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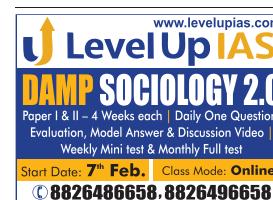
NEARBY



NIA to probe blast near Israel embassy

NEW DELHI
The Ministry of Home Affairs has said the probe into the January 29 explosion near the Israel Embassy in Delhi was handed over to the National Investigation Agency due to the "gravity of offence and its international implication". The order does not mention any country. An improvised explosion device was set off at a pavement near the embassy damaging a few cars. No one was injured.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 10



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Farmers' road blockade today to exclude Delhi, Uttarakhand, U.P.

Unions appeal for non-violent, peaceful protests

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ
ANUJ KUMAR
NEW DELHI/ GHAZIABAD

The *chakka jam* (road blockade) planned by farm unions on Saturday will exclude Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to ensure that the kind of violence that marred their tractor parades on Republic Day is not repeated.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha leadership has issued strict guidelines to ensure a "completely peaceful and non-violent" agitation in the rest of the country, with a specific appeal not to engage in any conflict with the government authorities or other citizens.

"There will be no *chakka jam* programme inside Delhi



Sowing harmony: Farmers planting flowers at the barricades fixed by the police at the Ghazipur border on Friday. ■ PTI

since all the protest sites are already in a *chakka jam* mode. All roads for entering Delhi will remain open, except where farmers' protest sites are already located," the SKM statement on Friday said.

Leaders of the Bharatiya Kisan Union-Tikait, which is leading the protest in U.P.,

and the Terai Kisan Sangathan, which includes a large number of protesting farmers from Uttarakhand, said the *chakka jam* had been called off in those two States.

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No flaws in farm laws, Tomar tells RS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar told the Rajya Sabha on Friday that the government's offer to amend the three farm laws did not mean they had any shortcomings, and sought to know what was "black" about them.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on the January 29 motion of thanks to the President's address, he said he had held 11 rounds of talks with the farmers but had never used any objectionable word for them.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

Munawar Faruqui gets ad-interim bail

Police didn't comply with Section 41: SC

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday granted ad-interim bail to comedian Munawar Faruqui in a case registered against him by the Madhya Pradesh police for hurting religious sentiments.

In a brief hearing, a three-judge Bench, led by Justice Rohinton Fali Nariman, also stayed a production warrant issued by the Uttar Pradesh government against Mr. Faruqui in a separate case based on the same facts.

The petitioner is released on ad-interim bail on conditions to the satisfaction of the trial court. In the meantime, there shall be stay of the production warrants as well," the court ordered.

Justice Nariman said the allegations against Mr. Faruqui were vague. He noted that the police had not complied with the procedure prescribed under Section 41 of the CrPC.



ruqui were vague. He noted that the police had not complied with the procedure prescribed under Section 41 of the CrPC.

Justice Nariman pointed out that the SC, in a scathing judgment in *Arness Kumar versus State of Bihar* in 2014, had warned States and their police from depriving personal liberty without following due process of law.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

J&K restores 4G mobile Internet

PEERZADA ASHIQ
SRINAGAR

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Friday restored high-speed mobile Internet, which was cut since August 5, 2019, when the Centre ended its special status.

"Keeping in view the advice of a special committee and upon careful review of the overall security situation, the Home department hereby revokes the restrictions on mobile data services and fixed line Internet. Prepaid SIM card holders will also be provided services only after verification as per the norms applicable," said Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary, J&K Home Department.

"AG Mubarak! For the first time since Aug 2019 all of J&K will have 4G mobile data. Better late than never," former CM Omar Abdullah tweeted.

You will open eyes of government, Jayant tells farmers at massive U.P. rally

Rashtriya Lok Dal vice president takes dig at Centre, ruling party

ANUJ KUMAR
GAZIABAD

Taking a dig at the BJP, Jayant Chaudhary said on Friday that those who took a long time before unfurling the National Flag were now teaching farmers nationalism. The Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) vice president was speaking at a massive rally of farmers in Bhaunswal village of Shamli.

In a display of aggression and wit, Mr. Chaudhary said Prime Minister Narendra Modi failed to understand the temperament of farmers in the last seven



Farmers wave the National Flag during a rally in Shamli, Uttar Pradesh, on Friday. ■ PTI

years. "He should understand if you try to suppress the demands of farmers, they will resist with double

force. The farmer should at least get the minimum support price by law," he said.

The RLD leader said the

government had not said a single word to commiserate with those who died during the protest. "No BJP leader

went to meet Navreet Singh, a farmer from Rampur who died during the protest in Delhi. Seventy and eighty-

year-olds are being picked up and booked," he said.

He said notices were being sent to farmers in western U.P. for denigrating the National Flag. "No farmer could insult the National Flag. When his son's body comes from the border draped in the Tricolour, he does not cry. He takes pride in it," he said.

Mr. Chaudhary thanked the farmers for turning up in large numbers at panchayats. "You will open the eyes of the government," he said, alleging that the ruling party had plans to disrupt peaceful protests by sending its members as locals to protest sites. "They did it at Singhu. At Ghazipur it was prevented after [his father and RLD chief] Ajit Singh's timely intervention."

Govt. ready to give UPSC aspirants another chance

A virtual U-turn from earlier position

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Friday informed the Supreme Court that it is "agreeable" to giving UPSC aspirants, who have exhausted their chance in the last October 4 preliminary exam but are not age-barred, another crack at the exam this year.

The government said the leeway was an "ex-gratia, one-time, restricted relaxation" to those who appeared in the Civil Services Exam - 2020 as their "last permissible attempt". Appearing before a Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar in a virtual

court hearing, Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju read out from a note, which said that the candidates given the leeway should not be age-barred.

The note said the candidates whose number of attempts had not exhausted could not avail themselves of this one-time relaxation.

"This relaxation for the candidates, and to the extent as prescribed, shall be a one-time relaxation only and shall apply only for appearing in CSE-2021 and shall not be treated as a precedent," it said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 8

With public library movement, Jamtara turns a new page

District is infamous as 'phishing capital'

SATYASUNDAR BARIK
BHUBANESWAR

A library movement developed in a short span of time in Jharkhand's Jamtara district is receiving a steady flow of students and helping them turn a new page.

The district's love for books assumes huge significance as it has the dubious distinction of being the "phishing capital of India". Many youth, mostly drop-outs in the 15-35 age group, have been turning to cybercrime to earn a few quick bucks.

Police personnel from 22 out of 28 Indian States have visited the tiny district in search of cyber fraudsters in the past few years. It is said that the majority of online fraud calls received by people across the country emanate from the district. Netflix's 2020 crime drama, *Jamtara*, was based on this.

"Now we have taken initiative to change the identity of Jamtara, where educator and social reformer Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar had once worked, through a community library movement," Faiz Ahmed Muntaz, Deputy Commissioner of Jamtara,



A group of students prepare for exams at a public library in Jharkhand's Jamtara.

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Mumtaz said the district now has 45 functional public libraries. Unused government buildings have been renovated and converted into public libraries.

"Studies of students preparing for Class X and Class XII exams were disrupted during COVID-19. But the community library proved to be a boon for such students. The State government is conducting classes for mathematics and science at these campuses," he added.

As many as 93 cyber criminals are languishing in Jamtara's jails, while 156 online fraudsters were arrested in 74 different cases in 2020.

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RISE 02:01 SET 12:53
SUNDAY, FEB. 07
RISE 07:06 SET 18:06
RISE 03:07 SET 13:43
MONDAY, FEB. 08
RISE 07:05 SET 18:06
RISE 04:11 SET 14:38

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Palam 20 09

Delhi Palam Today 23°C Shallow fog would prevail during morning with mainly clear sky and pleasant day likely.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow 24°C Shallow fog likely during cold morning at some places. A comfortable sunny day with dry winds likely.

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THE HINDU

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AAP govt. issues tender to set up 100 EV charging stations

This is largest in the country, says Jain

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has issued a tender – the largest in India – to set up public charging stations for electric vehicles in the city, said Power Minister Satyendar Jain on Friday.

He said Delhi Transco Limited (DTL), a Delhi government agency, has initiated the process for setting up 100 public charging stations.

All power infrastructure costs will be borne by the government, he added.

Cannot afford to wait for zero cases to resume classes: Sisodia

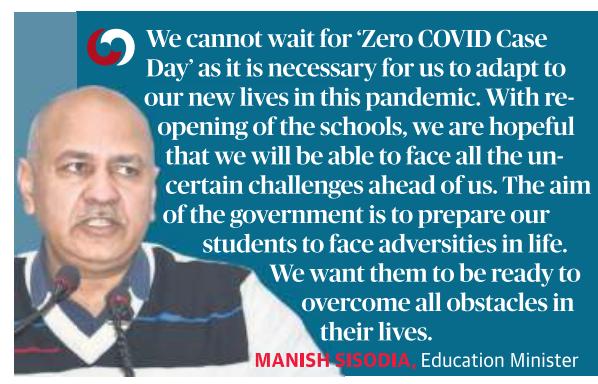
Schools reopen for Classes IX, XI; Minister asks authorities to follow COVID protocols

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said students need to get back to their normal routine and the government cannot afford to wait for COVID cases to drop to zero in order to resume classes.

Mr. Sisodia, also the Education Minister, inspected the COVID-19 protocols put in place at the Government Girls Senior Secondary School, Gandhi Nagar on Friday when classes resumed for students of Class IX and XII.

After inspecting the school, he said: "We cannot wait for 'Zero COVID Case Day' as it is necessary for us to adapt to our new lives in this pandemic. Students of Classes X and XII [reopened on January 18] were able to strictly follow



We cannot wait for 'Zero COVID Case Day' as it is necessary for us to adapt to our new lives in this pandemic. With reopening of the schools, we are hopeful that we will be able to face all the uncertain challenges ahead of us. The aim of the government is to prepare our students to face adversities in life. We want them to be ready to overcome all obstacles in their lives.
MANISH SISODIA Education Minister

COVID-19 instructions due to which we were confident to reopen Classes IX and XI as well."

Mr. Sisodia asked all school authorities to take necessary COVID-19 and follow social distancing norms in its premises.

He added: "Our lives have slowly begun to get back on track. With the reopening of the schools, we are hopeful that we will be

able to face all the uncertain challenges ahead of us."

Expressing his excitement on seeing students back in the science lab of the school he visited, he said: "The aim of the government is to prepare our students to face adversities in life. We want them to be ready to overcome all obstacles in their lives." Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "Our students are really missing school. We have to protect them from COVID but also have to get the atmosphere of school back. Slowly we are getting the happiness and light of the school back."

Sisodia attacks Centre

Mr. Sisodia also took a dig at the Central government for clearing a proposal that purportedly gives more power to the Lieutenant Governor.

"The Kejriwal government has broken the old traditions and established world-class schools in Delhi. But the Centre stealthily approved a bill, which aims to give more power to the L-G. This is directly hampering the working of the elected government in Delhi and curtail the ongoing development," he said.

Over 9,000 beneficiaries get the jab

Capital reports 154 fresh COVID-19 cases and two deaths

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A total of 9,216 beneficiaries took the COVID-19 vaccination in the city on Friday and 12 Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) were reported, the government said. The vaccination drive was carried out at 184 centres across Delhi's 11 districts.

The Capital reported 154 fresh COVID-19 cases on Friday along with two deaths and 140 recoveries over a 24-hour period. A health bulletin released by the Delhi government said 59,964 tests were conducted over the same period with a positivity rate of 0.26%. Out of the total tests, 37,770 were RTPCR tests and 22,194 were rapid antigen tests.



A health worker at vaccination drive at G.B. Pant Hospital. ■ FILE PHOTO

Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
6,35,793	10,873
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
154	2

The total number of cases in the city now stands at 6,35,793 with 6,23,714 recoveries and 10,873 deaths. The number of active cases in the city stands at 1206. The number of people in home isolation is 452.

+ Social network



Kites perch over an amusement park near the Ghazipur landfill in Delhi on Friday. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

Delhi riots: HC advances Jamia student's bail plea

Tanha held under UAPA in May last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Delhi High Court on Friday allowed a plea by Jamia Millia Islamia student Asif Iqbal Tanha, arrested under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, seeking advancement of his bail petition in connection with a case related to larger conspiracy in the riots last year.

An HC Bench advanced the date of hearing Mr. Tanha's petition from March 12 to February 25. The court allowed the early hearing application noting that special public prosecutors Amit Mahajan and Amit Prasad fairly did not oppose the plea.

Advocate Sowjanya

Shankaran, representing Tanha, sought advancement of the date of hearing of the petition on the ground that he is a student and has already undergone detention for 263 days.

Mr. Tanha has challenged a trial court's October 26, 2020 order by which his bail application was dismissed on the ground that he allegedly played an active role in the entire conspiracy and that there were reasonable grounds for believing that the allegations against were prima facie true. Mr. Tanha was arrested in the case in May last for allegedly being part of a "premeditated conspiracy" in the riots.

AAP MLA refutes allegations of lying about qualifications

Degrees in maiden name, Tomar tells HC

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

AAP MLA Preeti Tomar on Friday refuted in the Delhi High Court the allegation that she gave a false declaration regarding her educational qualifications in her nomination form.

Responding to the petition challenging her election, Ms. Tomar said her M.Sc and B.Ed degrees were issued in her maiden name, which she changed after her marriage. She claimed that prior to her marriage to former AAP MLA Jitender Singh Tomar, her maiden name was Kumari Tulsa Solanki and she was enrolled under that name in the Raghunath Girls Degree Col-



lege, which is affiliated with the Chaudhary Charan Singh University, earlier known as Meerut University.

Ms. Tomar claimed that she was issued the B.Sc and M.Sc degrees in 1988 and 1990, respectively, from the Meerut University and the B.Ed degree from Chaudhary Charan Singh University in 1995.

20% drop in property circle rates for 6 months, Cabinet decides in meet

Stamp duty may see dip of 1%, says CM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Kejriwal tweeted: "Our students are really missing school. We have to protect them from COVID but also have to get the atmosphere of school back. Slowly we are getting the happiness and light of the school back."

Sisodia attacks Centre

Mr. Sisodia also took a dig at the Central government for clearing a proposal that purportedly gives more power to the Lieutenant Governor.

"The Kejriwal government has broken the old traditions and established world-class schools in Delhi. But the Centre stealthily approved a bill, which aims to give more power to the L-G. This is directly hampering the working of the elected government in Delhi and curtail the ongoing development," he said.

will make our nation proud," Mr. Kejriwal said.

Under the scheme, students studying in Delhi schools – who have secured more than 60% in Class VIII – are eligible for the examination. Students belonging to SC, ST, PH or OBC category will be given a relaxation of up to 5% marks. The Cabinet also decided to completely digitise the Education Department and approved the procurement of 1,200 computers, multi-functional printers and UPSs for all schools, branch offices and district offices under it.

It also approved the constitution of a Group of Ministers to look after a new excise policy under the chairmanship of Deputy CM Manish Sisodia. The group will seek to ensure transparency and ease of doing business to taxpayers and the business sector. The group will examine aspects of the current system of excise duty administration, the Report of the Expert Committee and the suggestions received from the stakeholders and public. It will then suggest a progressive new Excise Policy to the Council of Ministers, which is expected to make a final decision in the coming weeks.

IN BRIEF

'Thousands of quintals of rice rotting in schools'

NEW DELHI

LoP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Friday alleged that thousands of quintals of wheat and rice, meant to be distributed to the poor during the nationwide lockdown, are rotting in schools. In a letter to CM, he said 1,200 quintals wheat, 300 rice were lying in schools of his constituency.

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Elderly couple found dead in Greater Noida

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NOIDA

An elderly couple was found allegedly murdered at their residence in U.P.'s Greater Noida on Friday, the police said.

The body of Suman Nath, 65, was found inside the house while that of her husband Narendra Nath, 70, was recovered from the basement, an officer said.

Greater Noida DCP Rajesh Kumar Singh said the incident took place in Alpha 2 Sector.

"Prima facie, it appears that some people had been invited over to the house for a party where they had consumed liquor. Glasses, liquor or bottle, chowmein, momos and cigarette stubs have been found from the house," Mr. Singh said, adding: "The family members of the deceased have also raised suspicion over the involvement of people who had come to the house for the party."

The DCP said the couple was into money lending and the family members suspect that some borrowers could also be involved in the crime. "It appears the door of the house was opened by the couple and suspects were known to them had a normal entry," he said, adding that an FIR has been registered.

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Change of Name

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BEFORE THE MUNISIFF'S COURT,
CHERTHALA
O.S. No. 467/2018SUMMONS FOR DISPOSAL OF SUIT
(ORDER V RULES 1 AND 5)Plaintiff
Sheelamma, aged about 50, W/o. Shyakumar, Nayaram, Kadakkarpally muri, Kadakkarpally village, Kadakkarpally P.O.Second Defendant
Latika, aged about 57, W/o. Ravendaran, Rebit Bhavan, Padinjare Manakkadom, Thiruvananthapuram south village, Pothukkada P.O.

WHEREAS the plaintiff Sheelamma has instituted a suit against you for partition. You are hereby summoned to appear in this Court in person or by a pleader duly instructed (and able) to answer all such questions, on the 27th day of February 2021 at 11:00 o'clock in the forenoon, to answer the claim; and the day fixed, for your appearance is appointed for the final disposal of the suit, you must be prepared to produce on that day all the witnesses upon whose evidence and all the documents upon which you intend to rely in support of your defense. Take notice that, in default of your appearance on the day before mentioned, the suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

15-01-2021 By Order of Court,
Adv. P. Manoj.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is notified to all that a document No. 1940, in relation to file No. 4, Volume No. 505, on Pages 190 to 195, in the office of the sub-registrar-VA, Haor Khas, New Delhi, in favour of Mr. Vethesh Choudhury W/o Mr. Bishnu Choudhury, Chetna Choudhury, 1st Floor, Green Park Ext, New Delhi, executed by Mr. Sochit Ahluwalia S/o M Asha Ram, Bhola R/o A-1284, Pashupati Vilas, New Delhi has been stand registered in the office of the sub-registrar-VA, Haor Khas, New Delhi on 02-02-2021. The serial no 1299 (Receipt Book A) in the office of sub-registrar-VA, Haor Khas, New Delhi with immediate effect. It is to be noted that the parties mentioned there through Mr. Vethesh Choudhury are considered as invalid with immediate effect also any previous unregistered transaction/s made by them. The parties concerned are advised regarding the same are taken off their own risk and responsibilities for which the Principal/ Title Holder (Mr. Sochit Ahluwalia) shall not be liable and responsible in any manner whatsoever.

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Sub Work-II: Water proofing treatment for platform valley gutter in platform 1 to 6 & Sub Work-III: Repairs to FOB steps in PF No.01 & 02.	
Last date for submission of bids:	Up to 11:00 hrs. of 25.02.2021
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Dated: 03.02.2021

Deputy Chief Engineer (Construction), West Central Railway, Jabalpur for and on behalf of President of India invites following E-Tenders against E-Tender Notice No. DYCEC1REWA-01-2021 Dated: 03.02.2021. The Closing date will be 09.03.2021 at 15.00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers will not be entertained against the above tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. The tender shall be opened at the notified date and time.

Tender No.: DYCEC1REWA-01-2021, Name of work with location: Construction of balance work of foundation and substructure of major bridge at chainage 14719m span of 1/61.0m + 1/12.20m with wing and return wall for existing bridges, retaining walls and other miscellaneous work

in Rewa-Govindgarh section in connection with Rewa-Sidhi new B.G. Rail line project. Approx. cost of the work (In lakhs): ₹ 2,45,93,339.07, Earnest money (In Rs.): ₹ 0.00, Cost of Tender form (In Rs.): ₹ 0.00, Completion period (In months): 08 Months including monsoon, Time and Date of closing & opening of E-tender: Closing at 15.00 hrs. & opening after 15.00 hrs. on 09.03.2021. Tenderers are required to submit their bid online through IREPS website <https://www.ireps.gov.in>. Tenderers are advised to regularly visit IREPS website <https://www.ireps.gov.in> to note any changes/corrigendum. Minimum Eligibility Criteria shall be applicable.

By: Chief Engg. (Const) Rewa West Central Railway, Jabalpur

रेल यात्रा के द्वारा शिकायत होती है।

पर एवं सुरक्षा होती है। पर संपर्क करें।

Locals hold the fort at Palwal

Farmers from M.P. expected to rejoin the protest against the farm laws soon



The protest site in Palwal on Friday. ■ ASHOK KUMAR

bigger protest site than Singhu and Tikri, but we make sure to keep it peaceful and keep anti-social elements away," said Deepak Chaudhary, who has been part of the protests since the sit-in was first started in December. Mr. Chaudhary said the farmers had assured the local administration that they won't lay permanent blockade on the highway, but the traffic would be stopped for three hours on February 6 in response to the farmer unions call.

'Ready to wait'
Rakesh, 27, conceded that a resolution to the issue was not in sight, but the farmers were prepared to wait as long as it took for the government to accept their demands. "Now the people have been awakened. It may take weeks, months or even years, but we are determined not to give up till our demands are met," he said.

Border dispute: Naveen flayed over Kotia 'polls'

Govt. transfers Koraput Collector

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Opposition parties on Friday came down heavily on the Naveen Patnaik government, saying it failed to protect its own land with neighbouring Andhra Pradesh reportedly conducting panchayat elections in three of Odisha villages.

Both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have been at loggerhead over the jurisdiction pertaining to Kotia gram panchayat in Odisha's Koraput district for several decades.

As per reports from Koraput district, Andhra Pradesh is scheduled to hold panchayat election in three villages – Talaganjeipadar, Patnusineri and Phagunseri in Kotia gram panchayat – by changing their names to Ganjeibadar, Pattuchennuru and Pagluchennuru on February 13. Nominations have been filed for the post of sarpanch and ward members from the three villages.

Perturbed over the report, the Odisha government has transferred Koraput Collector Madhusudan Mishra on Thursday evening, a day before Chief Minister Naveen

CAT stays forest officer's transfer order

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GUWAHATI

The Central Administrative Tribunal has stayed the transfer order of an Indian Forest Service officer in Manipur on the ground that he has been transferred too often and in violation of service rules.

N. Ganesh, a 2015 batch IFS officer, had filed a petition for quashing the January 27 government order that sought to transfer him from Divisional Forest Officer in Chandil district to DFO, Division 1 of Soil and Water Conservation Department. The applicant argued that the transfer order was in violation of the IFS Rules of 1966 and that a cadre officer cannot be replaced by a non-cadre officer.

The CAT observed that Mr. Ganesh had been transferred eight times since being appointed as an Assistant Conservator in Manipur on May 22, 2017.

Border dispute: Naveen flayed over Kotia 'polls'

Govt. transfers Koraput Collector

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

Patnaik inaugurated different welfare programmes in Kotia gram panchayat. The 2015-batch IAS officer Muhammed Abdala Akhtar has been asked to assume charge of Koraput collector.

Mr. Patnaik on Friday inaugurated projects worth ₹18 crore in Kotia gram panchayat by videoconferencing. He also laid the foundation stone of a bridge in the bordering panchayat. According to the Chief Minister's Office, projects to the tune of ₹150 crore were being taken up in the area.

'We need a solution'
Leading the attack on government, Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said, "It seems we have not attached seriousness to the Kotia gram panchayat. We are not giving emphasis on connecting with people of Kotia. We need to find a solution by taking all parties into confidence."

Senior Congress leader Narasingha Mishra said, "Another State conducting polls in jurisdiction of Odisha proves that we have a weak leadership."

Report sought over delay in prosecution sanction

STAFF REPORTER

BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha Lokayukt has issued notice to State Chief Secretary over the government not granting sanctions for prosecution of officials under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

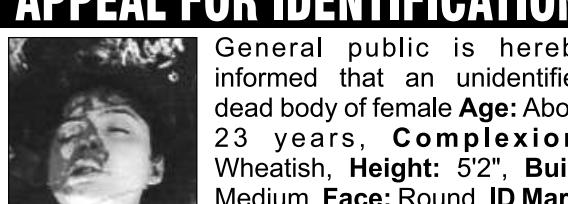
Prasanta Kumar Mohapatra had moved the Lokayukt complaining that he had obtained information under Right To Information that as many as 69 cases relating to corruption against different public servants were pending since 2015 in the General Administration and Public Grievance Department for sanctions regarding their prosecution under Prevention of Corruption Act.

'Deliberate delay'

Mr. Mohapatra alleged that applications were deliberately kept pending for sanction. "Non-issuance of sanction order in time is an offence as per Central Vigilance Commission," he submitted.

The RTI information annexed by Mr. Mohapatra says the State government did not give its sanction in 19 cases in 2020 while 21 cases could not get approval in the year 2019. In 2018, as many as 18 cases were pending for sanction in the General Administration Department.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of female Age: About 23 years, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5'2", Built: Medium, Face: Round, ID Mark: Black mole on left side of neck, was wearing Red Top & Black Jeans, was found at Hirank Pusta Road, Alipur, Delhi, In this regard a DD No. 32A, dated 20.01.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Alipur, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO
P.S. Alipur, Delhi
DP/769/ON/2021
Ph: 011-27202290, 27202265

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL



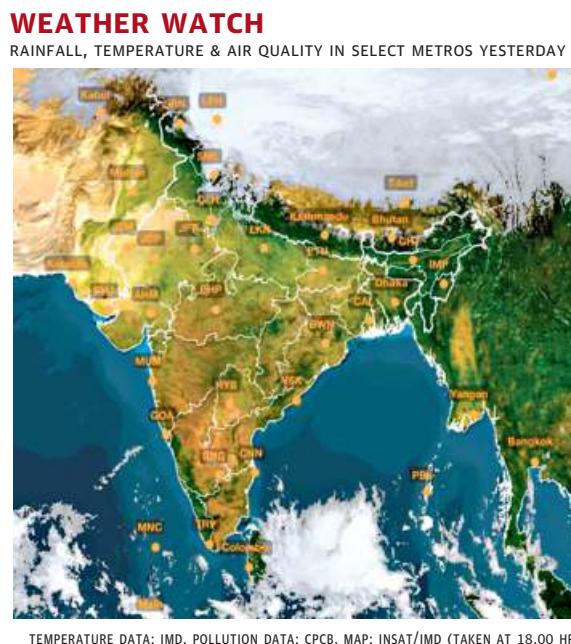
General public is hereby informed that one girl Name: Savitri, D/o Shri Radhe Shyam, R/o H. No. 387, Jhanda Colony, Asola, New Delhi, Age: 16 Years, Height: 5', Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Built: Medium, Wearing: Sky blue colour suit, black pajama and slipper in feet has been missing since 29.07.2020 from her house the area of P.S. Maidan Garhi, New Delhi.

In this regard a FIR No. 211/20, dated 31.07.2020 has been lodged at P.S. Maidan Garhi, New Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this girl but no clue has come to light so far.

Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in
Website: <a href="http://cbi.nic.in



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

Forecast for Saturday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. Dense fog likely in isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	29.4	10.3	—	Kozhikode	—	34.0	24.0
Ahmedabad	29.7	13.3	—	Kurnool	—	32.8	17.5
Aizawl	23.6	9.7	—	Lucknow	0.6	23.0	13.9
Allahabad	24.6	13.2	—	Madurai	—	32.0	20.6
Bangalore	30.4	15.4	—	Mangaluru	—	35.0	22.0
Bhopal	25.1	13.6	—	Mumbai	—	31.1	19.2
Bhubaneswar	31.6	13.0	—	Mysuru	—	31.0	15.0
Chandigarh	12.4	22.1	6.7	New Delhi	—	23.0	6.8
Chennai	30.1	21.2	—	Patna	—	26.6	10.2
Coimbatore	30.8	18.6	—	Port Blair	—	31.0	25.8
Dehradoon	22.0	5.4	—	Puducherry	—	30.2	19.4
Gangtok	15.0	6.5	—	Pune	—	30.8	13.6
Goa	32.3	21.2	—	Raipur	—	31.0	9.5
Guwahati	29.0	12.0	—	Ranchi	—	29.4	10.5
Hubballi	30.0	18.0	—	Shillong	—	20.7	7.0
Hyderabad	31.0	14.9	—	Shimla	56.4	15.0	0.7
Imphal	25.7	7.2	—	Srinagar	—	7.1	1.0
Jaipur	23.3	10.0	—	Thiruvananthapuram	—	34.4	22.7
Kochi	31.8	23.4	—	Tiruchi	—	32.1	19.8
Kohima	19.0	5.5	—	Vijayawada	—	30.7	18.0
Kolkata	29.0	13.1	—	Visakhapatnam	—	30.9	20.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO ₂	NO _x	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE
Ahmedabad	36	.84	.19	69	123	...
Bangalore	.4	.58	.43	70	99	...
Chennai	13	.66	.46	129	102	...
Delhi	18	.99	.62	144	115	...
Hyderabad	.5	104	.35	91	126	...
Kolkata	11	.82	.40	296	237	...
Lucknow	10	.69	.102	211	147	...
Mumbai	.3	.34	.50	274	226	...
Pune	—	.116	.27	176	122	...
Visakhapatnam	11	.88	.18	166	216	...

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Muzaffarpur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 346 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Bagalakot, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 31.

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

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

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

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

ASHOK KUMAR
GURUGRAM

A recent email from her ward's school has left Tripti Singh grappling with many queries and doubts.

The email says that all schools have been directed by the district education officer to collect required information for Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal's unique identity card scheme – Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP).

It further says that it is mandatory for all families to register themselves on the PPP portal to avail the benefits of the social security schemes of the State government.

But Ms. Singh, not availing any of the government social security schemes, is not sure about the objectives of this massive data collection exercise.

She does not know what the government plans to do with this and whether the PPP was going to be accepted as an official identification document in the future in the State. "Like many parents, I do have apprehensions about sharing the details," conceded Ms. Singh, who is the administrator of the *Gurgaon Parents' for Better Education*, a Facebook platform for parents.

Renewed push

Though the PPP scheme was formally launched in July 2019 to achieve Haryana government's vision for "paperless" and "faceless"

delivery of schemes, services and benefits offered by the government, it has got a renewed push over the past few months with the government collecting data

through schools, residents' welfare associations and holding special camps across the State to enrol families, especially those who are likely to avail benefits of government schemes such as below poverty line families, social security benefit recipients etc.

Simultaneously, efforts are on to train district officials and residents are being made aware of the scheme through print and audio visual campaigns and face-to-face interactions.

Focu group discussions are also being held with key stakeholders such as members of residents' welfare associations in the urban areas and other local representatives in urban as well as rural areas.

Families enrolled

Of the estimated 65 lakh families in Haryana, around 48 lakh have voluntarily enrolled for PPP and provided the data on 'self-declaration'

These services and schemes such as social security pensions, ration cards and birth, death, caste and income certificates etc. are being delivered by various departments of the Haryana government.

The government has plans to gradually extend the PPP to all government schemes, services, benefits and subsidies.

The PPP may also be linked to property records in the government database of lands and properties to prevent fraudulent transac-



Privacy concerns over Haryana's ID scheme

Amid concerns over the Parivar Pehchan Patra scheme, the Haryana govt. says enrolment is voluntary. But residents have little choice as delivery of even birth and death certificates is linked to it

mode', claimed the Haryana government.

Any family with a Haryana residential address can enrol for the scheme.

The family ID or PPP, an eight-digit alpha numeric ID, is provided to those who are residents of Haryana. A registration ID is provided to those who live in Haryana but have not completed residency requirements.

The required period for residency has been reduced to five years from 15 years as of January 2021. The registration ID for migrant families will enable the State government to provide benefits such as rations from fair price shops, benefits of labour schemes from the Labour Welfare Board and the Board for Construction Workers and the street vendors' support schemes, and more.

Services delivered

As of now, over 110 services and schemes being delivered to citizens via the SaRa platform have been linked to the PPP scheme.

These services and schemes such as social security pensions, ration cards and birth, death, caste and income certificates etc. are being delivered by various departments of the Haryana government,

which has already been integrated with the PPP, the PPP ID would be required.

Enrolment is voluntary even for government employees at present, said the office of CRID principal secretary.

The PPP may also be linked to property records in the government database of lands and properties to prevent fraudulent transac-



Special camps in Faridabad for enrolment and update of Parivar Pehchan Patra. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tions and clarify ownership.

Integration of the PPP with land records would enable the State to provide "anytime, anywhere" online registration of property transactions instead of visiting the tehsil office. As a first step, it has been announced that from April 1, "anywhere" registration of property transactions is being attempted – the first in the country.

Contradictory reply

Replies to an email from *The Hindu*, the office of principal secretary, Citizen Resources Information Department (CRID), Haryana, clarified that enrolment under the PPP was voluntary, but in case a citizen or a family wished to apply for a service delivered by the Haryana government or any benefit and subsidy under any citizen welfare scheme of the State government, which has already been integrated with the PPP, the PPP ID would be required.

He also expressed concern over reports of plans to cross-link this database with other databases, saying that if the PPP becomes a precondition to getting birth or death certificates, etc. then there is no choice in the matter and it was an offer you can't refuse.

Additionally, in the absence of privacy laws in India, or any indication of data protection Standard Operating Procedures being followed for this exercise, I would worry about

potential abuse of this data – including, but not limited to, its immediate leakage and availability to spammers at the very least, and perhaps more insidious uses," said Mr. Roy.

He added that though various official portals, including the State government website, it is stated that the "data is to be taken with consent", but the State government is virtually mandating that consent via schools.

"It is virtually telling schools and RWAs, please ensure 100% compliance," Mr. Roy said, adding that the State government, in other words, was telling the residents of Haryana that giving this data was optional, but consent was mandatory, and you need to be in this database if you want any services, not just subsidies or benefits from the State but also birth and death certificates. That is beyond bizarre," he said.

The office of PS, CRID, however, said that the data in PPP would be used only for planning purposes and for delivery of government schemes, subsidies, benefits and services and not for any private purpose.

"Only data that is legitimately sought for implementation of government schemes, subsidies, benefits or services is put together and not any other private data."

It also dismissed apprehensions that the State government might profile people on the basis of this data and use it for election campaigns and strategy as "baseless".

The land dispute was in the neighbouring village of Sheikhpur Jafar, he said. A reply would be filed in the HC regarding the petition.

With the unfurling of the tricolour, singing of the national anthem and planting of saplings of various trees like tamarind, mango, neem and guava at the five-acre plot in Dhannipur village here, the formal construction of the Dhannipur mosque project was launched on Republic Day. The soil testing procedure for the structure was also initiated before the actual construction begins.

Dhannipur mosque project land not disputed'

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The trust entrusted with building a mosque and hospital in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village on Friday, quoting a revenue official, stated that the five-acre plot allotted for the project by the Uttar Pradesh government was not disputed land.

The Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) issued the clarification days after two Delhi-based sisters moved the Allahabad High Court claiming ownership of the five-acre plot in Sohawal Tehsil of Ayodhya. They claimed their father, Gyan Chandra Punjabi, had come to India during Partition in 1947 from Punjab and settled in Faizabad (now Ayodhya) district, where he was allegedly allotted a 28-acre land in Dhannipur village by the Nazul Department for five years, which he continued to possess beyond that period. Later, his name was included in the revenue records but it was struck down from the records against which their father filed an appeal before the Additional Commissioner, Ayodhya, which was allowed, they claimed.

The petition could be taken up by the court on February 8.

In the petition, Rani Kapoor alias Rani Baluja and Rama Rani Punjabi demanded that the authorities be restrained from transferring the land to the Sunni Waqf Board till the pendency of dispute before the settlement officer.

Athar Hussain, secretary of the IICF, issued a statement quoting "bandobast adhikari chakbandi" Rajesh Pandey to state that "there is no dispute regarding the Dhannipur mosque land".

The land dispute was in the neighbouring village of Sheikhpur Jafar, he said. A reply would be filed in the HC regarding the petition.

With the unfurling of the tricolour, singing of the national anthem and planting of saplings of various trees like tamarind, mango, neem and guava at the five-acre plot in Dhannipur village here, the formal construction of the Dhannipur mosque project was launched on Republic Day. The soil testing procedure for the structure was also initiated before the actual construction begins.

Thakre for the Deputy Chief Minister's post. However, the MVA allies had agreed on an arrangement whereby the Congress would get the Speaker's post, and Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena) and Mr. Pawar (NCP) would be handed the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister's posts respectively.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pawar accused the BJP of misleading the public on power bills.

Sena protests surging fuel prices

Party workers take out rallies on bullock carts, cycles



New questions

ICMR's serological survey findings may have relevance for modifying vaccination policy

The results of the ICMR's third serological survey to ascertain the spread of COVID-19 show that nearly one in five Indians – about 270 million – may have been infected. The headline findings were publicised at a press conference and it will be a while before granular details of the course of the infection – as was known till December – will be made public in a peer-reviewed journal. However, what is known so far is that compared to August – when data for the second serological survey was announced – there has been a three-fold rise in infections. There has also been a five-fold rise (in percentage terms) of the infection in those aged 10-17 years. The third edition also included a serological survey of doctors, nurses and paramedical staff, revealing that nearly 25% – significantly above the national average – had been infected. Compared to reports of city-focused serology surveys in Delhi and mathematical modelling estimates, the ICMR survey results appear to be more conservative in estimating the true spread. Experts of various hues point to the declining trend in infections since September, and the absence of multiple peaks in coronavirus cases as a pointer to the spread being far wider and speeding up 'herd immunity' – a state when a significant proportion of people in a locale have been infected, thereby retarding future spread. But it would be wrong to derive comfort from this situation. The ICMR emphasises that the results point to a significant number still potentially vulnerable, underscoring the need to be vaccinated and continuing with distancing and masking up. Also, neither this survey nor any city-wide survey has evaluated how long antibodies persist and if certain virus mutant variants can overcome the protection from antibodies.

Given that vaccines are round the corner for the general public and that no district has been immune from the virus, it is now no longer useful to know that 80% of India is still vulnerable. Rather, such surveys must shift focus to asking more granular questions: should the rise in spread among teenagers and children mean that they be considered for vaccination earlier than scheduled? Should companies accelerate trials to test protection in children? Should the rise in rural India – the survey is designed in a way to sample more villages than urban pockets – mean that they be given vaccines earlier? These and many more questions are no doubt already on the minds of specialist researchers but alongside the vaccination drives, the ICMR and the government health facilities must coordinate with a broader spectrum of specialists to investigate questions that can be used to guide and modify vaccination policy.

Terminal declined

India and Japan are important donors, and Sri Lanka must try and salvage the ECT deal

The Rajapaksa government's decision to overturn Sri Lanka's tripartite agreement to develop Colombo's East Container Terminal is a setback to India and Japan. The project, worth an estimated \$500-\$700 million, was a key marker for infrastructure investment in the island nation where Chinese projects are most prominent. More than two-thirds of transhipment at this port is tied to India, making it an important trade and connectivity link. Japan has been a keen supporter of Sri Lanka's growth story, with its loans of about ¥1.1 trillion and grants and technical cooperation of about ¥300 billion. As a joint venture for India and Japan to invest in, the ECT project was also expected to showcase how the two Indo-Pacific partners, and also Quad members, could provide South Asia with viable, transparent and sustainable alternatives for financing and development. The sharp statements from New Delhi and Tokyo now reflect their deep disappointment and their suspicions about the motivations. The ostensible reason for the Rajapaksa government's decision is growing pressure from port union groups which have opposed any foreign participation, and threatened a "work-to-rule" agitation if ECT operations were handed to the Adani group, as proposed. India has also had some misgivings about whether the Rajapaksa brothers, who became President and Prime Minister in 2019-2020, would in fact honour the commitments made by the previous government, given the acrimony between the two governments. Similar commitments made by former PM Ranil Wickremesinghe during a visit to Delhi when he signed an MoU for developing the Eastern city of Trincomalee through oil and infrastructure projects also appear to have fallen by the wayside. The larger question of a possible Chinese role in the ECT decision also hangs over the decision, given that other terminal projects at the Colombo Port such as the Colombo International Container Terminal, have not faced similar pushback. It is also curious that given its financial difficulties, Sri Lanka felt confident in taking a decision guaranteed to upset such important donors.

New Delhi has said it continues to engage Sri Lanka on the ECT issue, although it remains cold to Colombo's alternative offer of developing the West Container Terminal. Over the past year, the Modi government has invested much time and resources to India-Sri Lanka ties, including a new credit line, currency swap agreement, and COVID-19 assistance and vaccines. NSA Ajit Doval and EAM S. Jaishankar have visited Colombo more than once, and Mr. Modi has hosted President Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda. India has also set much store by its partnership with Japan, which could be a template for similar projects, as a counter to China's BRI. There is much at stake for all three countries to derail the partnership. It is in all their interest, but primarily Colombo's, to find a compromise formula to salvage a deal that has far-reaching consequences for the region.

Beating down critical journalism, creative freedom

The curious deference of the judiciary is part of the precariousness of the rights to freedom in India today



SUKUMAR MURALIDHARAN

Riots in India's capital city on a day reserved for the celebration of the Republic, was a new low in unravelling political concord. Within days of that trauma, points of entry into Delhi were barricaded with layers of concrete and steel, interwoven with vicious spools of concertina wire. Some locations had lethal iron nails embedded into the road and trenches dug deep to prevent the ingress of farmers long encamped around the capital city, protesting recent legislation that goes by the title of "agricultural reforms".

Media clampdown

A few days after the riots, expectations that public resentment would enable the forceful dispersal of protests seemed belied. Active efforts to deter critical reporting were by then under way. Nine senior journalists were charged under the law of sedition, for reporting the ambiguous circumstances of the sole fatality in the riots.

A young freelance journalist was arrested and charged with lacking appropriate media credentials. Even as he was granted bail, in a rare exception to what is becoming the general rule of denial, the Home Ministry decreed that only journalists with press credentials granted by the central government could legitimately report on the farmers' agitation.

A number of social media pages run by newspapers and websites were blocked by executive order. For media platforms that did not relent, the legal process of secur-

ing injunctions began, along with an unsubtle threat that employees of the social media company, Twitter, could face arrest for failure to comply.

The tragedy of a government that remains deaf to the anxieties of a significant section of Indian citizens was transformed into farce, when formidable machines of propaganda were mobilised on February 3, to push back against two inconsequential Twitter posts, by a music artiste from the United States and an environmental campaigner from Sweden.

Imperfections made worse

Events since Republic Day constitute an unprecedented assault on three of the "rights to freedom" granted under Article 19 of the Constitution: free speech, free movement, and peaceful assembly. Like several other Articles in the Fundamental Rights chapter, Article 19 includes a *non obstante* clause: notwithstanding all its promises, each of the rights comes with certain conditions attached.

These clauses were in most part inserted by the First Amendment to the Constitution, when the government of a fledgling nation sought to negotiate the fine line between freedom and necessity. It was a manifestly imperfect job of resolving a conundrum that has defied the most determined philosophical inquiries. And those imperfections have been compounded by decades of judicial default and executive caprice.

The Supreme Court has spoken up in its lucid interludes, but often retreated rather than face down obvious abuses. In matters of sedition, the first impulse of the judiciary in the afterglow of the Republic's emergence, was to strike the law down. Article 13 of the Constitution annulled every law that was inconsistent with the fundamental rights chapter and the Patna High Court was on solid ground when it



held the sedition clause in criminal law unconstitutional. A few years later, in a milieu more sensitive to possibilities of disorder, the Supreme Court reinstated the law, but held it applicable only to "activities as would be intended ... to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resort to violence".

In 2012, the Gujarat High Court upheld this precedent in a matter involving the country's largest English language newspaper, *The Times of India*, after sedition charges brought by the Commissioner of Police in Ahmedabad city. It also added that the Constitution protected strong commentary on "measures or acts of the Government, or its agencies, so as to ameliorate the condition of the people or to secure the cancellation or alteration of those acts by lawful means".

It took the newspaper and three employees, four years to secure full discharge. A luxury by the standards of the judicial system, this is one denied to most independent journalists and smaller media houses, entrapped in the coils of whimsical prosecution by police and other actors anxious to evade public scrutiny.

State's new weapon

The nine journalists charged after the violence at the Red Fort have been spared arrest, but that possibility will hang heavy over their practice for years, potentially inducing a "play-safe attitude". The

State government in Uttar Pradesh, inattentive to even these niceties, has used arrest as literally the first recourse against critical journalism.

Siddique Kappan, who works with a number of news organisations and is a member of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists, was arrested by the police while on his way to Hathras early in October, to report on the death after alleged sexual assault, of a young girl of the Dalit community. He was charged with sedition and other offences, and the statutes invoked, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, could potentially result in indefinite detention.

Angle of religion

Politics of religious offence constitute another clear threat to freedom of speech and expression. The arrest of a stand-up comic, Munawar Faruqui, in Indore, for jokes that he did not crack, represents a particular depth of absurdity. He was denied bail in successive hearings and the Madhya Pradesh High Court was particularly severe in its strictures about an intent which remained unexpressed. He finally was granted bail after over a month in detention, by the Supreme Court.

In deciding the S. Rangarajan versus Jagjivan Ram case in 1989, the Supreme Court declined to embrace a doctrine of censorship. The benchmark for judging the potential for offence had to be a "reasonable" person and not someone of "weak and vacillating" mind. Yet, in the case of the TV serial, *Tandav*, whose producers and cast face charges despite multiple apologies, the Court has now chosen to underline the conditional nature of the free speech right. An actor seeking exemption from arrest because he was only a paid professional, was told that he should not "play a role which

hurts religious sentiments".

Another blow

In the matter of regulating the right to freedom of movement, the Supreme Court has encountered unanticipated turbulence. Last year, while hearing a petition seeking the dispersal of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh area, the Court ruled that expressions of dissent should take place in "designated places only". When called upon to apply the same principle to ongoing farmers' protests, the Court balked. A ruling that the protests were unconstitutional would have been the legal basis for a coercive dispersal of the farmers. Hesitant about that, the Court sought to play problem solver, nominating a team of mediators to find the solution the government had set its face against. It did not end well for the parties involved, and least of all, for public perceptions of the integrity of judicial institutions.

Asymmetry in the application of the law, when charges are brought against partisans of the ruling party is another feature, widely commented on. While hearing a recent matter involving hate speech, the Chief Justice of India observed that the Court is trying to discourage litigation under Article 32, which enables any citizen to invoke the writ jurisdiction of the higher judiciary when fundamental rights are threatened. This ambivalence towards an article that B.R. Ambedkar called the "heart and soul of the Constitution", and the curious judicial deference to the political executive, are central parts of the story of how precarious the rights to freedom are today.

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A prisoner's tragedy, a nation's shame

The Perarivalan case is an example of state agencies sacrificing the lives of those with a 'peripheral role' in a conspiracy



ANUP SURENDRANATH & TRISHA CHANDRAN

Perarivalan has been in prison for almost 30 years for his role in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi during the 1991 election campaign. At the heart of the injustice being inflicted on Perarivalan is that government agencies have continued to insist on his incarceration despite being unsure of his role. It really is a classic case of state agencies being unable to identify and arrest those at the heart of the conspiracy while sacrificing the lives of those who might have had a peripheral role at worst.

Prolonged injustice

The charges of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against Perarivalan for terrorist offences under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, or TADA, were upheld by the trial court along with the conspiracy to commit murder under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Over the course of many rounds of litigation, his conviction only for the conspiracy to commit murder under the IPC has been sustained and he has served 30 years as part of his life imprisonment sentence (his death sentence was commuted in February 2014). But that procedural narration does not capture the profound injustice of Perarivalan's incarceration.

It is incredible that despite the Supreme Court dropping the TADA charges, his confession which

At the core of his conviction is his confession to a police officer, a violent legacy of the TADA that was carried forward under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). While confessions to a police officer are inadmissible as evidence under the Indian Evidence Act (to protect people from coerced police confessions), terrorism legislations such as TADA and POTA made confessions to the police admissible as long as it was made to an officer not lower than the rank of Superintendent of Police.

A suspect 'confession'

The CBI's main weapon against Perarivalan was his confession to V. Thiagarajan (SP, CBI) where he allegedly confessed to his role in procuring a car battery for the main conspirator and purchasing two 9-volt batteries that were used in making the bomb to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi. All of this was damning until Mr. Thiagarajan came out in November 2013 and made the startling revelation that he had not recorded Perarivalan's 'confession' accurately.

In a sworn affidavit filed before the Supreme Court in December 2017, Mr. Thiagarajan stated that he had omitted to record Perarivalan's statement that he did not know the purpose for which the battery was being procured. It was a glaring omission that completely changed the nature of Perarivalan's involvement. In effect, Perarivalan was convicted based on a manipulated confession to a police officer.

It is incredible that despite the Supreme Court dropping the TADA charges, his confession which



was admissible only due to provisions of the TADA was then used to convict him for IPC offences.

Beyond the untenable legal basis of Perarivalan's conviction, details of the broader investigation into Rajiv Gandhi's assassination only exacerbates the injustice. Justice M.C. Jain's Report (Jain Commission Inquiry) to Parliament in March 1998 identified massive gaps in the CBI's investigation, including lack of clarity on the source and the making of the bomb.

To address these concerns, the CBI constituted the Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) in December 1998 to conduct further investigations into the larger conspiracy and the origins of the human belt bomb used in the assassination. Over two decades, the MDMA has been submitting reports in sealed covers to the TADA Court and Perarivalan has been denied access to these. However, the MDMA has repeatedly stated that Perarivalan and the other accused are not part of these ongoing investigations. In essence, we have a situation where there is an acknowledgment at the highest levels that the origins and the making of the bomb remain unknown, and yet Perarivalan continues to

be in prison for purchasing batteries whose use remains a mystery.

Despite all these indications of tenuous connections to the larger conspiracy, Perarivalan and his mother, Arputham, have been on a tireless crusade to end his incarceration. Having served 30 years of life imprisonment for the conspiracy to murder, his effort to get a remission under the Code Of Criminal Procedure was rejected by the Central Government in April 2018.

However, Perarivalan continued to be entitled to have his pardon considered by the Governor of Tamil Nadu under Article 161 of the Constitution. His application for a pardon had been pending with the Governor since December 2015 and under the Constitution, the Governor is bound by the aid and advice of the State government in the exercise of pardon powers.

Meanwhile, the central government employed obfuscation as a strategy to prolong Perarivalan's incarceration. Having initially maintained that the issue of pardon was solely between the Governor and Perarivalan, the Centre took a constitutionally untenable argument before the Supreme Court in December 2020 that it was the President of India who had the power to consider Perarivalan's pardon.

Then on January 21, the Centre submitted to the Supreme Court that the Governor would take a decision on Perarivalan's pardon within a matter of days.

On February 4, the Centre informed the Court that the Governor had finally considered Perarivalan's pardon and had decided

that the President alone had the power to consider such an application. It is a shocking abdication of a constitutional duty and a blatantly unconstitutional manoeuvre to ignore the advice of the State government, which the Governor is constitutionally bound to follow.

Life in jail

Perarivalan was 19 years old when he was imprisoned, and 30 years later is still fighting for his freedom. In those 30 years, he has earned BCA and MCA degrees from the Indira Gandhi National Open University along with completing a whole host of certificate courses involving two-wheeler mechanics, managerial skills, nutrition etc. In his book, *An Appeal from the Death Row*, Perarivalan says that MDMA will ultimately find that he had nothing to do with making the bomb. He then asks us, who can ever give him back his life. We must ask ourselves why Perarivalan continues to be incarcerated when we know that his confession was manipulated, that the government agencies themselves admit not knowing the origins of the bomb, and that Perarivalan is not part of the investigations on the bomb. Is it our fear that releasing Perarivalan would be a collective admission of our failure to successfully investigate the assassination of a former Prime Minister? It is cruel to ask Perarivalan to pay for our failures with his own life.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

'Defaming' India

What is this "international conspiracy" that India is facing? Has the government been rattled by some messages posted by a singer and an environmental activist?

Those who matter in the present government, instead of trying to arrive at a middle ground, have now gone and cut power, shut off water, shut down the Internet and even blocked passageways for the protesting farmers with barricades and impediments, the kind of which may not even exist along our international

borders. This does not speak well of a federal system, where States have not even been informed or consulted as to what to do or what this "international conspiracy" is. Is the government trying to deflect attention?

HEMACHANDRA BASAPPA, Bengaluru

This does not speak well of a federal system, where States have not even been informed or consulted as to what to do or what this "international conspiracy" is. Is the government trying to deflect attention?

SOMNATH SENGUPTA, Lorong Chuan, Singapore

■ The remarkable determination displayed by the agitating farmers is a new chapter in the history of struggles seen in post-independent India. What is striking is the lessons the rest of India has to learn from the so-called less educated, less

intelligent, less modern and less civilised sections of our society. Saner counsel should prevail upon the government to show courage to withdraw the ill-conceived farm Acts.

S.V. VENUGOPALAN, Chennai

■ When Vladimir Putin jailing Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and Aung San Suu Kyi being thrown out by the junta are viewed as cases of rights violations, how is embedding nails on roads and erecting barricades less obnoxious? If Greta Thunberg and other celebrities notice these, how can they be blamed?

THOMAS K.E., Hyderabad

■ The remarkable determination displayed by the agitating farmers is a new chapter in the history of struggles seen in post-independent India. What is striking is the lessons the rest of India has to learn from the so-called less educated, less

intelligent, less modern and less civilised sections of our society. Saner counsel should prevail upon the government to show courage to withdraw the ill-conceived farm Acts.

K. PRADEEP, Chennai

Nature's lessons

Farmers, the state, and a rising tide

February 6 dawns amid extraordinary security arrangements made by the government against a call by protesting farmers to halt national and State highways. **Jatin Anand and Anuj Kumar** report on the preparations and assess the shifting realities

The capital wears the look of a city fortified and battle-ready. As far as the eyes can see are reams and reams of razor wires, which, as a senior police officer points out, have their origins in the trench warfare of World War I. Metal and concrete barricades and panels of nails fastened by cement to restrict breach by vehicles display the readiness of the state to take on the farmers. The three-hour *chakka jam* (gridlock) on Saturday announced by a section of protesting farmers on all State and national highways around and beyond Delhi – the first “big event” since a proposed march to Parliament on February 1 was postponed – will be a test of self-discipline for the agitating farmers, and of nerves for security personnel manning veritable fortifications behind metal and concrete walls.

Access to protest sites, for protesters, local residents and journalists alike, is controlled either directly through security personnel, especially at Singhu border, which is regarded as the headquarters of the movement, or indirectly via elongated routes through dirt roads replete with recently dug pits and concrete slabs. The Delhi Police, commandos, the Rapid Action Force (RAF) and riot police are on guard.

Internet services are restricted at all three locations, earthmoving equipment is on standby to make “modifications” to the topography of the area as and when required, alongside riot control vehicles. Heavy slabs – longish metal ones placed on large trucks under the Tikri Border metro station, concrete ones topped with iron bar pieces jutting out from the top at the Singhu border, and smaller ones on either side of beds of nails on both the main roads leading to and on the Ghazipur flyover – have been requisitioned.

Over two months since the mostly peaceful protests began, an interlude of a few hours on January 26 witnessed unprecedented violence at several locations, including the Red Fort, during the tractor rally taken out by farmers. The police say it was “a breach of trust” and a deliberate violation of terms related to the rally agreed upon by them and leaders of the farmer unions, and that has necessitated the *bandobast* (arrangements) this time.

As the ceremonial parade on Rajpath got underway on January 26, the ‘Kisan Gantantra Parade’, too, commenced around 10 a.m. on routes on the peripheries of the capital. However, within a few minutes, reports of farmers aboard their tractors attempting to breach the boundaries began pouring in from all sides.

Water cannons were used and tear gas shells were lobbed to stop the agitating farmers’ advance as tractors driven by men with faces covered rammed into DTC buses meant to demarcate the “permitted” route; men poured out from “private vehicles” to clash with security personnel and damage road dividers at Mukarba Chowk, Nangloi and Singhu border, among other locations.

Soon, tractors and vehicles had breached the route on the UP Link road near the Akshardham Temple and had driven on towards ITO, the arterial junction between Old and Lutyens’ Delhi. Those who were stalled clashed brazenly with police personnel. Some attempted to run them over with their tractors under the mural of a smiling Mahatma Gandhi adorning one side of the old Delhi Police headquarters. One of the protesters died allegedly after his tractor overturned at a high speed.

In the meantime, others, many of them on foot, had reached the Red Fort.

As police personnel, a majority of whom had reported for duty almost 18 to 24 hours ago as per the standard protocol preceding Republic Day arrangements, scrambled onto the scene, a mob breached the gates of the 383-year-old fort, rampaging through its vicinity, and oversaw the hurried hoisting of the ‘Nishan Sahib’ flag on one of its poles amid cheers of triumph.

Close to 400 police personnel, including both men and women, were injured, some seriously, during the course of the day. Almost one-fourth of these injuries were reportedly inflicted at the Red Fort. Of these, a sizeable number were suffered as police personnel fell or chose the relative safety of jumping over 15 feet into the dry moat along the periphery of the fort to escape the sticks, batons and other improvised weapons of the mob.

Aftermath and resurrection

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella organisation of 41 farmer unions, alleged that some “anti-social elements” had infiltrated their otherwise peaceful movement. It called off the tractor march as the police administration took stock of its injured personnel and went into a huddle over the way forward at what a police source termed “the highest levels”.

“Chupsals (village meetings) and panchayats were convened throughout the night across villages in Haryana, Punjab



Workers constructing concrete barricades at Singhu border on Friday; (below) local residents near Ghazipur are forced to take longer routes due to blockades on highways. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA, V.V. KRISHNAN



and Uttar Pradesh, and what had happened was discussed at length till noon the next day. We realised we had been betrayed not by our own but by the government,” said Suresh Dhaka, a resident of Haryana.

Two days later, a video of a crying Rakesh Tikait, the national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), followed by his emotional appeal to rural India to join the movement to strengthen it, instilled a new-found resolve among the agitating farmers.

An old saying

There is a saying in western Uttar Pradesh: *‘Jat mara tab janioy jab tehervi ho jaye’* (Don’t consider a Jat dead before 13 days have elapsed). On the evening of January 28, the Ghaziabad administration realised its import as Tikait’s emotional outburst reinvigorated the agitation that was seemingly on its last legs at the Ghazipur border. Shaken and demoralised after the violent incidents of January 26, wherein some protesters lost in more ways than one, the farmers had begun to pack their bags, and those who were left were waiting to be detained after being caned.

Rajveer Singh, State vice-president of the BKU, says he had warned the administration that “hum 500 se 5,000 kabhi bhi ho sakte hain” (we could swell within hours), “but that day even we were not sure”. Senior members of the BKU said they had conveyed to officials that they should arrest the protesters with *pakke kagaz* (proper charges), failing which, they would not vacate the almost 3-km space on the Delhi-Meerut expressway.

“Otherwise, our position would have been worse than that of V.M. Singh [of the Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan] and Bhanu [BKU-Bhanu],” said a senior member. While Singh had left the protest site the previous day after blaming Tikait for mismanagement on Republic Day during the tractor rally, Bhanu Pratap Singh of the BKU-Bhanu vacated the protest site at Chilla on the Delhi-Noida border citing the violence.

As images of a teary-eyed Tikait flashed across western Uttar Pradesh after the Additional District Magistrate served him an eviction notice under Section 133 of the CrPC, the Ghaziabad administration started getting inputs about movement of farmers from neighbouring districts.

Police action, that had seemed imminent, was ultimately called off. On January 28, there had been indications: water and electricity supplies were cut off a night before and CCTVs were taken off.

Within hours of the video, Tikait be-

came a national figure and Ghazipur no longer had to play second fiddle to Singhu and Tikri.

With his rival gone, Tikait, who had been saying that a section of farmers had let the movement down on January 26, took no time to embrace Sikh farmers from the Terai belt who were mobilised by V.M. Singh, and declared unflinching support for the community.

With his rustic wit and combative demeanour, Tikait handled both a prying media and impatient farmers with ease, but after January 28, he also shed the pro-BJP image, justifying his place in the coordination committee.

Galvanising fresh recruits not only from villages in western Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, but also from other protest sites in the city, Tikait’s appeal, however, underlined the fact that a peaceful resistance against alleged attempts at besmirching and defaming the movement would be crucial.

“This protest will continue till October-November; we have told the government this categorically and we have enough supplies to last us till then. *Jab tak kanoon wapas nahin, tab tak kisan wapas nahin* (There will be no farmers’ return home till the laws aren’t taken back),” Tikait announced on February 2. Apart from the tears that turned the ideological protest against the Central government’s farm laws into a fight for the dignity of farmers, Tikait’s allegation that the administration wanted the farmers to be beaten up by a crowd led by a BJP MLA decidedly turned the tide that night. It is not clear whether the BJP MLA from Loni, Nand Kishore Gurjar, was present at the spot – Ghaziabad Police say they are still verifying the charge – but his videos and a letter to the Union Home Minister, wherein he suggested that he and his supporters be allowed to remove the farmers from the protest site, gave BKU enough material to mobilise sympathy.

However, Tikait still needed numbers on the ground. That came after he got a call from Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Ajit Singh, followed by a tweet of support from the party’s vice-president, Jayant Chaudhary. Most of the farmers that reached Ghazipur that night were supporters of the RLD from neighbouring areas. However hard BKU leaders try to describe themselves as “*araajnaitik*” (apolitical), for Jat farmers in western Uttar Pradesh, the BKU and the RLD had been two faces of the same coin, until the BJP started making inroads into the community, particularly after the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013.

Before January 26, the impression in the region was that farmers were being misguided like Muslims during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests. The vernacular frontline media was not playing its part in explaining the clauses of the laws to the public,” says Dr. Sharma. But after January 26, he says, awareness spread through social media and the youth were mobilised quickly through *khpans*.

“Unlike rallies, to which people are brought, here, people come out of their own will,” says Yudhvir Singh, general secretary of the BKU. While in urban

areas colleges are key sites for mobilisation of youth, in rural areas, it is the panchayats, he adds. “Panchayats continue to play an important role in peasant mobilisation, irrespective of caste. A large section of protesters at Ghazipur border may be from Jat families; food and other material support is being provided by people of all castes in a village. Even student leaders attend them,” says Dr. Sharma.

Considered close to senior BJP leader and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Rajnath Singh, who had supported the BKU in protests during the Congress regime, Tikait had told *The Hindu* in December 2020 that he expected Rajnath Singh to join the talks at a later stage. But that didn’t happen and farmers who supported the BJP in the last two Lok Sabha elections were left without a political cover.

Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan, the sitting MP from Muzaffarnagar, might be an effective polarising figure in the region, but he did not carry enough social or political weight to pull the farmers back from Ghazipur. Locals say the Tikait are on a first-name basis with the Minister, who is a member of the Balyan *khap* which Naresh Tikait heads, and yet, he could not force the farmers to return.

Social impact

After 2014, the BJP has tried to build a young, more Hindutva-friendly leadership among Jats. Locals say they were given the patronage of the administration during face-offs with other communities, but the elderly are still loyal to the clan of former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, who created a robust social alliance among Jats, Yadavs, Muslims, and Gurjars in the 1970s.

“The farmer, who was free of the communal virus even during the Ayodhya movement, fell prey to it after the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots. There was communalisation of farmers in the region and a particular party benefited from it,” says Sokhendra Sharma, assistant professor in the History department in Digambar Jain Degree College in Baraut. The town saw a huge pan-

chayat of various *khpans* last week.

Dr. Sharma says there has been tremendous social mobilisation through *khpans* after January 26 as the emotional appeal by Tikait, youngsters got connected with the protest.

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On the slow mobilisation in western Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Sharma says that though census figures indicate that around 60% of the population is engaged in farming, the reality is different. “The direct involvement of the population in farming in this region has reduced considerably over the years as after globalisation, the children of farmers migrated to cities doing all kinds of jobs but not farming. Though they are from farming families, they are not aware of the interests of farmers.”

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“The contentious farm laws have given the youngsters a jolt because, as Rakesh Tikait says, they have put their identity as a farmer at stake. They were facing issues such as rise in electricity and diesel prices, stray cattle, and non-payment of sugarcane dues, but after the farm laws, they feared that their lands would be taken away by corporates. The apprehensions also brought back those who have agriculture as their secondary source of income.”

“There are clauses that the government would intervene only if there is 50% increase over the previous year’s price in case of non-perishable goods and 100% rise over previous year’s price of perishable goods. It is against both the farmer and the consumer,” says Yudhvir Singh.

Suddenly, old-timers say, youth have begun to realise why the elders used to say never allow *diya aur bati* (lamp and wick), the symbol of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the predecessor of the BJP to enter villages, as it is a party that keeps traders’ interest first.

Political ambitions

Politically, it is still an open game that depends on Tikait’s political ambitions after the new-found glory. Having bitten the dust on the hustings twice in the past, the seniors in the outfit hold that he is better placed as a farmer leader, with Jayant Chaudhary taking the political charge.

Naresh Tikait, the less combative of the two brothers, understands that he, too, the protest could be termed as a protest of Jat farmers, a label he could afford when the elections in the State are still a year away. Hence, he is not making any statements against the BJP leadership in the region and is telling reporters that Balyan must have his political compulsions, and otherwise, he is with them.

Old-timers in the community do not foresee a profitable alliance between the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the RLD, unless SP chief Akhilesh Yadav cedes west Uttar Pradesh to the RLD. “The Jats still hold a grudge against Mayawati Singh Yadav for betraying the trust of his mentor Charan Singh by not giving his son Ajit Singh his share in the former Prime Minister’s political legacy,” says a senior BKU member. It was seen during the Bulandshahr Sadar by-

poll in 2020, where the RLD candidate came a cropper. But those in favour of the alliance cite the Kairana win of 2018.

Response to fortification

Rakesh Tikait describes the turning of protest sites into citadels as a well-thought-out plan on the part of the police and the Centre, as that will only inconvenience people, which the authorities will then use to mobilise the public against farmers.

Already, on WhatsApp groups of residential societies in Ghaziabad, messages that question using the word ‘*annadata*’ (food-provider) for farmers have begun to surface. An argument is being promoted that the so-called ‘food-providers’ get many subsidies.

On Friday evening, the BKU called off the *chakka jam* proposed for Saturday in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand citing ‘prevailing conditions’ and ongoing agricultural work in the region. Dharmendra Malik, media in-charge of the BKU, said the conditions in the two States are not conducive for the protest.

“Now, members of BKU will give a memorandum to district officials in these two States. In the rest of the country, the call for the *chakka jam* remains as it is,” he said. The outfit has already kept Delhi out of Saturday’s protest. Sources in the BKU say to counter propaganda, it was proposed to keep Delhi-NCR out of the protest, but ultimately, only Delhi was kept out. Tikait says he had inputs that violence could be fomented in Uttar Pradesh by breaking windshields of cars during the *chakka jam*.

Sources say the BKU is being careful as those who are averse to the farmers’ movement could foment trouble during the protest. “We have already proved that we can mobilise hundreds of people within hours. So, there is no point in pursuing the protest belligerently. We know we are in for a long haul,” said a senior member.

In a touch of Gandhigiri, Tikait on Friday also made a flowerbed on the Ghaziabad border in response to nails fixed into roads by the Delhi Police. Farmers have been urged to distribute water and food items like groundnuts and jaggery among people who get stuck in the jam.

Music and noise

No movement is complete without music. Every evening, as the sun sets at the Ghaziabad border, young Jats assemble around tractors fitted with huge speakers and dance away to artiste Ajay Hooda’s “Modiji thari top kde hum dilli aage” (Modiji, where is your canon? We have reached Delhi). Played in a loop, it is not the Punjabi beats, but the song’s biting lyrics – *digital hogi duniya sari, annadata hu bhikari* (the world has turned digital but the food provider is reduced to a beggar) – that pointedly capture the anguish of farmers.

However, as the dance began to border on hooliganism and split onto the streets, the discipline of the protest has been denting. After a couple of days, senior members of the community had to step in to restore order. “We have to constantly fight the stereotype: I told you they are unruly and can go berserk any time,” said Rajveer Singh. So, on Friday, one could also hear the sound of Mohammed Rafi’s “Aaj mausam bada beimaan hai” emanating from tents.



FROM PAGE ONE

Farmers' road blockade to exclude Delhi, U.P.

BKU leader Rakesh Tikait told reporters he had inputs that violence could be foisted in U.P. and the border areas of Uttarakhand by breaking windshields of cars during the *chakka jam*.

Prevailing conditions in the two States are not conducive for the protest, said BKU-Tikait spokesperson Dharmendra Malik. "Now, members of BKU will give a memorandum to district officials in these two States. In the rest of the country, the call for the *chakka jam* remains as it is," he said, adding that there were also concerns about a harmful impact on ongoing agricultural work by sugarcane

farmers. Mr. Malik said the move should be seen only as a preventive measure and not a sign of the weakening of movement.

"It has been decided to take one lakh farmers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand on standby," Mr. Tikait said, in a statement. The decision was taken after consultations with Balbir Singh Rajewal, who heads another faction of the BKU in Punjab.

"There is a fear expressed by those at Ghazipur that the BJP and RSS may cause some problems in the guise of farmers," said Darshan Pal Singh, president of the Krantikari Kisan Union.

No flaws in farm laws, Tomar tells Rajya Sabha

"We brought the Trade Act, a provision was made that areas outside APMC will be trade area, can be a farmer's home also. It will not attract any tax. Within APMC, States levy tax. The Centre's act abolishes the tax outside APMC and State forces you to pay tax. I want to ask Punjab farmers, we have freed the tax system, so you should revolt against someone who is taxing you or who is abolishing the tax system. I want to request the farmers, we are committed to farmers, we have res-

pected them, called them and spoke to them 11 times. I have never used any objectionable word against them. I only asked them the objectionable part of the law. We assured them that APMC will not be abolished. That we are ready for amendment should not mean that there are shortcomings in the laws," Mr. Tomar said.

He said farmers were being misled that the law will take away their land, adding that there is not a single provision in the contract farming law that says this.

Munawar Faruqui gets ad-interim bail

Arrest was not a tool for harassment, it said.

"Tell us, Mr. Kirpal, did the police follow Section 41 before they arrested him?" Justice Nariman asked advocate Saurabh Kirpal, who appeared for Mr. Faruqui.

"No, My Lord... not at all," Mr. Kirpal replied.

"Then that is all is needed for granting bail," Justice Nariman said, before issuing notice to the M.P. police to

explain their actions.

"The procedure under Section 41 was not followed despite the Supreme Court having adumbrated the necessity of it in the Arnesh Kumar judgment of 2014," Justice Nariman observed, before granting the bail.

On January 28, the Madhya Pradesh High Court refused bail, forcing the comedian to appeal to the top court.

Govt. ready to give UPSC aspirants another chance

"The relaxation shall not create any vested right whatsoever or any other purported right on ground of parity or otherwise, in favour of any other set/class of candidates at any time in the future," the note said.

The Bench asked the government to circulate the note. "We do not have copy of this note... You have made a very involved statement. There are some conditions in it too," Justice Khanwilkar told Mr. Raju.

"The condition is only

age-related," Mr. Raju responded.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, for some aspirants, sought time to read the note and see if a consensus could be arrived at on the issue.

"They [aspirants' side] must examine it [note]," Justice Khanwilkar said.

The court then scheduled the case for Monday.

Government figures submitted in the court show that over 3,300 candidates would benefit from the one-time relaxation.

Pfizer India withdraws vaccine application

Moreover, Pfizer India hadn't spelt out a plan to generate safety and immunogenicity data in the Indian population, the committee noted.

"Pfizer will continue to engage with the authority and resubmit its approval request with additional information as it becomes available in the near future," a statement said.

"Pfizer remains committed to making its vaccine available for use by the Government in India and to pursuing the requisite pathway for emergency use authorisation that enables the availability of this vaccine for any future deployment," a company statement said.

The Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine employs a novel technology – in the form of small piece of genetic material from the coronavirus called a messenger ribonucleic acid – to make a vaccine for the coronavirus. In-

terim Phase-3 efficacy trials in Americans showed that those inoculated were 95% more likely to be protected than those who didn't take the vaccine.

After being approved in the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union, Pfizer also applied for the vaccine to be made available in India under 'emergency use listing' conditions. This is the clause under which Covishield and Covaxin have been approved in India. While the latter has been administered to over 4.5 million Indians, Pfizer India had been given an opportunity at least thrice, since late December, to appear before the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of the DCGI to furnish evidence enough for an approval.

However, Pfizer hadn't appeared multiple times, Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said early last month.

Unions oppose move to sell Vizag steel plant

They demand that Centre rescind the proposal

SUMIT BHATTACHARJEE

VISAKHAPATNAM

The proposed strategic sale of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the corporate entity of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, appears to be heading towards a showdown between trade unions and the Union government.

On Friday, hundreds of VSP employees, affiliated to various trade unions, organised a rally from Kurmannapalem to the Gandhi statue near the GVMC office, to stage a protest and demand the immediate rescinding of the proposal.

The steel plant was set up after a sustained agitation in the early 1970s under the slogan 'Visakha Ulku - Andhrula Hakku', and 32 people lost their lives in the struggle.

They would not let the strategic sale happen, said CITU State president Ch. Narasimha Rao.

All trade unions such as



United front: Members of various trade unions taking out a rally opposing the privatisation of the steel plant in Visakhapatnam on Friday. ■ K.R. DEEPAK

CITU, AITUC, INTUC and even YSRC Party Trade Union have joined hands to stage the protest and they collectively took a decision to oppose the sale.

Speaking at the protest camp, Mr. Narasimha Rao said the plan to privatise RINL was sown since day one of its inception. But somehow, the employees and the

trade unions didn't allow it to happen.

"Today, there are over 30,000 direct and contract workers engaged with the steel plant and lakhs of others are associated with the plant in some way. Their families depend on the well-being of the plant and as long as it remains with the government," said Bose Babu of the AITUC.

The union leaders said the proposed joint venture with South Korean steel maker POSCO was only eyewash and the real intent was 100% sale, said G. Venkat Rao of the INTUC.

According to Mr. Narasimha Rao, the Union government was already in talks with a number of private steel makers such as POSCO, Tata, Jindal and ArcelorMit-

Drop plans of privatising RINL, TDP urges Centre

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party on Friday urged the Centre to shelve its proposal to privatise Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) – the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

TDP leader Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu in his letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman wrote: "The oft-cited rationale for privatisation is that RINL has been reporting losses. But RINL was debt-free in 2011-12. It reported losses in the last four years due to huge interest payments to service debts that VSP has had to take on to fund its expansion plans for which the Centre did not invest fresh equity."

TDP MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna Rao also joined the protest and said they would also oppose the move.

Visakhapatnam MP M.V.V. Satyanarayana said the YSRCP would not support the Centre's move to privatise RINL and would raise the issue in Parliament. "If the Centre sticks to its proposal, we are ready to step down as MPs," he said.

Cong. closes ranks over slur on CM

Sudhakaran sticks to his guns, criticises Pinarayi Vijayan for vitriolic attacks



K. Sudhakaran

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Congress on Friday sought to put a lid on the political controversy surrounding working president K. Sudhakaran, MP's, "casteist remark" about Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Mr. Sudhakaran had sparked a row by stating that Mr. Vijayan was the first Chief Minister from a toddy tapper's family to hire a helicopter for travel. The CPI(M) had criticised the remark as an attempt to denigrate toddy tappers as unsuited for high political office.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and Congress legislator Shanimol Usman, who had initially disagreed with Mr. Sudhakaran over the "caste slur" on Mr. Vijayan, however, retreated from their position rather

hastily. Mr. Chennithala had earlier averred that Mr. Sudhakaran's comments were avoidable, while Ms. Usman demanded a public apology from the leader. The issue threatened to snowball into an intra-party feud in the Congress with Mr. Sudhakaran expressing his displeasure publicly.

Mr. Sudhakaran slammed

Ms. Usman as a mere cat's paw of his detractors and saw a plot to deny him his due in the Congress.

Backing down, Mr. Chennithala said he was not fully seized of the facts when he made the observation. Mr. Sudhakaran had merely pointed out that Mr. Vijayan's public persona as a working-class leader conflicted with his fiscal profligacy as Chief Minister.

In an FB post, Ms. Usman apologised to Mr. Sudhakaran for her remark and said the mistake was her own and not prompted by any Congress leader. Ms. Usman had come under fierce criticism in social media from Congress workers.

Ironically, the controversy appears to endowed Mr. Sudhakaran with a knight-in-shining-armour image among Congress workers. Recently Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president Mullappally Ramachandran and All India Congress Committee general secretary K.C. Venugopal backed Mr. Sudhakaran.

Mr. Sudhakaran also found support from an unlikely quarter with BJP State president K. Surendran saying there was nothing defamatory in Mr. Sudhakaran's statement.

An unchastened Mr. Sudhakaran unleashed another tirade of criticism against Mr. Vijayan. Referring to the Chief Minister's criticisms of Congress leaders, he said the CPI(M) had no moral right to take umbrage at his remarks.

The main campus of the Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit at Kalady, near here, witnessed protests by activists of the Youth Congress (YC) and Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) on Friday against the appointment of R. Ninitha, wife of M.B. Rajesh, former MP of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], as assistant professor in the department of Malayalam.

They shouted slogans against Vice Chancellor Dharmarajan P.K. alleging irregularities and nepotism in her appointment. They alleged that the university authorities had ignored merit while appointing CPI(M) cadres in various vacancies.

Andhra Pradesh HC stays use of 'e-Watch' app till February 9

Why not use Panchayat Raj Department's app, asks court

STAFF REPORTER

VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday imposed a stay on enabling and use of State Election Commission's 'e-Watch' mobile application till February 9, when the first phase of elections to gram panchayats are scheduled to be conducted.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami and Justice C. Praveen Kumar agreed with the petitioners' view that the SEC could have used 'e-Vigil', the existing mobile app of the Election Commission of India, or 'Nighaa' app de-

veloped by the Panchayat Raj Department of the State, and posted the matter for further hearing on the above date.

No security certificate

Government Pleader C. Sunmmon insisted that the citizens would not be able to make an effective use of 'e-Watch' as there was not much publicity for it. More importantly, he contended that 'e-Watch' did not have the security certificate required under the AP Cyber Security Policy 2017 and various GOs issued in its pursuance.

Besides, it was not clear as to who developed the app and whether it had security features required to protect personal information of the citizens. He also pointed out that the AP Technology Services was the nodal agency for conducting a security audit and issuing the mandatory security certificate.

The court asked what purpose would be served by 'e-Watch' since the Model Code of Conduct had been in vogue since January 8 and the elections were due to begin in a few days' time.

It also asked the SEC why it had not used the app developed by the PRD, which was available from March 8, 2020.

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I am safe in my seat as long as I have Modi and Shah's confidence'

Yediyurappa was responding to Siddaramaiah's comments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Amid constant speculation about the longevity of his tenure, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa asserted on Friday that he would remain in his position as long as he enjoys the confidence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

Chiding Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah for making repeated statements on his term ending prematurely, the Chief Minister said in his reply to the debate on the Governor's address, "You have been saying for six months now that I will be asked to step down. But I am ready to face a 100

more challenges as long as I have the blessings of Mr. Modi, Mr. Shah, and the people of Karnataka." He was responding to Mr. Siddaramaiah referring to the cases

he is facing in the Supreme Court in which he has been granted "stay of arrest".

The Chief Minister went on to say that "anyone on the street can apply for RTI" and take people to court. He said that several leaders in the Congress too were facing charges and were out on bail. "Who is not on bail?" asked Mr. Yediyurappa.

Responding to these statements, Mr. Siddaramaiah said, "Aren't your own MLAs and MLCs saying you will be asked to resign soon? I am only reflecting what I have been hearing.. You changed portfolios of Ministers four times in five days. Is that the sign of a confident Chief Minister?"

Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa speaking in the Assembly on Friday.

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Farm laws: thaw likely in Lok Sabha next week

Cracks appear in Opposition unity

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha is expected to function from next week as floor leaders of the Opposition parties will meet on Monday afternoon to decide their future course of action.

As the Lower House witnessed disruptions for the fourth day in a row on Friday, Speaker Om Birla convened a meeting of the floor leaders to ascertain their views on running the Lok Sabha next week.

Leaders of the Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Trinamool Congress and Biju Janata Dal were among those who attended the Speaker's meet.

Though Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi was not part of the meeting, he expressed confidence that the Lok Sabha would run smoothly from Monday.

The government's confidence is based on the calculation that members from the other parties are keen on speaking on the motion thanking the President's address to a joint sitting of Parliament, and that there may be cracks in the Opposition unity.

Keen to air views

The first signs could be seen on Friday as the Trinamool members did not join their colleagues from the Congress, DMK and the Left parties, who rushed to the Well holding placards and raising slogans against the government over the new farm laws.

Sources told *The Hindu* that Monday could see a breakthrough as many Congress MPs, especially from Punjab, are keen to put across their views on the farm laws strongly.

A show of strength for Sachin Pilot

Friday's Mahapanchayat is the second major event in the region this week

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
DAUSA

A massive Kisan Mahapanchayat held here on Friday to demand rollback of the farm laws turned out to be a show of strength for Congress leader Sachin Pilot. The presence of Mr. Pilot not only enthused his supporters, but also lent legitimacy to the protest.

Mr. Pilot's camp has been facing alienation in the State's politics since July 2020, when the young leader was sacked as the Deputy CM and Pradesh Congress president following a showdown with the top leadership. The

farmers' rally in the eastern Rajasthan town gave an opportunity to Mr. Pilot to exhibit his political support.

The Dausa Lok Sabha constituency – represented by Mr. Pilot's father and Union minister, the late Rajesh Pilot, five times between 1984 and 1999 – has emerged as a new turf of farmers' protest against the controversial laws.

Friday's Mahapanchayat was the second major event in the region this week where the farmers gave vent to their anger.

Thousands of farmers, agricultural labourers, daily wage earners, milkmen and

cattle rearers gathered at the Rajesh Pilot Stadium here to attend the half-day Mahapanchayat held under the aegis of the Samyukta Kisan Sangathan. 'Main Bhi Kisan' (I too am a farmer) printed on a large banner put up at the stage reflected the indomitable spirit of farmers facing the agrarian crisis.

The Congress MLAs of the region, who were instrumental in mobilising the cultivators from far-off villages for coming to the district headquarters, flayed the "obstinate stance" of the BJP-led government at the Centre and took exception to the at-

tempts being made to defame farmers on the pretext of violence in Delhi on Republic Day.

Prominent among the politicians who addressed the Mahapanchayat were Dausa MLA Murari Lal Meena, Bandikui MLA Gajraj Khatana, Deoli-Uniara MLA Harish Meena, Todabhim MLA Prithviraj Meena, Masuda MLA Rakesh Pareek, Neem Ka Thana MLA Suresh Modi and Chaksu MLA Ved Prakash Solanki.

Two farmers carrying a wooden plough and the national tricolour were the centre of attraction.

Still standing with farmers: Mia Khalifa

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI

Former adult star Mia Khalifa on Friday said she was "still standing with the farmers" after her comments, criticising the treatment being meted to protesting farmers, drew sharp reactions. She had earlier criticised the Internet shutdown at the protest sites.

Whopping 900% rise in rejection of crop insurance claims

From 92,869 in 2017-18, it jumped to 9.28 lakh in 2019-20, show data provided by Agriculture Minister in the Rajya Sabha

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The number of farmers' crop insurance claims that were rejected by insurance companies under the Centre's flagship Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) multiplied 10 times in just two years, according to data provided by Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar

in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

In 2017-18, the number of rejected claims was 92,869. In the next year, 2018-19, the figure more than doubled to 2.04 lakh. By 2019-20, it was 9.28 lakh, a whopping 900% increase.

The question came from Manas Ranjan Bhunia, Trinamool Congress MP, who

asked whether farmers were denied crop insurance claims by insurance companies, the details of cases reported from different States in those particular years, and the steps the government was taking in this regard.

In response, Mr. Tomar said under the PMFBY, there was actually no need to file

crop loss claims in case of widespread natural calamities such as drought or flood, as claims were calculated on the basis of shortfall in yield of the whole unit. At the end of the season, prevented sowing and midseason adversity claims were settled on the basis of an area approach for which yield data and crop damage reports

were provided by the State governments concerned.

However, there was a different process when it came to risks impacting smaller areas such as losses due to localised risks of hailstorms, landslips, inundation, cloud burst, or natural fire. Such losses were calculated on the basis of crop loss assessment at individual insured farm le-

vels. Farmers informed such crop losses to the insurance company, the State government or financial institutions, and their claims were assessed by a joint committee with representatives from the State government and the insurance company. "The companies can reject claims on various grounds," he said.

Regulatory code for OTT content soon

21 MPs ask government to take action

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Twenty-one MPs cutting across party lines have sought an answer from the government about the content on over-the-top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, asking whether the Centre was aware that such platforms were full of content with "sex, violence, abuse, vulgarity and disrespect to religious sentiments".

Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar recently said his Ministry would soon come up with a regulatory code on the content on these platforms. The guidelines are expected to be made public in a week's time.

"We are in the final stages of working on the guidelines and it will be soon out," he told *The Hindu*. Sources in the I&B Ministry said the government had urged the platforms to come up with the guidelines themselves.

The Ministry in its reply on Friday said there are currently 40 OTT platforms operating in India. The government, as a first step towards regulation, amended the "allocation of Business Rules" in November last year, bringing all online platforms under the mandate of the I&B Ministry. All the platforms were told to register with the Ministry.



Prakash Javadekar

"The Government has received several grievances/complaints regarding content of programmes on OTT platforms," the Ministry said in its reply.

Self regulation

The Ministry said they had several rounds of consultations with the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) impressing upon them the need for an appropriate self-regulatory mechanism for content over OTT platforms.

In August 2020, the IAMAI had informed the Ministry that a self-regulatory mechanism had been developed for the OTT platforms. On examination it was felt that the mechanism proposed by IAMAI did not give adequate cognizance to content prohibited under law and there were issues of conflict of interest, which were communicated to IAMAI in September, 2020, the Ministry noted.

No blanket nod given for surveillance'

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday denied granting blanket permission to any agency for interception or monitoring of any messages or information under its surveillance programmes such as the Centralised Monitoring System, the Network Traffic Analysis, and the National Intelligence Grid

"There is no blanket permission to any agency for interception or monitoring or decryption; and permission from the competent authority (Union Home Secretary) is required, as per due process of law and rules in each case," read an affidavit filed by the Ministry of Home Affairs before the Delhi High Court.

The affidavit came in response to a petition seeking to constitute a permanent, independent oversight body for reviewing lawful interception and monitoring orders or warrants under the provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act and the Information Technology Act.

The Ministry, however, said "the existing safeguards of oversight by a high-level committee chaired by Cabinet Secretary at the Central level and chaired by Chief Secretary at the State level, are adequate and provide effective supervision".

**DELHI JAL BOARD: GOVT. OF NCT OF DELHI
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER (D)
VARUNALAYA PHASE-II: KAROL BAGH
NEW DELHI-110005**

STOP CORONA **"WASH YOUR HAND"** **"WEAR MASK"** **"MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING"**

Applications are invited for filling up the post of Chief Law Officer on deputation in Delhi Jal Board in the PB-4 of Rs.37400-67000 plus Grade pay Rs.8900/- (Pre-revised) from the eligible officers. Last date of receipt of application is will be the date of completion of 60 days from the date of publication of this advertisement in "Employment News". The eligibility criteria and application format can be downloaded from Delhi Jal Board website i.e. www.delhijalboard.nic.in

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER)
Advt. No. J.S.V. 375 (2020-21)

ASSTT.COMMISSIONER(D)

ICMR - NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY
R-127, Second Main Road, TNHB,
Ayappakkam, Chennai – 600077.

WALK-IN INTERVIEW / WRITTEN TEST/ONLINE INTERVIEW

Candidates are invited for Walk-in Interview / written test/ Online zoom app Interview on various dates for the posts of Project Scientist-C, Project Data Entry Operator, Project Technician, Project Secretary, Project Junior Consultant, Project Technical Assistant, Project Research Assistant, Project Technical Officer, on contract basis under various projects.

For application Proforma and other details regarding qualification, experience, etc., please refer to www.nie.gov.in

Director

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU / PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
BUILDING ORGANISATION, BLDGS (C & M) CIRCLE, CHEPAUK, CHENNAI - 5.
TENDER NOTICE No. 71 BCM / 2020-21 / DATED : 02.02.2021.**

FORM OF CONTRACT : LUMPSUM / Two Cover System

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Sealed tenders are invited from the PWD eligible registered contractors by the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Bldgs (C & M) Circle, Chepauk, Chennai-5 for the following work:-

Sl. No.	Name of work and EMD	Approximate value of work	Period	EMD in favour of
1.	Package - Slice I : Construction of District Municipality Court building at Pallipattu in Tiruvallur District. Slice II : Construction of District Municipal Quarters at Pallipattu in Tiruvallur District.	Rs. 543.60 Lakhs	15 Months	Executive Engineer, PWD, Buildings (C & M) Division, Tiruvallur.
	EMD Rs. 2,82,000/-			

Tender schedule can be Downloaded at free of cost from the Website <https://www.tenders.tn.gov.in/> and also available in the OIO undersigned at a cost of Rs. 1500/- + Rs. 1800/- (GST). Tender schedule will be made available from 15.02.2021 to 16.03.2021. Last date of receipt of tender is 17.03.2021 upto 03.00 PM, and opened on the same day at 04.00 PM, by the undersigned. Contractors Eligibility conditions and all other conditions are available in the above Website.

DIPR/828/Tender/2021 Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (C & M) Circle, Chepauk, Chennai - 5.

Let States take a call on the laws, Swamy tells PM

He suggests a compromise solution

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The three agricultural reform laws should only be implemented in the States which wish to do so, Rajya Sabha member Subramanian Swamy said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday.

Noting that the protest by farmers demanding a repeal of the three laws had now crossed 70 days, Mr. Swamy suggested a compromise solution.

"It seems they have not read their own data. They lie regarding MSP. Modiji never stops saying that the Congress did not increase MSP, [the] reality is, in the Congress time, the MSP increased by 21%. They only increased a little over 140%.

The average growth rate of MSP in UPA-I was 11.10 % and in UPA-II 12.48 %. In Modi government's time, it is only 5.53 %.

Do not compare in rupees, compare in percentage terms," he said.

"should restrict the implementation of the Act to those States which in writing inform its willingness to implement the Act and thus those who do not inform its willingness to implement may be given the freedom not to benefit from the salutary aspects of these Agricultural Reforms Acts", the letter said.

"The second rule should state that every State would be eligible for a Minimum Support Price in perpetuity. The third rule should limit the buying of the foodgrains by only those who have no other major business or commercial interests other than in agricultural trade."

These measures, Mr. Swamy said, would take care of the concerns of the protesting farm unions. He added that the agitation should end once these rules are added to the Acts.

Govt. draws flak for 'adversarial' stance

Former officers slam attempts to polarise farmers' protest along communal lines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A group of retired senior civil servants have criticised the Centre's attitude to the ongoing farm protests as "adversarial and confrontational".

In an open letter on Friday, they expressed concern about the effort to blame farmers for the events of Republic Day, as well as the barricading of the protest sites, denial of essential services and sedition charges that have followed.

The Constitutional Conduct Group, which issued the letter, says it has no affiliation with any political party, but believes in impartiality, neutrality and commitment to the Constitution of India. The 75 signatories include a number of former ambassadors, secretaries to the Government of India, and chief secretaries to State governments, with members from the IAS, IFS and IPS cadres.

"The approach of the Government of India (GoI) towards the farmers' protest has been an adversarial and confrontational one from the very beginning, treating the apolitical farmers like an

irresponsible opposition to be derided, demonised and defeated," said the letter. "The repeated, albeit unsuccessful, attempts to polarise the agitation along regional, communal and other lines are also reprehensible. Such an approach can never lead to a solution," it added.

It asked why the media did not cover the majority of farmers who held a peaceful parade.

The letter also asked why the police had not immediately intervened when "a few hooligans" attacked protesting farmers at the Singhu border site last week.

Mobile internet curbs to stay in Haryana

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHANDIGARH

Mobile internet services will remain suspended in Haryana's Sonipat and Jhajjar districts till Saturday evening, an official statement said. The services were suspended in some districts of the State "to prevent disturbance of peace and public order".

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**No. A.12026/9/2020-Estt.IV
Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources,
River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation**

Narmada Control Authority (NCA) is a Body Corporate set up by the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 6A of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956, for the purpose of securing compliance with the implementation of the decision and direction of the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal. The Narmada Control Authority has its headquarter at Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

- Applications are invited from eligible and suitable officers for filling up one post of Executive Member in Narmada Control Authority, Indore in the Pay Matrix Level-15 (Rs. 182200-224100/-) on deputation (including short-term contract) basis.
- The last date for receipt of applications for appointment on deputation (including short-term contract) basis to the post of Executive Member in Narmada Control Authority, earlier published in the Employment News on 28-January, 2021 is hereby extended to **26.02.2021**.
- Details of the post, eligibility conditions etc. are available at mowr.gov.in and dptt.gov.in. Applications complete in all respects of suitable and eligible officers and who can be spared immediately in the event of selection may be sent through proper channel to: The Under Secretary (Estt.IV), Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Room No. 435, Shram Shakti Bhawan, Rafti Marg, New Delhi 110 001 and by email at usbm@nic.in & socd-mowr@gov.in through proper channel.
- Advance copies of application or application received after the prescribed period or not accompanied with the requisite information/ documents are liable to be rejected.

Shalin Juneja
Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, GOVT. DOON MEDICAL COLLEGE
Patel Nagar Dehradun-248001 Uttarakhand Tel: 0135-2726020-2726201
Email : doonmedicalcollege@gmail.com, Website: www.doonmedical.org

**Letter No.: GDMC/Advt./2021/634
Dated: 05.02.2021
WALK IN INTERVIEW**

Walk in interview will be held on 18-02-2021 at 10:00 am onwards in Govt. Doon Medical College Campus, Patel Nagar, Dehradun for various faculty positions (broad and super specialties

China unlikely to collude with Pak. to target India: IAF chief

Nevertheless, preparation is essential, says R.K.S. Bhaduria

DINAKAR PERI
BENGALURU

China would lose moral authority if it colluded with Pakistan to target India, said Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal (ACM) R.K.S. Bhaduria on Friday. He noted that he did not see China getting into a collusive kind of arrangement in a conflict situation to start with.

"To my mind if they [China] start a collusive plan they would lose the moral authority there itself. As a combat power, if you need another country to even threaten some country, you have given away your weakness. We need to be prepared. There are situations where it can happen. But... I don't see it, especially with China," ACM Bhaduria said in an interview to *The Hindu* at the ongoing Aero India.

The collusive threat would be in the background, he stated, in electronics, support, their (Pakistan's)

As a combat power, if you need another country to even threaten some country, you have given away your weakness. There are situations where it can happen. But... I don't see it, especially with China

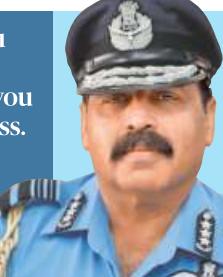
AIR CHIEF MARSHAL R.K.S. BHADURIA
Chief of the Air Staff

knowledge of tactics on the western side and whatever they learnt from the U.S.

Asked about the current stand-off with China in eastern Ladakh, he called it "stalemate status quo". The situation in summer would depend on how talks went.

"We should lay a lot of emphasis on the talks. The last round [of talks] was quite okay," he said. In case an agreement was not reached and the current deployments continued, then as winter ended an element of higher level of alertness would be required. "It really depends on the ground realities."

ACM Bhaduria said the



fall in the fighter squadron strength of the Air Force had been arrested.

The order for 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) being awarded to the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) early this week at Aero India and aircraft deliveries beginning early 2024 would ensure that the numbers would keep going up.

The first LCA MK-1A squadron would be made in 2024 and operationalised in a year after that. While the phasing out of the MiG-21s had caused a dip in squadron strength, last year the IAF constituted the first Rafale squadron and has so far inducted 11 jets.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The aero components sector in the country is set to double from ₹30,000 crore today to ₹60,000 crore by 2024, according to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

On the last day of Aero India here on Friday, Mr. Singh said the government's endeavour to bring down defence imports by at least \$2 billion by 2022 would remain.

"We have signed 128 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), 19 Transfer of Technology (ToT), four handing overs, 18 product launches and 32 major announcements, totalling a grand figure of 201 feats. Further, of the 45 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) participating in Aero India, 21 have bagged orders worth ₹203 crore. This is a major achievement," he stated.

President Ram Nath Kovind visited the show on the

Aero components sector to double to ₹60,000 cr. by 2024'

Rajnath Singh says the govt. is working to bring down defence imports



Sky dance: IAF's aerobatic team displaying its skills in Bengaluru on Friday. ■ MURALI KUMAR K.

last day, witnessed an air display and addressed the gathering.

Talking of domestic defence manufacturing, Mr. Singh said that between 2016 and 2019, 138 proposals worth over \$37 billion for domestic manufacturing

had been approved.

"India has a great potential to emerge as a global and regional Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) hub, given the cost competitiveness of its manpower resources, the availability of abundant, specialist capabil-

ities and geographical advantages," he observed.

"The aerospace sector has an important role to play, if we have to reach our targets of domestic defence production of \$25 billion and exports of \$5 billion by 2025," he noted.

HC pulls up U.P. govt. on illegal challans

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The Allahabad High Court has pulled up the Uttar Pradesh government for the "arbitrary and illegal" challans issued by police and the illegal detention of people in the State over apprehensions of breach of peace.

The court was hearing a writ petition filed by a resident of Varanasi Shiv Kumar Verma and another who had prayed that the administration provide them compensation in lieu of their illegal detention from October 12, 2020 to October 21, 2020 in relation with a case lodged against them at Rohaniya police station in Varanasi under Sections 151, 107 and 116 of the CrPC.

In response, the State's Additional Advocate General and the Home Secretary jointly stated before the court that the State government would develop a mechanism and issue appropriate guidelines as to ensure that such instances are not repeated. The State government would also consider granting monetary compensation to the petitioners for breach of their fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The case pertains to a dispute between the petitioners and their family members over the partition of ancestral property.

In apprehension of breach of public peace, the police had arrested the petitioners under Section 151 of CrPC on October 8, 2020. A challan report of the same date was submitted by a sub-inspector of Rohaniya police station to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Varanasi under Section 151/107/116 CrPC, which was in printed form but with merely the name of the petitioners and others, name of the village and "land dispute" given as details.

The court stated that the police authorities had arbitrarily and illegally submitted challan reports.

NIA to probe blast near Israel embassy

Home Ministry says the decision is due to the international implications

VIJAYA SINGH
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has said the probe into the January 29 explosion near the Israel Embassy in Delhi was handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) due to the "gravity of offence and its international implication." The order does not mention any country.

An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was set off at a pavement near the embassy damaging a few cars. No one was injured.

Earlier, the Special Cell of the Delhi Police was investigating the case. A handwritten note found near the explosion site and addressed to Israeli Ambassador Ron Malka mentioned revenge. The



Keeping vigil: Policemen deployed near the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi after the blast on January 29. ■ AP

note had eight spelling mistakes in it.

The letter, in English, written by someone who identified himself as Sarallah India Hezbollah said the explosion was a trailer to avenge the killing of Iranian

ponents of IED were found scattered nearby." The case was handed to the NIA on February 2.

It said the Central government was of the opinion that a scheduled offence under the NIA Act, 2008 had been committed and having regard to the gravity of offence and its international implication, it was required to be investigated by the NIA.

The First Information Report (FIR) filed by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police mentioned that the IED blast created a crater on the pavement near a palm tree. The site of explosion was near 5, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Road, close to the Israel Embassy. It said an "envelope folded inside a closed poly pack was also found at the spot."

Militant sympathiser deported by Qatar held at Delhi airport

J&K police say Muneeb Ahmad Sofi worked for the JeM

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR

A "wanted militant sympathiser", who was in touch with a Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant, was arrested at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi after his deportation from Qatar, the Jammu and Kashmir police said on Friday.

"Muneeb Ahmad Sofi, a resident of Bijbehara's Kanelwan, was an overground worker [OGW] of JeM," Inspector General of Police (IGP) Vijay Kumar said. Sofi, according to the police, was in contact with JeM's Waleed Bhai, a resident of Pakistan, for purchase of arms and ammunition.

Bhai was killed in an encounter last year.

The police said the role of Sofi surfaced during an investigation of a case registered under FIR No. 58/2020 under sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"An accused arrested in the case disclosed that he, along with other OGWS, were collecting money for JeM from various districts in Kashmir and handing over the collected amount to Sofi.

A look-out notice was published against him and a non-bailable warrant issued under Section 25 of the Police Act," the police said.

Sofi is being brought to

Kulgam for investigation, the police said.

Mobile Internet cut

Meanwhile, mobile Internet service was snapped in all four districts of south Kashmir on Friday in the wake of Pakistan observing the day as Kashmir Solidarity Day.

A senior police officer said the service was stopped as a precautionary measure".

"There were inputs of violence and terror attacks here as Pakistan was observing Kashmir Solidarity Day," the officer added.

Residents said mobile Internet was stopped on Thursday night.

Registered unrecognised parties double in last 10 years

ADR report analyses contribution reports for 2018-19

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The contribution reports of only 78 (3.39%) of the total 2,301 registered unrecognised political parties are available in the public domain for 2018-19, while the reports of only 82 such parties (3.56%) for 2017-18 are uploaded on the respective State Chief Electoral Officers' websites, according to the Association For Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The number of these parties increased two-fold in the last 10 years, from 1,112 in 2010 to 2,301 in 2019. The figure spiked disproportionately during the year of parliamentary election. "Between 2018 and 2019, it increased by over 9.8%, while between 2013 and 2014, it increased by 18%," said an ADR report.

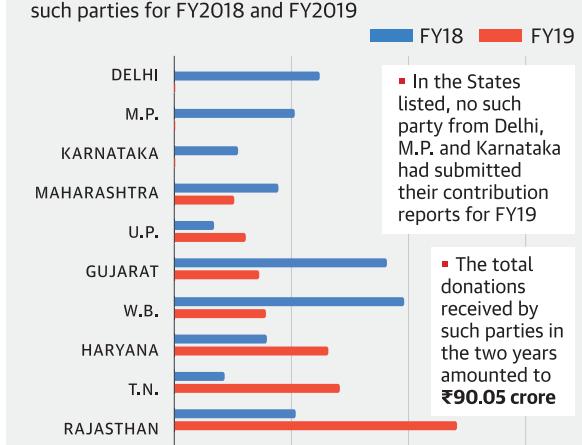
There are 2,360 political parties registered with the Election Commission of India and 2,301 or 97.50% of them are unrecognised.

"Either newly registered parties or those which have not secured enough percentage of votes in Assembly or General Elections to become a State party or those which have never contested in elections since being registered are considered unrecognised parties," it said. Such parties don't enjoy all the benefits extended to the recognised parties.

The reports analysed by the ADR declared 6,860 donations worth ₹65.45 crore during 2018-19 and 6,138 donations of ₹24.6 crore for 2017-18. The Apna Desh Party of Uttar Pradesh declared

Missing records

Contribution reports for registered unrecognised parties were largely absent for FY2018 and FY2019 for major States. West Bengal and Bihar, with only 9.8% and 15.91% for FY18 and FY19 respectively, had the highest share of such parties. The chart shows the State-wise share (in %) of such parties for FY2018 and FY2019



the highest donations for both financial years, involving ₹65.63 crore.

In 2017-18, only 39 registered such parties had submitted contribution reports before the due date and in 2018-19, only 38 did so.

"Of the 138 parties analysed for the two-year period, the contribution reports for 2017-18 are not available for 56 parties. In the case of 2018-19, the reports are not available on the CEO website for 60 parties at the time of making this report," said the ADR.

State-wise, 653 parties or 28.38% belong to Uttar Pradesh, followed by 291 parties or 12.65% from Delhi and 184 or 8% from Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh etc. are available on the respective State CEO websites for 2018-19... for 2017-18, contribution reports of parties of 21 states/UTs are not available," said the ADR, terming it a violation of the ECI guidelines.

Election-bound Assam recruits 29,701 teachers

About half are fresh candidates

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Friday handed out appointment letters to 29,701 teachers.

Education Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed that the recruitment drive, timed ahead of the Assembly elections, was the largest ever.

Of the new recruits, 16,484 had been serving in non-provincialised schools for years. Some of them barely have two years of service left.

The remaining 13,217 are fresh recruits who had cleared the Teachers' Eligibility Test.

"Our primary responsibility is ensuring education and health to the people. Some of you will attain the age of retirement soon. The situation created by the previous governments made you waste the prime time of your lives," Dr. Sarma said at

the job distribution programme at the Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who attended the programme, said he had made an announcement on August 15, 2020, that the State government would give 50,000 jobs.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given us the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat. If we want to achieve it, we shall have to first build Atmanirbhar Assam. The teachers will have an important role to play in it. They shall have to ensure a skilled future generation which can compete all over the world," he said.

A section of teachers appointed under various schemes earlier protested outside the stadium while the appointment letters were being distributed. Holding placards, they demanded justice and pending pay for more than a year.

Ahead of Bengal poll, Mamata rolls out a populist Budget

She announces 46,000 km of rural roads, 20 lakh houses

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

With an eye on the coming Assembly polls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday presented a populist budget for 2021-22, making major allocations for infrastructure and introducing several schemes aimed at the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population.

Borrowing a quote from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, she said, "Keep faith in me, I shall give unconditional and selfless service with utmost dedication."

The major announcements include 46,000-km new rural roads with an allocation of ₹500 crore and the construction of 20 lakh pucca houses for the SC/ST population in the next five years with an allocation of ₹1,500 crore. Along with the announcement of a West Bengal Highway and Bridge Cor-

poration, the Chief Minister announced a number of flyovers for Kolkata. She said the government shall connect all rural roads with the State Highways.

The other major announcements include the continuation of free rations after June 2021 as well as the Swasthasathi Scheme, a comprehensive health coverage for the entire 10-crore population of the State. The government's new initiatives also include 500 new schools in Alchiki language and 100 new English-medium schools for the SC/ ST population.

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The other major announcements include the continuation of free rations after June 2021 as well as the

5.2 mn vaccine doses given so far

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

India has reported 22 deaths so far following vaccination, though none of these are attributable to the vaccine itself, the Health Ministry said



Instapick

Outsider Art Fair: Even as London Art Fair went completely digital last month and Art Basel postponed their 2021 edition once again, from June to September, this New York event went offline. At least partially. The pared down version has seven curated shows and 45 online viewing rooms. Check out Daniel Johnston's colourfully nightmarish drawings and more @outsiderartfair.



Talking point

#FarmerProtests: After pop icon Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg tweeted about the ongoing protests in New Delhi, the Internet had plenty to say. Punjabi singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh released a new song, 'RIRI', giving meme makers more material. Meanwhile, the number of cricket and Bollywood celebrities coming out in favour of #IndiaAgainstPropaganda is increasing.

Pick of the week

Concerts, stand-up and other online events you just can't miss.



Art and more

Red Earth presents **Lockdown Chaumasa**, an online art exhibition featuring works by sculptor Vyom Mehta and painter Debarcan Rout, among others. The artwork draws similarities between the monsoons and the lockdown – both of which forced people to stay indoors. Details: 2020.themonsoonfest.com For the first time, IIT-Madras' annual fest, **Saarang**, is streaming online (till tomorrow). Catch The Yellow Diary at the Rock Show tonight and Jonita Gandhi tomorrow, both at 7.30 pm on saarang.org.



Goa calling

If you're headed to the west coast, take a tour of **Maka di Brewery** located an hour north of **Panjim**. Choose from three packages (starting from ₹2,000), which includes sampling the craft beer and activities like beer pong. +91426074972 From February 12 to 14, Marbela Beach in Morjim plays host to a scaled down version of Heineken's **Krank Sessions**, a techno music festival. Marseille-based Rafael Cerato, Russian DJ Alexey Union and Amsterdam's Baba Robijn, among others, are in the lineup. From ₹1,500 on insider.in



Love is in the air

Plan ahead for **Valentine's Day** with **Fendi**'s new collection that includes their signature bags in a palette of bright yellow and powder pink, Fendimania bracelet watches, and Baguette sunglasses. From ₹20,000, in stores and on fendi.com. Mumbai-based **The Gift Studio** has curated hampers from ₹1,419 onwards. Keep it simple with strawberries and flowers, or opt for a celebratory food trunk hand-picked by **Sonam Kapoor Ahuja**. It features sweet and savoury treats packed in a cream leather trunk (₹6,999). On thegiftstudio.com



On the food front

Eros Hotel New Delhi, at Nehru Place has reopened the Empress of China that serves up **Sichuan, Yunnan and Hunan food**. Specialties include Szechuan Red Snapper, Empress Dim Sum Platter, Empress Corn Cake, Steamed Jasmine Chocolate. **Mai Bao**, a modern **Singapore street food** restaurant is at Commons, DLF Avenue Mall, Saket, Delhi, offering an alcholic bubble tea. Gurugram's Karma Lakelands has a **Sunday brunch** (₹1,399) at Club Karma, with south Indian, continental and Indian street food. On birkenstock.in/1774



Sneakerheads rejoice

Singapore's OG sneaker artist, **Mark Ong**, collaborates with footwear brand **Asics** and Singapore-based sneaker store **Limited Edit** for the **Monsoon Patrol 2** collection that drops tomorrow. Only 170 pairs of the grey/green colourway are up for grabs in India. At ₹12,999, online and offline at Superkicks and VegNonVeg. German brand **Birkenstock** and **Maison Valentino**'s second collab is all about the Arizona sandal. The unisex piece comes in a striking oversized camouflage pattern with three contrasting tones. On birkenstock.in/1774



Mom, dad, and me

Nykka Fashion now has its first multi-brand store at Ambience Mall, New Delhi. They have brands like RSVP, Twenty Dresses, Mondano and Nykd by Nykka, Aachho, Lavanya the Label, Kaanchie Nangia and Anokhe Rang. Something for kids while you shop: Aspiring content creators from nine to 14 can learn the basics of the craft at a two-day YouTube Champ Camp. Comic and TV host **Cyrus Broacha**, accompanied by an industry expert, will lead the master class. On February 6 and 7, from 6 pm. At ₹499 on insider.in.



Podcasts and takeovers

David Javerbaum or God on Twitter (@TheTweetOfGod), recently hosted **Stephen Colbert** on the debut episode of his podcast, aptly titled **Godcast**. The late-night talk show host chats with the celestial representative about the meaning of life, *Lord of the Rings*, and the second joke he ever wrote. On Apple Podcasts and Spotify. Another social media phenomenon, albeit on Instagram, designer **Sabyasachi Mukherjee** will take over the **Bergdorf Goodman** handle today. Tune in all day for surprises @bergdorfs.

PAVITRA SAGAR

The general mood for resort wear before the lockdown was to go big or go home, with extravagant styles and silhouettes. For instance, Tanuya Khanuja's holiday collection last year had a lot of ruffles with exaggerated sleeves or structured corsets. The Zsa Zsa Zsu edit from Papa Don't Preach had lots of embellished bralettes that were matched with ornate accessories. Now the focus is on comfortable transitional separates that can be recycled and reused over seasons to come.

Classic cuts and practical silhouettes with a relaxed feel are in, and there is a conscious shift towards sustainability. Vibrant florals, tribal prints and boho luxe-inspired ensembles took away the gloom of the pandemic and kept us looking forward to dressing up on our first holiday post-lockdown. I love to mix all kinds of prints, and I'm partial to graphic, animal prints, gingham, plaid and muted florals. I picked a couple of pieces from Saaksha & Kinni for my trip to Goa in December, as they fit the bill.

Being resort ready in 2021

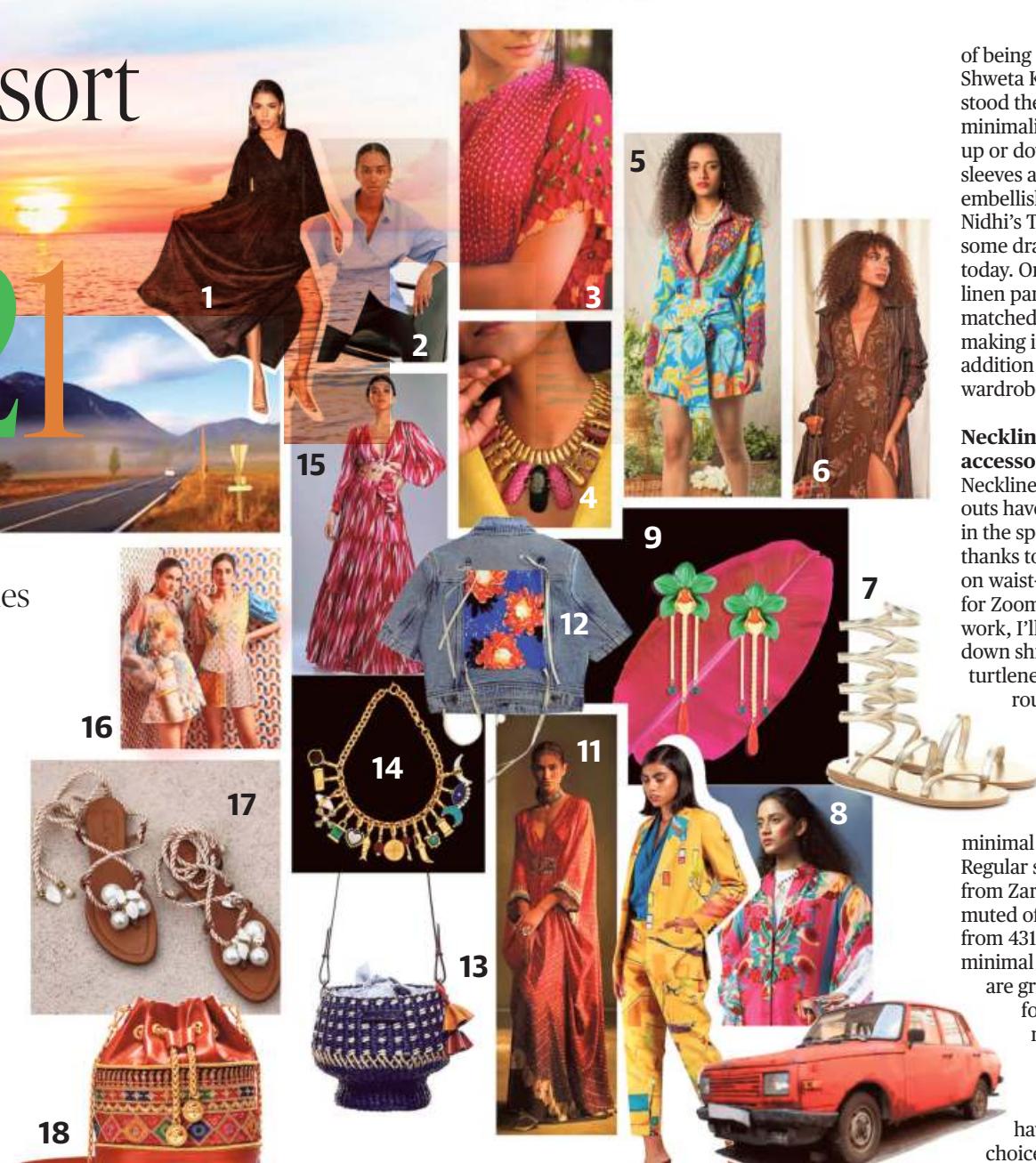
As post-lockdown travel gains momentum, here are some fashion discoveries that will last well past this moment

with Kareena Kapoor Khan and baroque embroidered maxis in bronze and gold by Nikita Mhaisalkar.

For work and play

One of the most frequent questions I get about resort wear is if they can be used beyond just one season or occasion – something that is on everyone's mind post-pandemic. I believe it is important to invest in versatile pieces that can be styled not just on holiday, but back home as well. Fluid separates with *dabu* prints on muga silk from KoAi and free-spirited silhouettes from Verb by Pallavi Singhee come to mind.

I also love the bold and unapologetic designs of Bobo Calcutta, with graphic printed silk pieces that will provide all the drama you need after months



1. 431-88 by Shweta Kapur 2. Zara 3. 4. Ekaya x Misho Designs 5. Verb by Pallavi Singhee 6. Nikita Mhaisalkar 7. Ancient Greek Sandals 8. Bobo Calcutta 9. Valliyan 10. SuketDhir 11. Rajdeep Ranawat 12. Dhruv Kapoor 13. Straw India 14. Isharya 15. KoAi 16. Pankaj & Nidhi 17. Alameda Turquesa 18. Sabyasachi

of being housebound. 431-88 by Shweta Kapur is a brand that has stood the test of time; her classic minimalist clothing can be dressed up or down. And the voluminous sleeves and modern embellishments in Pankaj & Nidhi's Talisman collection add some drama that is much-required today. On my wishlist: Suket Dhir's linen pant suit, which can be matched with other separates, making it a classic addition to the wardrobe.

Necklines and accessories

Necklines and cut-outs have also been in the spotlight thanks to the focus on waist-up fashion for Zoom calls. For work, I'll pick button-down shirts, turtlenecks, regular round or V-neck T-shirts and accessorise with minimal jewellery. Regular slim fit shirts from Zara and the muted office shirts from 431-88 with minimal embroidery are great options for a weekday meeting call.

Off-shoulder, halter and strappy tops have been the preferred choice for my casual video interactions. I would pair these with some statement earrings from Valliyan, The YY Brand by Yashvi Vanani, Deepa Gurnani, Studi Metallurgy and Outhouse, along with layered necklaces from Misho Designs.

I've barely worn denim through the lockdown. But with travel opening up gradually, there are a lot of interesting jackets to pick from. I'd recommend Dhruv Kapoor's embroidered ones; they are such a fun addition to the wardrobe and can elevate any look.

Accessories remain strong, with wicker bags (Straw India), straw hats, bold earrings,

statement belts, oversized totes, sunglasses and mask chains (Isharya, Argento) adding glamour to muted colour palettes.

While I'm not a hat person, I love to collect interesting belts and sunglasses. The former I pick from Loewe, Cult Gaia, Shivan and Narresh, peplum belts from Johanna Ortiz, Richa Khemka, and Alexander McQueen. I usually stay away from logo-embossed pieces.

For sunglasses, it has to be Linda Farrow, Celine, Karen Walker and Dior. And don't forget your resort must-have: a pair of interesting flat sandals to complete the look. I suggest

Alameda Turquesa's pearl-embellished tie-ups, the strappy Ofis from Ancient Greek Sandals and the ocean-themed selection from Cult Gaia.

The writer is a fashion stylist (@stylemuzee) and co-founder of Funky Fish and Kairos Home

and tiffin, now social distance farther than the coronavirus would ever get us to.

It started with that political post. You called the politician I worship, a worm. I called yours a buffalo's bladder. A week later, we laughed, made up, and I posted again. About the economy or footpaths or cricket, I've forgotten. "You're wrong, you were always wrong," you said, "Even back in Class 3 in that Maths sum I copied from you." "You always lied through your teeth," I retorted, "Little wonder you've got such gaps between them."

Later, you blamed your unforgivable rant on the heat. And I objected; it had been a cold day. "It wasn't even day," you snapped, "It was night." You've always been two-faced, I fumed. I'd always talked rubbish, you raged. You were stupid. I was snobby.

No surprise you got the sum wrong in Class 3. It was Class 4. Your memory has gaps wider than those in your teeth. My eyes were so squinty I could never tell the truth if it danced in front of me.

Before we flush three decades of best friendship down the loo (you always said 'restroom', you pretentious prude!), hear this: the head lice you had back in school wormed their way into your brain and destroyed it. As I close my browser, I see you telling everyone I secretly ate chalk which made me delusional.

Whatever you believe, you're wrong. Whatever I say is wrong before I say it. There is only one way to see it: you're wrong unless you agree with me that you're wrong.

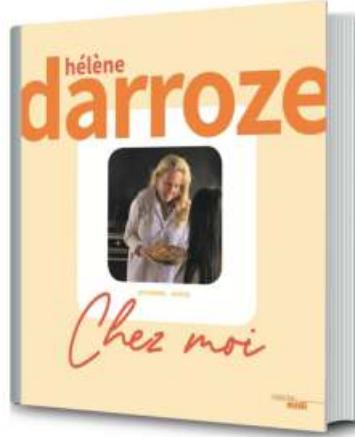
Where Jane De Suza, author of *Flyaway Boy*, pokes her nose into our perfect lives

Hélène Darroze serves her food with kindness

The French chef behind Michelin-starred kitchens in London and Paris and single mother to two daughters, was awarded the guide's top rating last week



Darroze's new book, *Chez Moi*, and (above) a still from *Ratatouille*. The French chef inspired the character Colette in the hit animated film



ROSELLA STEPHEN

Don't set out to be a man in the kitchen. This has consistently been Hélène Darroze's advice to young women in her profession. Part of a small group of celebrated female chefs who have been breaking boundaries in a male dominated industry, she should know. Last week, Darroze once again made headlines as her eponymous restaurant at The Connaught in London joined Michelin's vaunted three-star club. The French chef has often emphasised that she is no radical feminist. Over a phone call late in 2019, she explained, "We have our own sensibilities and the difference is complimentary. So be proud to be a woman in a kitchen full of men". Her acceptance speech during Michelin's online awards ceremony last Monday, underlined this. "Believe in your dreams, everything is possible. And stay true to your femininity," she said.

Equality in the kitchen

Successfully running her restaurants – Hélène Darroze at The Connaught in Mayfair and Marsan and Joia in Paris – Darroze, 53, has split her time between the two cities for years now. She is known for her easy manner and being a hands-on mother to her two young daughters, something that didn't change when she was named the world's best female chef in 2015 by World's 50 Best Restaurants. A controversial award, many food writers have wondered aloud at the need for a separate category for female chefs. It was called out by the late Anthony Bourdain as far back as 2013. "Why – at this point in history – do we need a 'Best Female Chef' special designation? As if they are curiosities?" he'd asked on Twitter. "Best Female Chef is not necessarily a 50 Best Chef," a male



NICOLAS BUSSON

chef told me, off the record. But Darroze, refreshingly unpretentious, added that it only spurred her into being more ambitious. It has resulted in three restaurants in two capitals, and now, the coveted three-star accolade.

Journey to this moment

Darroze was raised in Les Landes, south west France (which explains why she is partial to truffles, foie gras and suckling lamb from the Basque country). The fourth generation restaurateur – though she refers to her grandparents, parents and uncles simply as 'cooks' – learnt early on about the importance of quality produce as hunters and fishermen visited their kitchen every morning with their catch. "My family taught me how to cook but also to welcome people to my table. And in the south-west of France, there is much life around food," she explained. Darroze graduated from business school, then trained under chef Alain Ducasse at his three Michelin-starred Monaco restaurant, Louis XV. Three years later, she re-

turned home to run her family's restaurant Chez Darroze, before relocating to Paris at 32 and opening her own restaurant. In no time, she was lauded for her unusual interpretation of French rustic classics.

"Ducasse's influence was huge and he taught me to work with rigour and push myself every day," said Darroze, for it was the super chef who inspired her to get involved in cooking at Le Louis XV. Yet Darroze famously ignored his feedback at his first tasting at her restaurant – he had suggested she be more Parisian. "I was open to his advice, but wanted to be myself and couldn't change my style. I cannot cook something that I couldn't believe in," she later shared with me on a voice note. Be it winter specials back then at The Connaught – the scallops, black and white truffle, foie gras from the south west but here, an experiment with seaweed and citrus, and venison Wellington with quince and a strong pepper sauce – or her Valentine's Day takeaway for next weekend, Darroze seems to know her diners' food

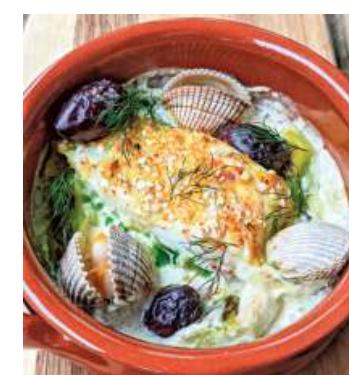
cravings even before they do.

Spreading the love

A week before her restaurant at The Connaught got its three stars in 2021's Michelin Guide for Great Britain and Ireland, her Paris Marsan joined the two-star list in the Michelin France guide. So there is much to celebrate at Chez Darroze. She has received plaudits from that *enfant terrible* of the UK culinary world, Gordon Ramsey, as well as her Connaught neighbour, Balenciaga. There have been macarons and other treats coming her way all week, as shared with her 5.5 lakh followers on Instagram. For the Michelin rating, she has duly credited her eight-year-old team, be it Kirk Whittle, her "pastry accomplice for the last 17 years", executive chef Marco Zampese or restaurant manager Mirko Benzo, and her "small suppliers". She posted on social media that this is a week she will remember for the rest of her life.

What began with *Ratatouille*
Having inspired Colette, the only fe-

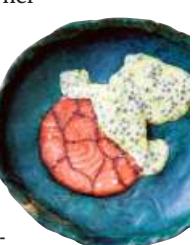
(Clockwise from far left)
Hélène Darroze,
Connaught Hotel in
Mayfair, a selection of
dishes from The
Connaught and Marsan in
Paris



male cook in Chef Skinner's kitchen in Disney Pixar's 2007 *Ratatouille*, Darroze told Independent then that she was not as tough as that character. But almost everyone who meets her comes away impressed. "When people meet me they always talk about my kindness. It is true because it is my way of being," was her artless response when I mentioned this. Gaggan Anand, the celebrity chef known for his two Michelin stars and making it to the fourth spot on the 2019 World's 50 Best Restaurants List, says Darroze was "very simple and nice" to him when he briefly met her

in Paris that year. "She is gentle and kind and the food shows it," shares another industry power-house, chef Ritu Dalmia. "I have eaten at The Connaught a couple of times. She is not one of those Gordon Ramsey female versions, and I know many chefs like that as well!"

Also shuttling between cities (Goa and Delhi) as she tackles the effects of the pandemic on her business, Dalmia agrees that women "by nature are nurturers" but that is it good that they are at least being recognised for it. "I don't think most people realise how difficult it is to get where she [Darroze] is today," concludes Dalmia, who left the 50 Best Restaurants panel as she didn't agree with the separate category for a woman chef.



HOUSEPROUD IN 5

Be it for the family or the happy singleton, décor options to suit all tastes

Courting comfort

The post pandemic present calls for flexible design solutions and eco-friendly options. And brands are delivering. Pick from reissues of classic furniture (that paved the way for modular seating), lighting that's fluid, and bathrooms that kids can have fun using.

Compiled by Surya Prabhulla Kumar



Sarita Handa

Accent Chairs

Give your living room a splash of colour with Sarita Handa's new capsule collection of statement chairs, which marry "Palampore floral patterns and signature bird motifs with the bold, clean lines of American modernism". Subtle tone-on-tone embroidery adds interest, while white ash wood and walnut finishes bring in timeless character. Pick from accent chairs, armchairs and oversized high-backs. From ₹70,000, at the Delhi and Mumbai stores

B&B Italia

Camaleonda Sofa

Once radical and now iconic, architect Mario Bellini's 1970 design is a museum favourite and the weakness of collectors. The 19-piece modular sofa – that lent itself to endless configurations, and which was only produced until 1979 – is back in a 21st century eco-friendly avatar, using all recycled or recyclable materials. Think fabric, leather and dacron (a synthetic fabric made of recycled PET). Seats from approx ₹3,16,775, and ottomans, from approx ₹1,80,598, on bebitalia.com



All Home Living

Hand-Blown Lights

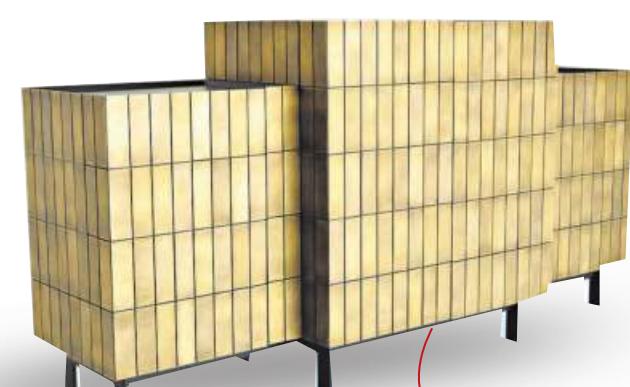
Danish designer Frank Kerdil is best known for his PineApple lights series – all sharp angles and earth tones. Here he softens the look, with individually mouth-blown lights, hand-finished by skilled artisans. Made with soda-lime glass, these are lead free and will look stunning as table lamps or hanging pendants. ₹8,499 to ₹10,499, on allhomeliving.com

Siddu stuffed with poppy seeds, *pahadi maahrajma*, chutney and ghee • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

FOOD SPOT



Pahadi Pattal in Delhi offers a home delivery menu with a thaali that's worth a taste



Alsorg

Metal Sideboards

The Gurugram-based manufacturers of high-end bespoke furniture recently launched a trio of credenzas with metallic finishes. Choose from Array, a stunning piece composed of loosely-arranged vertical metal pipes with a lacquer finish; Serra, an off-floor unit made with brass sheets and an oxidised finish; and, our favourite, the Fenesta (above), which is architecturally inspired and created with a series of oxidised brass tiles. Order on alsorg.com

Vitra

Sento Kids Collection

Winners of the 2020 Good Design award (by Chicago Athenaeum Museum of Architecture and Design), the Turkish brand's new collection is specially designed for children between three and six. It comes with different combinations to suit various needs, such as soft-closing WC seats (so no little fingers are caught) and double or triple wash basin units to encourage kids to wash their hands together. Washbasins start from ₹9,150



The smoky flavours of Himachali food



RAHUL VERMA

If there is one state that never fails to captivate me, it is Himachal Pradesh. I spent quite a few months there back in the late 70s and early 80s, staying with Himachalis and eating a lot of *khatti* dal and a sour pickle the region is known for. Having grown emotionally attached to their simple cuisine, I always rued the fact that there were hardly any outlets offering Himachali food in Delhi.

I rue no more. I got a message some months ago about a place known as Pahadi Pattal. Run by a young woman called Nitika Kuthiala, it offers home-cooked dishes on the weekends. I had my *thihali* delivered last week – and was back in Kangra, inhaling the air scented by pine trees and tea leaves. Kuthiala worked for a corporate office, but decided to give up her job for the simple pleasure of cooking for pe-

ople. She had picked up recipes from her father and mother, both known for their culinary expertise, and started organising pop-ups at home. "I wanted to showcase Himachali food," she tells me.

Soon she had a regular stream of clients. Then, during the pandemic, some suggested that she start delivering food. She has been doing this for some months now. You have to place your orders a day in advance (Ph: 8447674414).

The *thihali* with a meat dish costs ₹1,299 (delivery charges are extra). You have to organise your own rice or rotis, but there is food for two. The meat dish, however, is mainly for one. Our *thihali* consisted of *pipli* mutton, *alo* and *mattar madra*, *siddu* stuffed with poppy seeds, *pahadi maahrajma*, chutney and pickle.

The *madra* is Dham food – that is, festival food cooked without onion, ginger or garlic. It consisted of chickpeas and potatoes in a thick and tart curd-based sauce. The curd has to be cooked well for the dish to get its consistency and taste. I enjoyed that, and liked the dal, too – *rajma* and *urad dal*, which had been smoked with a piece of charcoal. It was not heavy, as

rajma and *ma ki dal* can be, and had been tempered with coriander, cumin and fenugreek seeds. I had it with the *siddu* – a savoury *gujia*-like dish with a filling of poppy seeds and walnut. I thought it was not just different, but also appetizing. There was some chutney on the side, too, which added to the zing.

The *jimikand* (yam) was disappointing. But that was not the problem with the dish; it was more an issue I have with the tuber itself. It seldom pleases me. This dish had been cooked with whole spices, masala powders, local herbs and desiccated coconut.

The dish I enjoyed the most was the mutton, which was light and tender, with the gravy the perfect balance of flavours. *Pipli* is a kind of a chilli in the north, and the dish had been cooked with these. It reminded me of a desi chicken dish that we'd eaten, sitting by a bonfire out in the open in a little village called Laggia in Chamba, back in the early 90s. I can still recall the lightness of its gravy, and the clear, smoky night.

I have one grouse, though. A *thihali* is not a *thihali* if there is no dessert. And while Himachal is not exactly known for its sweets, I could have done with its *mittha*, a dish of sweetened rice.

That would truly have meant '*muh mittha karna*', as we in north India refer to our offering of sweets to mark a celebration.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

'U.S. will build strength at home, abroad'

Biden says alliances were America's greatest asset, announces end of aid to Saudi-led Yemen war

SRI RAM LAKSHMAN

In his first address to the State Department as President, Joe Biden outlined his administration's foreign policy priorities, reiterating that America was back and engaging the world, but acknowledging the world had changed in the last few years. The new President said alliances were America's greatest asset. He said the U.S. would engage with adversaries and competitors diplomatically when it was in the country's interest, highlighting strategies in the Russia and China contexts.

Mr. Biden also used the speech to announce the end of U.S. support to the Saudi-led war in Yemen and the appointment of foreign service officer Tim Lenderking as special envoy to Yemen. However, he said, the U.S. would continue to support Saudi Arabia in defending its sovereignty.

The President also announced a pause in the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Germany, while the U.S. government – led by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken – reviews its global military footprint to make sure it is in alignment with foreign policy and national security policies.

Mr. Biden repeatedly returned to the theme of democracy and a need for the U.S. to work from a "position of strength" by strengthening itself at home and reclaiming its credibility.

During his speech, he highlighted the reversal of the travel ban from several Muslim-majority countries and lifting the ban on transgender persons in the military. He also talked the importance of a free press and restoring the daily press



Setting the agenda: Joe Biden speaking about U.S. foreign policy at the State Department in Washington. • AFP

briefing at the White House.

"We believe a free press isn't an adversary; rather, it's essential. A free press is essential to the health of a democracy."

Mr. Biden said foreign policy would need to be aligned with the interest of American working families. "There's no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy. Every action we take in our conduct abroad, we must take with American working families in mind," he said.

Growing ambitions

The President said America must confront growing authoritarianism, while he singled out Russia and China. "American leadership must meet this new moment of advancing authoritarianism, including the growing ambitions of China to rival the United States and the determination of Russia to damage and disrupt our democracy."

Mr. Biden said America's diplomacy must be rooted in democratic values, which he listed as, "defending freedom, championing opportunity, upholding universal rights, respecting the rule of law, and treating every person with dignity."

economic abuses and counter its aggression but would work with Beijing when it was in America's interest (the U.S. is expected to seek Chinese cooperation on climate change and pandemic preparedness for instance).

"We'll confront China's economic abuses; counter its aggressive, coercive action; to push back on China's attack on human rights, intellectual property, and global governance. But we are ready to work with Beijing when it's in America's interest to do so," he said.

"We will compete from a position of strength by building back better at home, working with our allies and partners, renewing our role in international institutions, and reclaiming our credibility and moral authority, much of which has been lost," Mr. Biden said, citing the fact that his administration had reversed Mr. Trump's steps to withdraw America from the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization.

Coup in Myanmar

Mr. Biden called on the Myanmar military to relinquish the power they have seized and release political leaders and activists, desist from violence and lift telecommunications restrictions.

"...I made it clear to President Putin, in a manner very different from my predecessor, that the days of the United States rolling over in the face of Russia's aggressive actions – interfering with our elections, cyber attacks, poisoning its citizens – are over," he said. The U.S. could deal more effectively with Russia if it worked with its allies, Mr. Biden said.

On China, Mr. Biden said the U.S. would counter its

democratic alliances that have atrophied over the past few years of neglect and, I would argue, abuse," he said.

The U.S. had been closely cooperating with allies in recent days, Mr. Biden said with regard to the military takeover in Myanmar. Just days ago, a State Department official had said that American officials were in touch with their Indian and Japanese counterparts on the unfolding situation in Myanmar.

"There can be no doubt: In a democracy, force should never seek to overrule the will of the people or attempt to erase the outcome of a credible election," Mr. Biden said, presumably referring to both the Myanmar coup d'état and the final weeks of the Trump administration.

"There's no longer a bright line between foreign and domestic policy. Every action we take in our conduct abroad, we must take with American working families in mind," he said.

Dissenting views

Mr. Biden also told diplomats that he valued their work. The President and Mr. Blinken have said they want to revitalise the State Department, which had seen significant workforce attrition during the Trump administration, with individuals being edged out and roles being politicised.

"I value your expertise and I respect you, and I will have your back. This administration is going to empower you to do your jobs, not target or politicise you. We want a rigorous debate that brings all perspectives and makes room for dissent. That's how we'll get the best possible policy outcomes," he said.

Hundreds protest in Myanmar amid arrest of key Suu Kyi aide

More than 130 officials and lawmakers have been detained



Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

A similar protest took place across town in Yangon University. In Naypyidaw, dozens of employees from several Ministries posed for group photographs wearing red ribbons and flashing the democracy symbol.

According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, more than 130 officials and lawmakers have been detained.

Social media restrictions

Twitter services experienced disruptions in Myanmar on Friday, with some saying it could not be used even with a VPN service.

"Twitter is now being restricted in #Myanmar on multiple network providers," said NetBlocks, which monitors Internet outages around the world. It also confirmed that other Facebook products – WhatsApp and Instagram – were facing disruptions.

Beijing warns off U.S. warship in S. China Sea

Exercise helps defend right of passage'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

guided missile destroyer on Thursday also conducted a routine transit through the waterway separating the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, which Beijing says constitutes part of its territory.

Washington has argued that such exercises are in line with international law and help defend right of passage through the region amid competing claims by China and other governments.

China lays claim to nearly all of the South China Sea, including the Paracel Islands.

Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam also claim parts of the region, believed to hold valuable oil and gas deposits.

The U.S. Navy in late January sent an aircraft carrier group into the South China Sea.

ELSEWHERE



Christopher Plummer, *Sound of Music* star, dies

NEW YORK Christopher Plummer, the dashing award-winning actor who played Captain von Trapp in the film *The Sound of Music* and at 82 became the oldest Academy Award acting winner in history, passed away on Friday at the age of 91. AP

Russia expels EU envoys over Navalny protests

MOSCOW

Moscow said on Friday it was expelling diplomats from Poland, Germany and Sweden for participating in unsanctioned demonstrations last month in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny. The diplomats were being declared "persona non grata" for their alleged participation in "unlawful" rallies on

January 23. AFP

Trump refuses to testify in impeachment trial

Aide calls the process unconstitutional

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

Former President Donald Trump refused on Thursday to testify in his looming impeachment trial after being called by House prosecutors to give evidence, branding the process "unconstitutional."

Mr. Trump's lawyers ridiculed the request in a letter by lead House prosecutor Jamie Raskin to answer questions over the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol as a "public relations stunt."

"Your letter only confirms what is known to everyone: you cannot prove your allegations" against Mr. Trump, attorneys Bruce Castor and David Schoen said in their reply.

While the attorneys did not say whether he would testify, a senior adviser to Mr. Trump, Jason Miller, said flatly that he would not.

"The President will not testify in an unconstitutional proceeding," Mr. Miller said.

The refusal came five days be-



Donald Trump

fore the trial of the former U.S. leader on one charge of "incitement to insurrection" opens in the U.S. Senate.

Mr. Trump is accused of fomenting the attack by his supporters on the U.S. legislature one month ago.

Mr. Raskin said the trial will prove "Trump's conduct was indefensible."

"His immediate refusal to testify speaks volumes and plainly establishes an adverse inference supporting his guilt," he said in a statement.

Imran Khan calls for restoration of Article 370

He was speaking on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday called upon India to restore Article 370 in Kashmir. He said Kashmiris should be free to decide their own future.

Addressing a rally at Kotli to observe 'Kashmir Solidarity Day', the Pakistan Prime Minister said he would raise his voice for Kashmir's aspirations.

"Today, I say to you again. Come resolve this Kashmir dispute with us. And for that, the first thing you must do is to restore Article 370. And then speak to us and then as per the UN Resolution, give the Kashmiris their due right," he said.

Mr. Khan's comment was part of a set of official remarks from Pakistan's top leaders, who make similar comments every year on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day'.

"We are ready to speak to you again. But I say this again. Do not mistake our hand of friendship for weakness. Pakistan belongs to those who bow to no one but God," said Mr. Khan, who was followed by President Arif Alvi, who said resolution of the Kashmir issue was the "key to durable peace in South Asia".

Dr. Alvi said, "We will continue to extend all-out support to the Kashmiris till the realisation of their unalienable right to self-determination."

The comments came just days after Army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa expressed the desire for a "dignified" resolution to the Kashmir issue.

The Ministry of External Affairs had said in response that the "onus" for creating "normal neighbourly relations" was on Pakistan.

Indonesia bans 'hijab' in schools

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
JAKARTA

Indonesia has banned schools from forcing girls to wear Islamic "hijab" headscarves after the case of a Christian pupil pressured to cover up sparked outrage in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

The move was applauded on Friday

by activists, who say non-Muslim girls have been forced for years to wear a hijab in parts of the country.

State schools will face sanctions if they fail to comply with the edict from Education Minister Nadiem Makarim.

Schools that violate the rules could see their government funding cut, he added.

**COUNCIL OF SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH
NATIONAL AEROSPACE LABORATORIES**
P.B. No. 1779, HAL Airport Road, Kodihalli, Bengaluru - 560 017
Phone: +91-80-25086040 / 6041, Fax: +91-80-25269611
E-mail: purchasek@nal.res.in

NOTICE
Date: 05.02.2021
Refer EOI Notification No. NAL/PUR/ACD/200/20-Z. The result of the EOI is available in the NAL website www.nal.res.in

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
TENDER EXTENSION NOTIFICATION**
Last date for submission of pre-Qualification application and Tender schedule mentioned in the Tender Notification No: 20SE/B(CMC)(MW)/MDU/2020-2021/Dt:19.01.2021 due to administrative reason extended as follows :
Last date for availability of pre-qualification application and Tender schedule - upto 22.02.2021, 5.45 PM.
Last date for submission of pre-qualification application and Tender schedule - 23.02.2021, 3.30 PM.
Pre-qualification opening date - 23.02.2021, 3.30 PM.
for amended details visit the website www.tenders.n.gov.in and other conditions remains unchanged

Superintending Engineer, (iic), PWD Buildings(C&M)circle, (Medical works), Madurai
DIPR/ 846 /TENDER/2021

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
49, East Wing, 4th & 5th Floor, Khanija Bhavan Race Course Road
Bengaluru - 560 001.. Phone No. 080-22265383
website : www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-44/2013/2020-21 Date: 04.02.2021

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK e – Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB is inviting item rate tenders under two cover system are invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from Class-I Contractors (Civil) registered in KPWD who have got adequate financial resources & sufficient past experience for the following works: (1). Formation of Industrial Layout including formation of 24M wide & 18M wide roads including Asphalt, Construction of RCC side drains, RCC cross drainage works, storm water drain, HDPE water supply pipeline at Mindahalli Industrial Area, Malur Taluk, Kolar District (2). Formation of Industrial layout including formation of 24M wide & 18M wide roads including Asphalt, Construction of RCC side drain, RCC cross drainage works, Storm Water drain, HDPE water supply pipeline at Mastenahalli 2nd phase Industrial Area, Kailara Hobli, Chinthamani Taluk, Chikkaballapur District. The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 04.03.2021 upto 04:00 pm Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

Wear Mask | **Follow Physical Distancing** | **Maintain Hand Hygiene**

**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER (P&C)
IDCO, IDCO TOWERS, JANPATH, BHUBANESWAR - 751022**
EOI Call Notice No. HO/S&IP/493/2021 / Date : 02/02/2021

NOTICE INVITING EOI UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH OFFLINE

1. Name of the Work : Envelopment of experienced consultant for Civil Structural, Electrical, Environmental and Marine Engineering design in different categories for upcoming projects in the above sectors.

2. Estimated Cost : Rs. 0.00

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-Line for Bidding
1	2	From 3 To 4
Chief General Manager (P&C), IDCO, IDCO Towers, Bhubaneswar,	Bid Id. No. PC/EST/E-71/2020-21	08.02.2021 at 17.00 Hrs.

Further details can be seen from the IDCO Portal www.idco.in and Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can only be seen in the IDCO portal www.idco.in.
Chief General Manager (P&C)
OIPR-14003/11/0121/2021

**GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**
BUILDING ORGANIZATION - OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
PWD, BUILDINGS (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE) CIRCLE, SALEM - 7.
PRE-QUALIFICATION APPLICATION AND PRICE TENDER
FORM OF CONTRACT : LUMPSUM (TWO COVER SYSTEM)
TENDER NOTICE No.32/ 2020-2021/SE(B/C&M)/CSL/M , Dated : 04.02.2021

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (Construction and Maintenance) Circle, Salem - 7 invites tender for the following works, at his office upto 3.00PM, on 12.03.2021 in two sealed covers containing (i) Qualification details and EMD in a separate inner cover and (ii) Price Tender Schedule in another sealed cover and put into one common sealed cover from the experienced and competent contractors / firms as detailed below. The tender schedule will be downloaded at free of cost from the Govt. designated website (v) <http://www.tenders.n.gov.in>. The tender schedule will also be available in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD, Buildings (C&M) Circle, Salem - 7 from 11.02.2021 to 11.03.2021 upto 5.45 pm. The tenders received will be opened at 3.30 PM on 12.03.2021, in the presence of the tenderers or their representatives who choose to be present at that time.

Sl. No	Name of Work	Approximate Value of work including G.S.T. (Rs. In Lakhs)	Amount of Earnest Money Deposit in Rupees	Period of Completion
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MARKET WATCH

	05-02-2021	% CHANGE
Sensex	50,732	-0.23
US Dollar	72.93	0.04
Gold	46,738	-0.84
Brent oil	59.31	-2.59

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Ports	566.95	-1.45
Asian Paints	2376.75	-25.05
Axist Bank	719.60	-24.30
Bajaj Auto	4231.25	7.75
Bajaj Finserv	9722.20	21.65
Bajaj Finance	5538.55	33.70
Bharti Airtel	581.10	-19.50
BPCL	415.00	-3.55
Britannia Ind	3541.65	-38.35
Cipla	847.70	13.25
Coal India	140.85	-2.75
Divis Lab	3822.45	143.55
D Dr Reddy's Lab	4800.90	132.95
Eicher Motors	2932.15	-31.30
GAIL (India)	128.20	-2.50
Grasim Ind	1186.10	-2.40
HCL Tech.	946.15	-11.50
HDFC	2721.50	13.75
HDFC Bank	1597.60	18.50
HDFC Life	681.55	1.15
Hero MotoCorp	3429.20	-11.50
Hindalco	262.05	0.20
Hind Unilever	2269.55	23.95
ICICI Bank	614.15	-14.15
IndusInd Bank	1025.10	-7.05
Infosys	1272.10	-7.25
Indian Oil Corp	102.40	-1.20
ITC	234.35	4.40
JSW Steel	402.20	1.90
Kotak Bank	1982.70	72.30
L&T	1516.50	-13.30
M&M	865.50	-1.00
Maruti Suzuki	7494.15	-145.85
Nestle India Ltd.	17115.75	41.75
NTPC	99.50	0.45
ONGC	97.65	0.00
PowerGrid Corp	207.10	1.75
Reliance Ind	1923.75	-0.55
SBI Life	864.20	0.30
State Bank	393.10	38.00
Shree Cement	26722.85	-368.15
Sun Pharma	634.75	3.25
Tata Motors	315.90	-10.25
Tata Steel	685.05	29.10
TCS	3157.95	-30.50
Tech Mahindra	959.40	-9.80
Titan	1509.45	-4.15
UltraTech Cement	6352.10	169.30
UPL	536.50	-11.55
Wipro	425.55	-4.35

EXCHANGE RATES

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	72.72	73.04
Euro	87.08	87.49
British Pound	99.51	99.98
Japanese Yen (100)	68.87	69.17
Chinese Yuan	11.24	11.29
Swiss Franc	80.51	80.91
Singapore Dollar	54.33	54.60
Canadian Dollar	56.81	57.08
Malaysian Ringgit	17.85	17.96

Source: Indian Bank

IN BRIEF



Oil rises on U.S. growth optimism, supply curbs

SINGAPORE

Oil prices climbed on Friday to their highest levels in a year on signs of economic growth in the U.S. and a continued commitment by producers to curb supply. Brent crude futures hit an intraday high of \$59.41. "Rising confidence in upturn in economic and oil demand recovery around the corner is a major impetus for crude," said Vandana Hari, an energy analyst. REUTERS

Paypal to shut services within India from April 1

NEW DELHI

Digital payment solutions provider PayPal on Friday said it will stop offering domestic payment services within India from April 1. "We will continue to invest in product development that enables Indian businesses to reach nearly 350 million PayPal consumers worldwide, increase their sales nationally, and help the Indian economy return to growth," a PayPal spokesperson said. PTI

MCA to unveil latest version of filings portal

NEW DELHI

In-depth scrutiny of filings, compliance management system to identify non-compliant companies and LLPs, and e-adjudication of various proceedings will be facilitated by the corporate affairs ministry's latest version of MCA21 portal, set to be unveiled next fiscal. The third version of MCA21 will be aided by artificial intelligence and machine learning. PTI

'New e-commerce policy in the offing'

NEW DELHI

The commerce and industry ministry is "definitely" working on a new e-commerce policy which will have various features such as those related to data and consumer rights, a senior official said on Friday. The other issues to be looked upon while formulating the policy are about the problem of counterfeit products, packaging and rules of origin, the DPIIT official said. PTI

RBI reiterates growth-supportive stance

Lowers projection for Q4 inflation, holds interest rates; to raise CRR in phases back to 4% by May 22

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said it would retain an accommodative policy stance into the next financial year to help revive growth on a durable basis even as it held interest rates and vowed to ensure inflation remains within target.

The RBI also lowered its projection for retail inflation for the current quarter and announced that it would gradually restore the Cash Reserve Ratio — which had been cut to address the pandemic's fallout — to 4% in two phases by May 22 as part of a 'normalisation process'.

Core a concern

After breaching the RBI's upper tolerance threshold of 6% for six consecutive months through November,



Growth hopes: The MPC sees FY22 GDP growth at 10.5%, lower than the 11% estimated by the Economic Survey. ■PTI

CPI inflation had eased to 4.6% in December, helped by an appreciable softening in vegetable prices and a base effect. Core inflation, excluding food and fuel, however, remained elevated at 5.5% in December with only a marginal moderation from a

month earlier. The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) noted in its statement that the RBI's January survey showed households' one-year ahead inflation expectations remained unchanged.

"With the larger than anti-

cipated deflation in vegetable prices in December closer to the target, it is likely that the food inflation trajectory will shape the near-term outlook," the MPC observed.

Sees Q4 inflation at 5.2%

Taking into consideration various factors including risks from increases in industrial raw material prices, the MPC revised its projections for CPI inflation: for the ongoing fourth-quarter to 5.2% (from 5.8% projected in December), that for the first half of 2021-22 to 5.2% to 5.0% (from 5.2% to 4.6%) and estimated it to ease to an average 4.3% in the third quarter, with risks broadly balanced.

The MPC also estimated real GDP growth at 10.5% in 2021-22, slightly lower than the 11% projected in the Eco-

nomic Survey and the International Monetary Fund's forecast of 11.5%.

Stating that growth was recovering, and that the outlook had improved significantly with the roll-out of the vaccine programme in the country, the MPC cautioned that the recovery was, however, still to gather firm traction, making it crucial to persist with policy support. The rate-setting panel voted unanimously to hold rates.

"Going forward, the Indian economy is poised to move in only one direction and that is upwards," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das asserted.

"It is our strong conviction, backed by forecasts, that in 2021-22, we would undo the damage that COVID-19 has inflicted on the economy," Mr. Das added.

Retail investors to be able to buy G-Secs directly: RBI

'E-access to bonds via RBI gilt account'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it would allow retail investors to open gilt accounts with the central bank to invest in government securities directly and without the help of intermediaries.

"It is proposed to provide retail investors with online access to the government securities market — both primary and secondary — directly through the Reserve Bank (Retail Direct)," RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said in a statement.

"This will broaden the investor base and provide retail investors with enhanced access to participate in the government securities market," he added.

"This is a major structural reform placing India

among select few countries which have similar facilities. This measure together with HTM [hold to maturity] relaxation, will facilitate smooth completion of the government borrowing programme in 2021-22," the RBI Governor added.

The RBI will soon come out with modalities for opening of such accounts.

Later answering questions at a press conference, Mr. Das said the provision would not in any way hinder flow of investors' funds into mutual fund schemes and bank deposits.

"Allowing retail participation in the G-Sec market is a bold step towards the financialisation of a vast pool of domestic savings and could be a game-changer," said SBI Chairman Dinesh Khara.

M&M's Q3 consolidated profit slips 6%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

Homegrown farm equipment and utility vehicles major Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M) on Friday reported a 6% fall in consolidated profit after tax from continuing and discontinued operations to ₹159.6 crore for the quarter ended December.

The company had posted a consolidated profit after tax from continuing and discontinued operations of ₹170.69 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal.

Consolidated revenue from operations stood at ₹21,625.95 crore, against ₹19,430.29 crore in the year-earlier period.

PSUs playing a role in farm sector will be not be sold'

Govt. lists firms that will stay outside purview of divestment

VIKAS DHOT

NEW DELHI

Public sector firms engaged in activities allied to the farm sector, such as provision of seeds to farmers, or procurement and distribution of food for the public distribution system, will not be up for sale under the new divestment policy announced in the Budget.

While the policy has specified four strategic sectors where 'bare minimum' public sector presence will be retained as per Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech, an annexure to the policy has listed out types of public sector entities that will remain outside



its ambit.

NITI Aayog would be in charge of recommending the firms in strategic sectors that should be retained, considered for privatisation or merger or 'subsidiarisation' with another public sector firm, or simply closed. "DIPAM shall move pro-

posal for obtaining 'in-principle' from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs for strategic disinvestment of a specific PSE from time to time, on a case-to-case basis. The timing for specific transactions will, however, be contingent on the considerations of appropriate sequencing, sectoral trends, administrative feasibility, investors' interests, etc," the policy memo explained.

Central public sector enterprises concerned with assisting farmers in getting access to seeds; promoting innovation in agriculture; or, procurement and distribution of food for public distribution system" are excluded.

Aditya Birla Capital profit rises 15%

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Aditya Birla Capital Ltd. reported consolidated third quarter profit increased by 15% to ₹289 crore. Consolidated revenue rose 16% to ₹5,346 crore.

The performance was driven by strong growth across businesses, the company said.

Gross disbursement in the lending businesses rose 18% to ₹5,100 crore. This was higher than the pre-COVID-19 level.

Asset management business achieved the highest-ever quarterly profit before tax of ₹194 crore, recording 12% growth, the firm said.

Individual first year premium in life insurance segment rose 6% in the nine months ended December 31 whereas the gross written premium in health insurance increased 57%.

SFL Q3 net profit rises 45% on business revival

₹12 interim dividend to be paid Feb. 17

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Non-banking finance company (NBFC) Sundaram Finance Ltd. has registered a 45% increase in net profit for the quarter ended December 2020 to ₹242 crore due to an uptick in most of its business segments.

Asset management business saw a revival in most of our business segments, except medium and heavy commercial vehicles. Passenger cars, tractors and construction equipment segments did particularly well in Q3," said Managing Director T.T. Srinivasaraghavan.

Interim dividend of ₹12 will be paid on February 17.

Root masterclass lights up milestone Test

England skipper celebrates 100th match with a century; Sibley plays supporting role to perfection

ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR
CHENNAI

In Latin they call it Centum. There is a magical ring to the number 100. It is a complete, fully rounded entity. And Joe Root made it hundred in 100. A century in 100th Test is much like extra cream on a cake. Makes it more delicious.

It was a hundred steeped in character, sound in technique, and rich in stroke-play. On a hot, humid day, Root battled cramps, was not overcome by the pressures of a momentous occasion and made his own destiny.

And at the end of Friday – the opening day of the series – Root was unbeaten on a 197-ball 128. The English captain 'swept' his way to glory.

Batting surface

And England, after Root won the toss, was on a comfortable 263 for three at stumps on a good batting surface.

Dogged opener Dom Sibley fell leg-before to a full-length thunderbolt from Jasprit Bumrah for a fighting 286-ball 87 in the day's last over.

It takes two to tango and the decisive Sibley, secure in defence, going fully forward or travelling right back, strong on the on-side, and not missing out on short balls, added 200 massive runs with Root for the third wicket, frustrating India.

Root walked in when England was at a tentative 63 for two – the impressive Bumrah had just reverse swung one to consume Dan Lawrence – and gradually assumed control.

Watching Root was an education in the art of batmanship. The last three years had been indifferent for him and the 30-year-old England captain has worked

on his methods.

His backswing is straighter, head position steadier and, consequently, he is beautifully balanced. His defence was solid and when he drove, his high left elbow was in view.

Far less challenging

After his huge monuments – 228 and 186 on surfaces offering turn at Galle in back-to-back Tests – the surface at the crowdless M.A. Chidambaram Stadium was far less challenging for Root.

The outfield was fast too and Root cashed in. A cover-drive off Bumrah, his left foot forward and to the ball's pitch, screamed for attention. The construction of the stroke from stance to finish was brilliant.

Among the hallmarks of great batsmen is how quickly they pick the length and adjust their footwork. And the manner Root went right back, shortening the length of left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem's delivery, and using the depth of the crease to glide the ball late, behind point, was high-quality stuff.

The Indian spinners, it seemed, still had the Australian hangover when they bowled a middle and leg line with men in catching position on the leg-side.

But then, you need bounce for this tactic to succeed and the pitch here lacked it. Instead they were swept and reverse-swept.

In the morning, the left-right pair of Rory Burns and Sibley gave England a sound 63-run start; the left-handed Burns could have left early had 'keeper Rishabh Pant held a difficult leg-side chance off Bumrah. Ishant Sharma bowled well, opening up batsmen, but without luck.

Burns perished attempting to reverse-sweep Ashwin but cramps.

A heroic Centum in Centum it was.



In his element: Joe Root displayed his class and finesse in ample measure. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

100 in 100

The players who have marked their 100th Test with a century

	Runs	Opponent	Venue	Year
Colin Cowdrey (Eng)	104	vs. Australia	Birmingham	1968
Javed Miandad (Pak)	145	vs. India	Lahore	1989
Gordon Greenidge (WI)	149	vs. England	St. John's	1990
Alec Stewart (Eng)	105	vs. West Indies	Manchester	2000
Inzamam-ul-Haq (Pak)	184	vs. India	Bengaluru	2005
Ricky Ponting (Aus)	120 & 143 n.o.	vs. South Africa	Sydney	2006
Graeme Smith (SA)	131	vs. England	The Oval	2012
Hashim Amla (SA)	134	vs. Sri Lanka	Johannesburg	2017
Joe Root (Eng)	128*	vs. India	Chennai	2021

* Innings in progress

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND – 1ST INNINGS

Rory Burns c Pant b Ashwin 33 (60b, 2x4), Dom Sibley lbw b Bumrah 87 (286b, 12x4), Dan Lawrence lbw b Bumrah 0 (5b), Joe Root (batting) 128 (197b, 14x4, 1x6); Extras (lb-4, nb-11): 15; Total (for three wkts. in 89.3 overs): 263.

Then Root assumed centrestage, using his feet against Ashwin.

Perhaps, no stroke encapsulated his spirit better than a sweep late in the day for a six off Ashwin after which he slid down in agony due to cramps.

A heroic Centum in Centum it was.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-63 (Burns, 23.5), 2-63 (Lawrence, 25.4), 3-263 (Sibley, 89.3).

INDIA BOWLING

Ishant 15-3-27-0, Bumrah 18.3-2-40-2, Ashwin 24-2-68-1, Nadeem 20-3-69-0, Washington 12-0-55-0.

Toss: England.

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Bangladesh in control

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CHATTOGRAM

Bangladesh reached 473 in its second innings at stumps on day three, stretching its lead to 218 on an increasingly deteriorating pitch. West Indies was all out for 259 in its first innings replying to the hosts' 430.

SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh – 1st innings:

430. **West Indies – 1st innings:** bowling: Kraigg Brathwaite b Nayeem 76, John Campbell lbw b Mustafizur 3, Shayne Moseley lbw Mustafizur 2, Nkrumah Bonner c Najmul b Taijul 17, Kyle Mayers lbw b Mehidy 40, Jermaine Blackwood c Liton b Mehidy 68, Joshua Da Silva c Liton b Nayeem 42, Rahkeem Cornwall b Mehidy 2, Kemar Roach c Mithun (sub) b Mehidy 0, Jomel Warriican b Taijul 4, Shannon Gabriel (not out) 0; Extras (lb-1, nb-4): 5; Total (in 96.1 overs): 259.

Fall of wickets: 1-11, 2-24, 3-75, 4-130, 5-154, 6-253, 7-253, 8-

9-23, 10-24, 11-25, 12-26, 13-27, 14-28, 15-29, 16-30, 17-31, 18-32, 19-33, 20-34, 21-35, 22-36, 23-37, 24-38, 25-39, 26-40, 27-41, 28-42.

West Indies bowling: 4-15-0, Cornwall 9-1-28-2, Gabriel 6-0-13-1, Warriican 1-0-1-0.

South Africa's top-order comes a cropper

SA IN PAKISTAN

ASSOCIATED PRESS
RAWALPINDI

South Africa's top order stumbled to 106-4 at stumps after Faheem Ashraf's second successive half-century had rallied Pakistan's first innings to 272 in the second

Test on Friday.

South Africa trails Pakistan by 166 runs in a match it must win to draw the series.

Pakistan fast bowler Hassan Ali (2-29) grabbed his wickets off successive deliveries and Ashraf had Faf du Plessis (17) caught behind to leave South Africa struggling



Good hand: Faheem Ashraf, rallying with the tail, scored a crucial, unbeaten 78 to swell Pakistan's total. ■ AP

in its first innings on day two.

Left-arm spinner Nauman Ali, who bagged seven wickets in his debut Test at Karachi last week at the age of 34, got the key wicket of Aiden Markram (32) with South

SCOREBOARD

Pakistan – 1st innings:

Imran Butt c de Kock b Maharaj 15, Abid Ali c Markram b Nortje 6, Azhar Ali lbw b Maharaj 0, Babar Azam c du Plessis b Nortje 77, Fawad Alam run out 45, Mohammad Rizwan c Rabada b Nortje 18, Faheem Ashraf (not out) 78, Hasan Ali c Elgar b Maharaj 8, Yasir Shah c & b Mulder 8, Nauman Ali c Markram b Nortje 8, Shaheen Shah Afridi c Elgar b Nortje 0; Extras (b-2, lb-2, nb-5): 9; Total (in 114.3 overs): 272.

Fall of wickets:

1-21, 2-21, 3-22, 4-145, 5-149, 6-190, 7-221, 8-251, 9-272.

Pakistan bowling:

Shaheen 5-19-0, Hasan 5-0-29-2, Ashraf 5-0-16-1, Nauman 9-5-19-1, Yasir 4-1-23-0.

IPL 2021: 1,097 in the fray

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI

A whopping 1,097 players from 16 countries have registered for the IPL auction to be held in Chennai on February 18, according to a BCCI statement.

A maximum of 61 slots, including 22 for overseas players, are available. While 814 of the registered players are Indians, 56 are from West Indies.

It is understood that S. Sreesanth and Shakib Al Hasan are also in the fray.

The preliminary list has been shared with the franchises and will be pruned over the next week based on their interest in the players. February 11 has been set as the deadline by the franchises to shortlist players.

We want to get 600-700: Root

SPORTS REPORTER
CHENNAI

Joe Root, who celebrated his 100th Test with a brilliant unbeaten 128, said his team would look to score 600 to 700 runs in the first innings.

In 2016, in the final Test in Chennai, England made 477 and still lost by an innings and 75 runs after India made 759 for 7 declared.

"We have got to get as many as we can; 600-700 if we can, really try to make the most of the first innings while [the pitch] is good," said Root.

"The foot-holes are starting to wear quickly, so if we can bat the whole of tomorrow or maybe day three, then things could speed up quite quickly for us. You never know what can happen from that point onwards."

"Ultimately we have got to try and back up today, and it has been an impressive start



Making it count: Sibley contributed 87 before being dismissed in the final over of the day. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

for us. We have got to make it count. That is going to be the challenge for this tour. We need to bat long periods in these conditions. That is all the focus will be, going into tomorrow."

Speaking about scoring his third hundred in as many

Tests, the 30-year-old said, "I am in some good form and need to make sure I cash in on it. I think, over the course of my career, I have not always gone on to make big scores, so for me to be going and doing that currently is pleasing."

Saliva ban has affected reverse swing: Bumrah

India quick says new COVID restrictions have limited the options for the seamers on flat tracks

S. DIPAK RAGAV
CHENNAI

Jasprit Bumrah said the ban on the use of saliva to shine the ball, a restriction introduced in the wake of the pandemic, has made it difficult to get reverse swing.

On a first-day wicket that did not offer any help for the bowlers, the 27-year-old pacer looked the most threatening, picking up two wickets.

"When the wicket is on the flatter side, because of the new rules there are limited options to shine the ball," said Bumrah after the day's play. "In India, the ball gets scuffed up and to make it reverse, you need to make one side heavy. With the sweat, it doesn't serve the purpose."



Bumrah celebrates a wicket with Pujara. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

But these are the rules of the game right now, and we have to make do with what we have."

FAITH

Germany dethrones Serbia

Zverev does it in doubles after losing to Djokovic; Spain also makes last four

ATP CUP

REUTERS
MELBOURNE

Alexander Zverev shrugged off a tight loss to Novak Djokovic to end Serbia's ATP Cup title defence with victory in the doubles as Germany advanced to the semifinals of the team-based event here on Friday. Germany will meet Russia in the last four, with Spain to take on Italy.

Zverev, beaten 7-6(3), 2-6, 5-7 in a high-quality match by World No.1 Djokovic earlier on Friday, stepped up to partner Jan-Lennard Struff to a rousing 7-6(4), 5-7, [10-7] victory over Djokovic and Nikola Cacic on Rod Laver Arena.

"We played well, both of us," he added of his doubles match with Struff, who beat Dusan Lajovic 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the opening singles rubber.

With Rafael Nadal still sidelined with a back problem, Pablo Carreno Busta

guided a depleted Spain into the last four by claiming a 6-3, 6-4 win against Greece's Michail Pervolarakis at John Cain Arena.

Though eliminated, Greece ended up winning the tie 2-1, with Stefanos Tsitsipas easing past Roberto Bautista Agut 7-5, 7-5.

The results:

Group A: Germany bt Serbia 2-1

[Jan-Lennard Struff bt Dusan Lajovic 3-6, 6-3, 6-4; Alexander Zverev lost to Novak Djokovic 7-6(3), 2-6, 5-7; Zverev & Struff bt Djokovic & Cacic 7-6(4), 5-7, 10-7.]

Group B: Greece bt Spain 2-1

[Michail Pervolarakis lost to Pablo Carreno Busta 3-6, 4-6; Stefanos Tsitsipas bt Roberto Bautista Agut 7-5, 7-5; Pervolarakis & Tsitsipas bt Carreno Busta & Marcel Granollers 1-0, ret'd.]

Group C: France bt Austria 2-1

[Nicolas Mahut bt Dennis Novak 7-6(2), 6-2; Benoit Paire lost to Dominic Thiem 1-6, ret'd.; Mahut & Edouard Roger-Vasselin bt Philipp Oswald & Tristan-Samuel Weissborn 6-3, 6-3].



Playing his part: Pablo Carreno Busta guided Spain into the semifinals. ■ REUTERS

Shoulder injury forces Serena to pull out

Barty enters final on a walkover; Halep crashes out; fatigue hits Wawrinka

TENNIS ROUNDUP

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MELBOURNE

Serena Williams pulled out of a semifinal clash against World No.1 Ashleigh Barty with a shoulder injury on Friday, days before the Australian Open, in the Yarra Valley Classic, while Simona Halep and Sofia Kenin both crashed to defeat.

Stan Wawrinka pulled out of his quarterfinal match against Jeremy Chardy due to fatigue in the Murray River Open.

The results: WTA Yarra Valley Classic: Semifinal: Ashleigh Barty w/o Serena Williams. Quarterfinals: Barty bt Shelby



Tragic: Serena decided to forego her semifinal against Barty because of a niggle in her shoulder. ■ AFP

Rogers 7-5, 2-6, 10-4; Garbine Muguruza bt Sofia Kenin 6-2, 6-2; Serena bt Danielle Collins 6-2, 4-6, 10-6; Marketa Vondrousova bt Nadia Podoroska 4-6, 6-3, 10-4.
Gippsland Trophy: Quarterfi-

round: Maria Sakkari bt Leylah Fernandez 6-2, 6-2; Angelique Kerber bt Ons Jabeur 6-4, 6-4; Victoria Azarenka bt Yulia Putintseva 6-1, 6-1, 11-9; Barbora Krejcikova bt Elena Rybakina 4-6, 6-2, 10-6; Sorana Cirstea bt Belinda Bencic 7-5, 6-2.
ATP Murray River Open: Quarterfinals: Jeremy Chardy w/o Stan Wawrinka; Daniel Evans bt Borna Coric 7-5, 7-6(1); Felix Auger-Aliassime bt Jiri Vesely 7-6(3), 0-0 ret'd.; Corentin Moutet bt Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 6-2.

Great Ocean Road Open: Quarterfinals: Thiago Monteiro bt Jordan Thompson 6-4, 6-4; Stefano Travaglia bt Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 6-3, 7-5; Jannik Sinner bt Miomir Kecmanovic 7-6(10), 6-4; Karen Khachanov bt Botic van de Zandschulp 6-7(6), 7-5, 6-3.

Nals: Ekaterina Alexandrova bt Simona Halep 6-2, 6-1; Kaia Kanepi bt Karolina Muchova ret'd.; Naomi Osaka bt Irina Begu 7-5, 6-1; Elise Mertens bt Elina Svitolina 6-3, 5-7, 10-6.
Grampians Trophy: Second

James on fire as Lakers rally to bury Nuggets



LeBron James. ■ AFP

phi 76ers 121-105.

The depleted Blazers won despite an array of injuries that got worse earlier Thursday with the announcement that marquee player Damian Lillard was ruled out of the contest with an abdominal strain.

The results: Grizzlies 103 lost to Rockets 115; 76ers 105 lost to Trail Blazers 121; Hawks 91 lost to Jazz 112; Lakers 114 bt Nuggets 93; Mavericks 116 lost to Warriors 147.

In Philadelphia, Carmelo Anthony delivered a throwback performance, scoring 22 points as the short-handed Portland Trail Blazers stunned Eastern Conference juggernaut Philadel-

James recorded the second triple-double of the season and 96th of his career as the Lakers opened their five-game home-stand with an impressive come-from-behind win.

With his third basket in the third quarter, James surpassed Wilt Chamberlain (12,681) for number three on career field scores list.

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Zeel knocks out top seed

SPORTS BUREAU
MONASTIR (TUNISIA)

Zeel Desai outplayed the No. 1 seed Angelica Mora-telli of Italy 6-1, 6-2 in the quarterfinals of the \$15,000 ITF women's tennis tournament on Friday.

In the \$30,775 Murray River Open ATP event in Melbourne, Divij Sharan and Igor Zelenay of Slovakia lost to fifth-seeds Jeremy Chardy and Fabrice Martin of France 7-6(5), 6-4.

The results: \$30,775 ATP, Melbourne, Australia: Quarterfinals: Jeremy Chardy & Fabrice Martin (Fra) bt Igor Zelenay (Svk) & Divij Sharan 7-6(5), 6-4.

\$15,000 ITF women, Monastir, Tunisia: Quarterfinals: Zeel Desai bt Angelica Mora-telli (Ita) 6-1, 6-2.
Second round: Zeel Desai bt Kathleen Kanev (Ger) 6-1, 3-6, 6-3.

\$25,000 ITF men, Villena, Spain: Quarterfinals: Dan Adaded (Fra) & Arjun Kadhe w/o. Jelle Sels & Tim Van Rijthoven (Ned).
Results:

LeBron James. ■ AFP

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