world address the global health crisis and is making plans to ensure that it is ready to take on that responsibility.

Youngsters included: New Zealand have called up an uncapped Finn Allen and picked Will Young for a three-match Twenty20 series against Bangladesh to compensate for the absence of six players, including Kane Williamson, bound for the Indian Premier League.

Yuki to lead: Bhamani will lead the challenge of Delhi Binny's Brigade, co-owned by Sneh Patel and actor producer Divya Khosla Kumar, in the Tennis Premier League 3.0, which will be played in Mumbai later this year with the support of AITA and MSLTA.

Balaram recovering: Former football Olympian Tulsidas Balaram, recently taken to hospital for the removal of a blood clot on his brain, was on Wednesday stated to be recovering satisfactorily. A source in the hospital said he was likely to be discharged on Thursday.

Dhawan says he knows how to cope with pressure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
PUNE, 24 MARCH

India opener Shikhar Dhawan (in photo), who hit a match-winning 98 in the first One-Day International against England after warming the bench for most of the Twenty20 series, said international cricket was all about pressure and he knew how to handle it.

Having lost his place in the T20 playing XI, Dhawan was under pressure to perform in the opening ODI with India spoilt for choice in all batting positions.

"In international cricket, pressure exists always and the good thing is, as (an) experienced player, I know how to handle pressure nicely," Dhawan said after yesterday's match. "And secondly, as I said, because I am an experienced player, I know what shots to play on what wickets and we read the wicket nicely and communicated very nicely in the batting unit and that worked for us."

"Of course, once I get set, I

have a lot of shots, I can get my runs," he said.

Dhawan, who was benched after the first T20 of the five-match series, explained how he had kept thinking positive when things were not going his way.

"I kept myself quite positive when I wasn't playing in the T20 series."

I was focusing on my process, fitness, skill work, gym work and I always stay in a positive mental space. I always try and look at the positives in every situ-

ation. That's what I was doing. I was working on my batting. I knew that if I get an opportunity, I'll take it."

Dhawan also said that the wicket had been aiding seam and swing bowling.

"It wouldn't have made any sense if you went hard at the start, losing a few wickets, so our plan was to stay at the wicket and respect the good deliveries."

"We knew that both of us, Rohit (Sharma) and I, can always make those runs later

on and the wicket would have been bit more supportive of batsmen and in the end we scored such a big total," he added.

The opener also had words of praise for the young players who had come into the side and spoke of how the Indian Premier League had helped them.

"The new players who have come into the side, they are confident, because they play so many domestic games and the IPL and they share dressing rooms with big players, play against them, that builds confidence and they feel there are the same players at international level."

"There are top-notch coaches there, so the IPL exposure helps a lot, and our domestic cricket is strong, it's a good mix of the two, because of which the new players are performing, so whenever the team transition happens, it won't be felt," the 35-year-old Delhi player noted.

Dhawan also lavished praise on debut-makers Krunal Pandya and paceman Prasidh Krishna.

na. "It was a great team effort. Especially, Prasidh, the pace he was bowling at, the bounce he was getting, he was rushing the batsman, that was great to see and it was his first game," he said.

"Even Krunal Pandya did really well. And with Shardul (Thakur), his confidence has gone quite up and I feel he is a very smart cricketer, he reads the game quite well."

Morgan injured

England skipper Eoin Morgan and Sam Billings could miss the second ODI here on Friday after sustaining injuries in the first game, dealing a fresh blow to the side's floundering campaign. The skipper split the webbing between his right thumb and his index finger that required four stitches. Billings injured his collar-bone following an awkward dive to stop a boundary.

"We're going to wait 48 for hours and see how it is... give as much time as needed to hopefully be available for Friday," Morgan said.

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'IPL won't be delayed'

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY
KOLKATA, 24 MARCH

The Indian Premier League of Twenty20 cricket, the centrepiece of the country's midsummer television entertainment in the time of the coronavirus pandemic, will not be delayed even though a spurt in infections has touched off speculation around it.

"The matches will be in camera and the players will be in bio-secure bubbles amid regular testing," veteran cricket administrator Ratnakar Shetty (in photo) told *The Statesman* by telephone from Mumbai today.

Asked if it would have been better for the tournament to be put back for some time considering what was being described as Covid-19's second surge across the land, Shetty pointed out the paucity of fifth over.

Thirumaine and Fernando then stuck together for almost 51 overs to erase the first innings deficit and to bat Sri Lanka into a strong position.

Fernando reached his second test half century from 84 balls and Thirumaine his seventh from 123 balls.

Mayers began his first class career as a bowling all-rounder but has bowled less often recently after an ankle injury. He had bowled only 16 overs in two tests before Tuesday when his four overs returned 2-10. Kemar Roach has 2-28.



turnstiles and the bio bubbles. There will have to be six of them but Shetty sounded confident that so many events and matches having by now taken place with cricketers and their peers in other disciplines having sheltered in those secure environments that safety-related apprehensions could be set aside and the job, got on with.

Reminded of a spate of positive tests during the International Shooting Sport Federation World Cup in New Delhi, Shetty said the Board of Control for Cricket in India was aware of it all. Asked if there were any plans for the IPL to be taken to West Asia, or anywhere away from India, as in 2020, Shetty said the IPL generated revenue across the market and going abroad implied the country's loss. "You can't do that on a regular basis," he said.

It's advantage Sri Lanka in first Test

ASSOCIATED PRESS
NORTH POINT (ANTIGUA), 24 MARCH

Dinesh Chandimal (4), both caught by wicketkeeper Joshua Da Silva.

When Kemar Roach bowled Thirumaine, Sri Lanka were 189-4, 87 ahead, after having lost three quick wickets for 19 runs. Dhananjaya de Silva and Pathum Nissanka then rallied Sri Lanka again, putting on 66 in an unbroken fifth-wicket partnership by stumps. De Silva was 46 and Nissanka 21 at close

of play.

Sri Lanka are working toward a strong position because the West Indies, who won the toss and bowled, face the task of batting last on a wearing pitch at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

"I think the wicket is a good one. It's flattened out nicely," Mayers said. "Obviously they had the upper hand today but the game is still evenly poised. "We're

still in the game 150-run lead. All we need is two early wickets tomorrow and then we're in with a chance."

Sri Lanka began the day by swiftly wrapping up the West Indies first innings, dismissing top-scorer Rahkeem Cornwall for 61. The West Indies had early success with the new ball, removing Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne (3) when Sri Lanka were 8 in the fifth over.

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India sweep women's 25m pistol after Tomar's historic gold in WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 24 MARCH

A dominant India swept the women's 25m pistol event with Chinky Yadav winning gold after Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar's (in photo) historic top finish in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions final of the ISSF World Cup here on Wednesday.

At 20, Tomar became the youngest Indian ever to win gold in this event when she shot 462.5 to claim the top prize ahead of Hungary's world number one Istvan Peni (461.6) and Denmark's Steffen Olsen (450.9).

After that, Yadav upstaged the experienced Rahi Sarnobat and the fancied Manu Bhaker to win gold in a 1-2-3 finish for India. The country's overall tally swelled to 19 with 9 gold, 5 silver and as many bronze medals.

The 23-year-old Yadav prevailed over Sarnobat, 30, 4-3 in a shoot-off after their scores were tied at 32.

Bhaker, aged only 19, shot 28 to settle for the bronze medal before being eliminated, leaving her two other compatriots to fight for the top prize at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

All three shooters have already bagged their quotas for the Tokyo Olympics.

Yadav, who fetched the Olympic quota with a second-place finish at the 14th Asian Championships in Doha in 2019, led the pack after first 20 targets with a score of 14.

She was followed by Bhaker at second with 13.

Then, the shooter from Bhopal led with a score of 21 and pulled away from the rest, even as the seasoned Sarnobat clawed her way back into the finals after struggling in bottom half.

In the final, Yadav shot all the five targets twice -- in the first competition stage's second and series and the sixth series of the elimination stage -- after beginning with two.

He won the bronze medal in the 50 metre rifle 3 positions event at the 2019 Asian Shooting Championships to secure a quota place for India at the Olympics.

This comes three days after Tomar combined with Deepak Kumar and Pankaj Kumar to win the silver medal in the men's team air rifle event.

In the event, Rajput qualified with 1172, while Tomar and Kumar shot identical scores of 1165.

Istvan Peni, Aleksi Leppa (Finland), Jan Lochbihler (Switzerland), Juhu Kurki (Finland) and Olsen were the others to make the final, which was a 45-shot contest comprising the three series of kneeling, prone and standing.

Tomar, who failed to clear selection trials at the Madhya Pradesh Shooting Academy seven years ago, led the eight-man final at the end of the kneeling position with 155.0 and was in second place after prone with 310.5, behind Olsen (311.4) and ahead of Peni (309.9).

Stimac and Indian footballers put to the test

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
DUBAI, 24 MARCH

after his maiden gold in a senior world cup.

The other Indians in the final, veteran Sanjeev Rajput and Niraj Kumar, finished sixth and eighth respectively.

After an impressive start following which he led for a while, Tomar slipped into the standouts but fought back strongly with a 10.4, 10.5 and 10.3 in the standing elimination stage.

Tomar is an Olympics quota-holder.

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Chhetri will be missed but India pulled off a goal-less draw with Asian champions Qatar in Doha without the striker in a 2022 World Cup qualifying round match in 2019.

"It's a big miss, not having Chhetri bhai in the squad. But I'm sure the boys will take this as an opportunity and we have to play together as a team," said number one goalkeeper and senior player Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who has led the side on many occasions.

Captain Sunil Chhetri will not be there but a young Indian team will seek to play fearless football against Oman in their first international match in more than a year here tomorrow.

Chhetri is not with the team for the two friendlies here -- the second one, against the United Arab Emirates, is fixed for Saturday -- as he is recovering from Covid-19.

But the side with an average age of just over 24 are racing to go in their first international match since November 2019 and many of them have done well in the recent Indian Super League for their franchises.

Head coach Igor Stimac has said the youngsters will be given ample chances to prove themselves and they should play free and fearless football.

"We need to come to the pitch without any fear; we need to try to make our transition properly, and we need to try and enjoy the possession we have. That's what I ask of my players," Stimac earlier said.

Chhetri will be missed but India pulled off a goal-less draw with Asian champions Qatar in Doha without the striker in a 2022 World Cup qualifying round match in 2019.

It is expected to be a tough game against Oman who have beaten India in both legs of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers in 2019. Oman are ranked 81st while India are at 104th but Stimac's men should take confidence from the fact that they

Blatter banned again by FIFA

AGENCIES
GENEVA, 24 MARCH

Sepp Blatter was banned for a second time by FIFA on Wednesday for financial wrongdoing, seven months before the 85-year-old former president's first ban expires.

Blatter has recently been in poor health and was put in an induced coma for one week after undergoing heart surgery in December, at the time when FIFA was deciding his case.

FIFA said its ethics committee banned both Blatter and former secretary general Jerome Valcke for six years