



PM trashes politics over vaccine, says he went by scientists' advice

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Perarivalan pardon plea to be considered in a week, says SC

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Bharat Arun reveals how India plotted Australia's downfall

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## NEARBY



CBI books Cambridge Analytica, another firm

NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has booked Cambridge Analytica (U.K.) Limited and Global Science Research Limited (U.K.) for alleged illegal harvesting of personal data of about 5.62 lakh Indian users on Facebook through an application.

NEWS ► PAGE 10



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## No further concessions to offer, govt. tells protesting farmers

No date set for next round of discussions yet

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

NEW DELHI

The negotiations between Central Ministers and farm unions came to a standstill on Friday with the government saying it had no further concessions to offer beyond the proposal to suspend the three contentious agricultural reform laws for 12 to 18 months. The unions rejected the proposal and reiterated their demand for the repeal of the laws.

No date has been fixed for another meeting.

At the end of a four-hour meeting, during which Mi-



All set: A farmer fixing the tricolour on his tractor in New Delhi on Friday, ahead of the Republic Day rally. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

nisters and union leaders were only in the same room for 20 minutes, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said the government had already presented its "best proposal". Urging the unions

to reconsider their stand, he said if they responded positively on Saturday, talks could resume.

Union leaders put up a united face during the meeting, jointly conveying their rejec-

tion of the proposal. Later, however, some leaders said they were open for further deliberations, while others took a more hardline position, vowing to intensify their agitation.

Tens of thousands of farmers have been camped on the borders of New Delhi for almost two months now, and thousands plan to enter the national capital for a tractor parade on Republic Day. Police officials have opposed the plan to hold the parade on the Outer Ring Road and presented an alternate proposal during discussions on Friday, which the farm unions will discuss on Saturday.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

MORE REPORTS ON ► PAGES 2 & 4

## Cong. leaders spar at CWC meet, defer party polls till June

Resolution backs strike by farmers

SANDEEP PHUKAN

NEW DELHI

Amid sharp exchanges between senior leaders over internal polls, Friday's virtual meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) deferred the decision to elect a new party president until June, even as it adopted three resolutions including one demanding a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into Republic TV promoter Arnab Goswami's leaked WhatsApp chats.

The other two resolutions were about backing the farmers' organisations in their fight against the farm laws, and expressing gratitude to scientists for developing a COVID-19 vaccine in record time, asking for free vaccines for the underprivileged sections and appealing to the people to get immunised.

However, the issue of holding organisational polls exposed the faultlines in the party with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and senior leader Anand Sharma sparring over it and former party president Rahul Gandhi stressing on the need to "avoid using harsh words".

When Madhusudan Misra, who heads the party's election panel suggested postponing the internal



Ghulam Nabi Azad

polls until May because of restrictions on large gathering due to COVID-19, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad opposed the idea and wanted the polls to be held immediately.

Multiple sources told *The Hindu* that Mr. Azad demanded elections not just to the CWC but also to the Central Election Committee, which decides who gets to contest elections on a Congress ticket.

He was backed by Anand Sharma and Mukul Wasni – both members of the group of 23 dissenters (G-23) who had asked for a revamp of the party in a letter to party chief Sonia Gandhi last August – as well as former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Offensive posts against Bihar Ministers may land you in jail

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PATNA

Bihar is set to use the cyber crime law to deter individuals and organisations from making "offensive comments" against the government, its officials, Ministers, MPs and MLAs.

"It has regularly been coming to light that certain persons and organisations have been making offensive comments through social media against the government, honourable Ministers, MPs, MLAs and government officials, which is against the prescribed law. For this act, it seems appropriate to take action against such organisations and individuals," Nayyar Hasnain Khan, IGP, Economic Offences Wing, which handles cyber crime, said in a letter written on January 21 to all Principal Secretaries and Secretaries. "You all are requested to inform the Economic Offences Wing about any such act so that suitable legal action can be taken against those organisations/individuals after investigation," it said.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav dared Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to send him to jail for "exposing the wrongdoings" of the government on social media.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

## West Bengal Forest Minister resigns from Cabinet

Banerjee sends resignation letter to CM, Governor

SHIV SAHAY SINGH

KOLKATA

West Bengal Forest Minister Rajib Banerjee on Friday resigned from the Cabinet.

"I regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my office as Cabinet Minister being in charge of Forest Department today, i.e. on 22 January



Jee and the charge of Forest Department would vest with the Chief Minister.

Mr. Banerjee is the third to resign from the Council of Ministers in the past two months. Former Trinamool heavyweight Suvedu Adhikari, who held several portfolios, including Transport, resigned from the Cabinet in December 2020 and the party and joined the BJP.

Former Indian cricketer and Sports Minister Laxmi Ratan Shukla resigned a few

weeks ago. Mr. Banerjee has been going public with his differences with the party over the past few months.

Not only was he absent from several Cabinet meetings but also called out against favouritism in the party. On January 16, he took to social media, saying he was going through a test of patience. He had told sources close to him that he would remain active in politics.

BALLY MLA EXPELLED ► PAGE 10

## 'No second attempt for UPSC aspirants'

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union government's law officer orally informed the Supreme Court on Friday that the Centre was "not agreeable" to giving Union Public Service Commission

(UPSC) aspirants, whose preparations for the October 4 prelims were severely restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a second crack at the exams for the elite civil services.

Bench led by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar, Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju said he received information late on January 21 about the government's unwillingness.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 8

Three artists withdraw plea against eviction

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Three artists who had moved the Delhi High Court against the notices sent to them by the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to vacate government-allotted houses by December 31, 2020 withdrew their plea on Friday. They are hoping for a one-year extension.

Mohiniyattam dancer Bharati Shivaji and Kuchipudi dancer Guru V. Jayarama Rao, who had been allotted government housing in 1987 under the eminent artists' quota, were among the group of artists who had been issued eviction notices in October 2020. They, along with Mr. Rao's wife, Kuchipudi dancer Banasri Rao, had moved the High Court in December and were given a stay on the eviction till Friday.

**'Extension assured'**  
Ms. Shivaji said the artists decided to withdraw their plea as they were "assured" they would be given a "one-year extension".

"We were compelled to file a plea at that time as we had no other option. Now, we are hoping for an extension on compassionate grounds. We have no intention of going against the government," she said.

The Cabinet Committee on Accommodation had on November 8, 2020 waived off the "damage charges" of ₹32.09 crore and regularised the allotment of homes to 27 artists as the allotment period had ended in 2014. The artists, including painter Jatin Das and Kathak dancer Pandit Birju Maharaj, were asked to vacate their government houses by December 31, 2020. The artists had been given the homes over the past five decades on the recommendation of the Culture Ministry.

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| 2        | 31-01-2021 | SEC-ECO-01   | Economy   | June 2020                |
| 3        | 07-02-2021 | SEC-GEO-01   | Geography   | July 2020                |
| 4        | 14-02-2021 | SEC-ENV-01   | Environment and Ecology                                   | August 2020              |
| 5        | 21-02-2021 | SEC-HIS-01   | Ancient and Medieval History of India and Art and Culture | September 2020           |
| 6        | 28-02-2021 | SEC-CSAT-01  | CSAT Part 1   |                          |
| 7        | 07-03-2021 | SEC-POL-02   | Polity  | October 2020             |
| 8        | 14-03-2021 | SEC-ECO-02   | Economy   | November 2020            |
| 9        | 21-03-2021 | SEC-GEO-02   | Geography   | December 2020            |
| 10       | 28-03-2021 | SEC-S&T-02   | Science and Technology                                    | January 2021             |
| 11       | 04-04-2021 | SEC-IIS-02   | Modern India  | February 2021            |
| 12       | 11-04-2021 | SEC-CSAT-02  | CSAT Part 2   |                          |
| 13       | 18-04-2021 | SEC-HIS-03   | Modern India  | March 2021               |
| 14       | 25-04-2021 | SEC-CAS-01   | Current Affairs Special                                   |                          |
| 15       | 02-05-2021 | GS-Mock-01   | Comprehensive Test GS                                     |                          |
| 16       | 09-05-2021 | GS-Mock-02   | Comprehensive Test GS                                     |                          |
| 17       | 16-05-2021 | GS-Mock-03   | Comprehensive Test GS                                     |                          |
| 18       | 16-05-2021 | CSAT-Mock-01 | Comprehensive Test CSAT                                   |                          |
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## IN BRIEF

**Bhajan singer Narendra Chanchal passes away**

NEW DELHI  
Popular 'bhajan' singer Narendra Chanchal (76), best known for his songs "Chalo bulawa aaya hai" and "Tune mujhe bulawa sheraawaliye", died following prolonged illness at a hospital here on Friday, hospital sources said.

**'BJP misusing govt. money, school premises'**

NEW DELHI  
The AAP on Friday alleged that BJP leaders were "misusing" government money and school premises for doing "fake politics". "Today at a school in Kalyanpur, BJP leaders started playing politics with mid-day meal kits. They distributed kits under their own banner in the presence of school principal and parents," said AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar.

**Bidhuri demands release of MLA development fund**

NEW DELHI  
Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, on Friday demanded that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal ensure the release of MLA Development Fund immediately as development work in Delhi had come to a standstill.

# 120 patients admitted so far at makeshift hospital at Singhu

Set up by a non-profit organisation, 8-bed hospital is a lifeline for ailing protesters

**HEMANI BHANDARI**  
NEW DELHI

Ever since a makeshift hospital was set up at the protest site on the Singhu border, a total of 120 patients have been admitted as on January 21, said Life Care Foundation, a non-profit organisation that started the hospital.

The eight-bed hospital, which was set up on January 8, has admitted 120 patients and is attending to over 300 patients in the outpatient department every day, said Avtar Singh, who started the foundation a year ago.

"It is really cold now. So most patients coming to the emergency department are asthma patients," said R.M. Sharma, Emergency Medical Officer while pointing at three patients lying in bed with oxygen masks.

Dr. Sharma said mostly, the admitted patients stay for a few hours or one day. However, there are patients who require more than a day. Pointing to an elderly man lying on a bed, Dr. Sharma said he had been there



Protesting farmers availing of medical facilities at the Life Care Foundation at the Singhu border on Friday. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

for three days because he got injured after falling off a mobile toilet and developed an infectious wound. They have been treating people for indigestion, diabetes, and blood pressure as well.

On Friday afternoon, a young man, who came shivering, walked into the hospital and Dr. Sharma said he was seemingly suffering from jaundice after which a nursing attendant immediately helped him to a bed and put him on liquid drip. Simultaneously, a lab attendant came and took the blood test to perform liver

function test. Mr. Avtar said there are three doctors, four nurses, and one physiotherapist who work here and are paid for the job.

**Help from Khalsa Aid**

Their salaries are paid by Khalsa Aid India. Mr. Avtar said, adding that he pays salaries of seven boys himself. "I've taken a loan of ₹3 lakh. But now, things are going very smoothly. God has blessed us and all the needs are being taken care of by the goodness of people who have given me their numbers in case I fall short of mate-

rial". Sharing a special moment, he said his wife asked him about the gift he wanted on the wedding anniversary on January 16. "I told her that we needed the blood count testing machine. So she bought it and gifted it to me," he said.

**Transcending beliefs**

At the Life Care Foundation pharmacy, Sadiq Mohammed, a resident of Roopnagar, who has been associated with Mr. Avtar for the last eight years, has been serving here since the beginning of the protest. He wears a turban since birth just like his father and grandfather. "People get shocked to see a Muslim wearing a turban but it is very normal for me because I have grown up seeing this. We offer namaz five times a day but during morning namaz, I visit the gurdwara and during evening namaz, my father goes to the gurdwara," he said, adding that turban is an honour for a farmer.



Toilet facility at the Singhu border. ■ SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

## Toilets, bathing facility set up at protest site

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

Two western and one Indian toilets and one bathroom have been constructed at the protest site, essentially for elderly and women. The toilets are being constructed by Doaba Sangharsh Committee.

Lakhwinder Singh Chakbam, a member who has been staying at the Singhu border, said those who are worshippers have to wake up early and take bath, which become tough as it is really dark at dawn. "They have to walk into the fields to bathe and to relieve themselves. There is also fear of pigs," he said.

Members said that this service is essentially for people of Doaba and those who might need in emergency. They are planning to put a lock at the toilets.

# Delhi Cong. moves court seeking details of money collected by AAP govt.

PIL sought amount paid to civic bodies

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress vice-president Abishek Dutt on Friday filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Delhi High Court, seeking details from the AAP government of the money collected by it through taxes and the grants received from the Central government, a share of which is payable to the Municipal Corporations of Delhi. In the PIL also asked for the amount paid to the municipal corporations and the manner in which the civic bodies have expended the money.

The PIL comes at a time when civic body workers, most of them who have been at the frontline during the COVID-19 crisis, have been on strike demanding their salaries while the AAP government and the BJP-run civic bodies have been trading charges on the state of

salaries. "The current plight of the civic bodies is such that neither the Central government nor the State government has been giving any funds to them, thus severely hampering the payment of salaries to the frontline corona warriors, who risked their own lives to work overtime during the lockdown and thereafter," Mr. Dutt said.

He added that the net tax collection by the Delhi government was on the rise, and it even made a ₹60,000-crore budget estimate but it had not complied with the Finance Commission's recommendations on giving money to the civic bodies for "basic expenses".

Mr. Dutt demanded a "true and complete" disclosure of funds collected by the Delhi government and

## Man held with fake currency notes

He had delivered FICN with a face value of ₹20 lakh in Delhi-NCR

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

A 44-year-old man was arrested on Friday with fake currency notes with a face value of ₹4 lakh in east Delhi's Anand Vihar, the police said.

The accused has been identified as Sheikh Shehzad, a resident of Delhi, who hails from Motihari district in Bihar, they said.

The recovered notes have almost every feature like that of an original one, including security thread and watermarks, the police said.

"On Thursday, the police

were informed that a member of a fake Indian currency note [FICN] syndicate would come to Anand Vihar railway station to deliver a huge consignment to one of his contacts named Raja.

"A trap was laid and the accused was nabbed. The police recovered FICN in the denomination of ₹2,000 and with a total face value of ₹4 lakh from his possession," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Sanjeev Kumar Yadav said.

During interrogation, Mr. Shehzad said he received consignments from a man

named Habibur Rehman, a resident of Kalachak in West Bengal. Mr. Shehzad had already delivered four to five consignments of FICN worth ₹20 lakh in Delhi and NCR, the DCP said.

He told the police that all the new security features that the government introduced were being quickly updated on fake currency notes. He was earlier arrested by Delhi Police Special Cell along with three accomplices in 2016 and FICN with the face value of ₹10.25 lakh was recovered from them, the police said.

## Minimum temperature dips below normal, settles at 4.2°C



Fog lowered visibility to 350 metres at Safdarjung and Palam on Friday morning. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

morning, fog lowered visibility to 350 metres at Safdarjung and Palam.

For Saturday, the Met Department has forecast a partly cloudy sky with moderate to dense fog in the morning and strong surface winds

during the day.

The maximum and minimum temperatures will be around 20 and 7 degrees Celsius respectively. Under the influence of a Western Disturbance, the sky is likely to be cloudy over the weekend

quality is expected to improve in the coming days.

"Due to better ventilation condition, AQI is forecast to marginally improve on January 23 and 24, but will stay in the 'very poor' category. The middle end of the 'very poor' category is forecast for January 25," said a statement by the government-run monitoring agency SAFAR.

Also, the speed of surface-level winds was "moderate", which aided in lesser accumulation of pollutants near the surface. However, the "mixing layer height", which is the height from the ground level up to which pollutants can be dispersed, was "low".

## Fire engulfs multi-storey building in central Delhi

No casualty reported; guard rescued

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

A fire broke out on the second floor of a multi-storey building in central Delhi's ITO on Friday morning, fire officials said.

No casualty has been reported. A security guard stuck on the terrace of the building was rescued by fire fighters. "We received a call at 8.30 a.m. about a fire in a meter board at the Institu-

tion of Engineers building at ITO," said Atul Garg, director, Delhi Fire Service.

Initially, three fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Later, nine more were pressed into service and the blaze was doused within an hour, he said.

In another incident, a fire broke out at a paint godown in south-west Delhi's Palam on Friday. No causality has been reported.

The court said it hoped that the media would follow "self regulation techniques" while reporting on a case pending investigation or trial.

"Self regulation is the best mode of regulation," Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dinesh Kumar said.

While the press and the news media was described as the "Fourth Estate" in a de-

mocratic society, there existed a risk of prejudice being caused if they failed to do their duty with care and caution and one of such risks was that of 'media trial', he said.

The plea moved by Mr. Khalid has claimed that the media reports have quoted from his alleged disclosure statement to show that he has confessed to his involvement in the riots and it was prejudicing his right to a fair trial. He had told the court that below the alleged disclosure statement, which was part of the chargesheet filed against him, it was written "refused to sign" by the accused.

"However, there exists a risk of prejudice being caused if the press and media fail to do their duty with care and caution. One of such risks is that of 'media trial'. One of the basic principles of criminal jurisprudence is presumption of innocence."

"This should not be destroyed at the very threshold through the process of media trial. Protection of such presumption is essential for maintenance of the dignity of the courts."

## Riots: 'media trial should not destroy presumption of undertrial's innocence'

Umar Khalid alleges vicious media campaign against him

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI

"Presumption of innocence" should not be destroyed at the very threshold of justice process through media trial, a court said here on Friday on a plea moved by former JNU student leader Umar Khalid alleging "vicious media campaign" against him in a north-east Delhi riots case.

The court said it hoped that the media would follow "self regulation techniques" while reporting on a case pending investigation or trial.

"Self regulation is the best mode of regulation," Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dinesh Kumar said.

While the press and the news media was described as the "Fourth Estate" in a de-

Fourth Estate in a democratic society. It has been regarded as one of the sentinels guarding the existence of the society. The most important role of the media is its ability to mobilise the thinking process of a large number of the population.

"However, there exists a risk of prejudice being caused if the press and media fail to do their duty with care and caution. One of such risks is that of 'media trial'. One of the basic principles of criminal jurisprudence is presumption of innocence."

"This should not be destroyed at the very threshold through the process of media trial. Protection of such presumption is essential for maintenance of the dignity of the courts."

## Cheating case against SAD leader and Delhi gurdwara body chief

FIR registered against Sirsa over misappropriation of funds

**STAFF REPORTER**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing has registered a cheating case against Shiromani Akali Dal leader and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) president Manjinder Singh Sirsa, officials said on Friday.

According to reports, a Delhi court had in November last year directed the EOW to register an FIR against Mr. Sirsa for alleged misappropriation of funds during his tenure as the secretary general of the DSGMC.

The case against Mr. Sirsa and others was regis-

tered on Thursday for cheating and embezzlement of gurdwara funds by making huge unjustified payments amounting to around ₹1 crore for the purchase of tents, blankets and tarpaulin from sham companies, the police said.

It was registered on the basis of a complaint by one Bhupinder Singh, who is one of the stakeholders in the funds received by the DSGMC, they said.

**Charges**  
The case was registered under Sections 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 406 (punishment for criminal breach of trust) and 120B (punishment of criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, the police said.

An investigation is under way, they added.



Manjinder Singh Sirsa

We are taking all necessary COVID-19 Precautionary Measures

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- LAJPAT NAGAR, 49, Main Ring Road, Adj. Haldi Ram, Near Moolchand Crossing

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| 1                     | PWD B&R, YAMUNA NAGAR                                    | WIDENING AND STRENGTHENING OF SANGIPUR TO DHAULIA (RD 592) IN YAMUNA NAGAR DISTRICT (RE-INVITE) + 1 OTHER WORK  | 28.01.2021<br>10.02.2021  | 48.10 LACS                       | https://etenders.hry.nic.in | 01732-237834<br>pwd-eepd-yamunagar@hry.nic.in |               |  |
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Timings  
DELHI

|                      |
|----------------------|
| SATURDAY, JAN. 23    |
| RISE 07:14 SET 17:54 |
| RISE 13:22 SET 02:20 |
| SUNDAY, JAN. 24      |
| RISE 07:13 SET 17:54 |
| RISE 14:01 SET 03:15 |

|                      |
|----------------------|
| MONDAY, JAN. 25      |
| RISE 07:13 SET 17:55 |
| RISE 14:45 SET 04:11 |

|               |     |     |
|---------------|-----|-----|
| Delhi Weather | max | min |
| Delhi City    | 19  | 04  |
| Safdarjung    | 19  | 04  |
| Palam         | 17  | 08  |

**Delhi Palam Today**  
20°C Shallow fog likely during morning. Rise in morning temperature. A pleasant day with moderate winds.

**Delhi Palam Tomorrow**  
19°C A cold morning with shallow to moderate fog likely during morning. A pleasant day would prevail with with partly cloudy sky.

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THE HINDU

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# RLDA e-roadshows showcase NDLS redevelopment work

Project at request for qualification stage; Feb. 2 last date for submission of applications

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) has conducted online roadshows on the redevelopment of the New Delhi Railway Station (NDLS) – the first project to be undertaken on the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) concept in the NCR.

The RLDA is a statutory body under the Ministry of Railways for the development of vacant railway land. Currently, the Indian Railways has approximately 43,000 hectares of vacant land across the country and is also handling 84 railway colony redevelopment projects.

**Flagship project**

"The redevelopment of the New Delhi Railway Station is our flagship project that will transform Delhi-NCR. The project has attracted interest from various stakeholders.



The redevelopment of New Delhi Railway Station will transform Delhi-NCR, said RLDA Vice Chairman. ■ R.V. MOORTHY

As a responsible organisation, our foremost priority is to engage with them, keep them apprised of various developments and incorporate their views and suggestions into the project," said RLDA Vice-Chairman Ved Parkash Dubeja.

The objective of the initiative is to engage with relevant stakeholders such as leading international real es-

tate developers, infrastructure players and financial institutions from advanced geographies such as Europe, Australia and South Asia.

According to the RLDA, the project is currently at the Request for Qualification (RFQ) stage with February 2 as the last date of submission of applications.

While RLDA is the approving authority for the master plan, an Apex Committee

under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal has been constituted to ensure coordination amongst the various civic agencies involved and expedite the approvals and clearances.

The roadshow was preceded by a pre-bid conference held in September 2020 for the project, which entails a capital expenditure of approximately \$680 million over a period of four years and offers multiple revenue streams to the developer including revenue from real estate rights for a period of 60 years.

According to the RLDA, the station has a master plan area of 120 hectares of which 88 hectares is being planned in Phase I; the redevelopment will seek to remodel the NDLS into a world-class station in line with global standards.

## CM meets DSIIIDC officials to review work on IT park Construction to commence from May

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday convened a meeting with Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (DSIIIDC) officials to review the development work on the new Rani Khera Technology Park – a new IT business park to be constructed.

The officials gave a presentation on the construction work, which will commence from May, 2021. The roadshow was preceded by a pre-bid conference held in September 2020 for the project, which entails a capital expenditure of approximately \$680 million over a period of four years and offers multiple revenue streams to the developer including revenue from real estate rights for a period of 60 years.

According to the RLDA, the station has a master plan area of 120 hectares of which 88 hectares is being planned in Phase I; the redevelopment will seek to remodel the NDLS into a world-class station in line with global standards.

According to the RLDA, the project is currently at the Request for Qualification (RFQ) stage with February 2 as the last date of submission of applications.

According to the RLDA, the station has a master plan area of 120 hectares of which 88 hectares is being planned in Phase I; the redevelopment will seek to remodel the NDLS into a world-class station in line with global standards.

## RRTS to adopt European signalling tech

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The country's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) is set to use an advanced signalling and train control system, said officials of the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC).

According to the NCRTC, the RRTS will adopt a modern European Train Control System Level 2 signalling over the long-term evolution backbone with the adoption of state-of-art Hybrid Level 3. "Adoption of this signalling technology adds to the distinction of RRTS, as the first technologically advanced rail network in India will be operational with a design speed of 180 km/hr," the NCRTC stated.

The ETCS signalling system will be a key enabler in ensuring interoperability and train movement at quick frequencies, thereby reducing waiting time for passengers.

## Four storks that died in zoo found negative for bird flu

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Samples of four storks that died in the Delhi zoo have tested negative for bird flu, said officials on Friday.

Earlier this month, a sample of an owl from the zoo had tested positive for bird flu. "We had sent 12 samples from the zoo, four samples of dead storks and eight live birds, to National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal, for testing and it came out negative yesterday [Thursday],"



A dead goose at Sanjay Lake in Delhi. ■ FILE PHOTO ■

A Delhi government official said.

A total of 24 samples from nine locations in the city have tested positive for bird flu till now, the official said.

## Delhi records 266 fresh cases, 7 deaths

Over 70,000 tests done in a single day, says government

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The city witnessed 266 fresh COVID-19 cases in 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 6,33,542, according to a health bulletin released by the Delhi government on Friday.

Also, seven more deaths have been reported in 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 10,789. A total of 71,850 tests were done in a day.

Of the total cases,

Virus spread

| Total number of COVID-19 cases | Total deaths |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| 6,33,542                       | 10,789       |

New cases in the past 24 hours

266

New deaths

7

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

on Friday and the overall positivity till now is 6.20%, as per the bulletin.

Availability of beds

Out of the total 9,068 beds available for COVID-19 treatment in the city, 8,125 were vacant.

There were only 825 people under home isolation and 943 in hospitals.

The Case Fatality Rate till now is 1.7%. Also, there were 1,836 containment zones in the city as of Friday.

## Will include riot-hit areas in collection drive for Ram temple, announces Tiwari

North East BJP MP says he will approach all sections of society

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

North East Delhi MP Manoj Tiwari will begin a door-to-door "Rath Yatra" in his constituency, which also includes areas hit by last year's riots, to collect donations for the Ram temple in Ayodhya from February 1.

Mr. Tiwari said the "Sri Ram Janmabhumi Nirman Nidhi Abhiyan" in his constituency will seek to reach out to "all sections of society"

and all donations would be voluntary.

"I will reach out to all sections of the society in north-east Delhi had witnessed violence in February 2020, which led to over 50 deaths and left hundreds injured in addition to massive destruction of private and public property.

His drive will be part of a larger effort of which the VHP, the RSS and the BJP will launch from February 1 for donations for the temple.

According to him, no target has been fixed for the

amount of contributions to be collected. Several areas in north-east Delhi had witnessed violence in February 2020, which led to over 50 deaths and left hundreds injured in addition to massive destruction of private and public property.

His drive will be part of a larger effort of which the VHP, the RSS and the BJP will launch from February 1 for donations for the temple.

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**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

General Public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male Namely Abdul Wahab S/o Unknown, R/o Unknown Age: about 75 years, Height: about 166 cm, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Normal, Wearing: Green coloured Jersey & blue coloured pant. He was working as Labour at Bhogal Chole wala, Backside Scindia House, Janpath, Connaught Place, New Delhi. He was found unconscious on 21.01.2021 at 10:56 AM from Bhogal Dhaba & he was taken to LHM Hospital, during the treatment Doctors declared him dead vide MLC No.169/20210009553. In this regard a FIR/DD No.21-A dated 21.01.2021 has been lodged at P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi. If any one having any clue about deceased male may kindly inform the undersigned and contact on following numbers.

**SHO**  
P.S. Barakhamba Road, New Delhi  
Ph.No.: 011-23413999, 23413800  
DP/201/NDD/2021

**SEARCH FOR MISSING**

General public is hereby informed that a boy Nitesh Kumar Yadav S/o Ram Kumar Yadav, R/o C-592, New Friends Colony, New Delhi has been missing since 01.01.2021 from the area of PS New Friends Colony, South-East District, Delhi. In this regard, FIR No. 02/021 dated 01.01.2021 has been registered at P.S. New Friends Colony, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the missing boy but no clue has come to light so far. The description of the missing boy is as under:

**Name:** Nitesh Kumar Yadav, **Gender:** Male, **Age:** 13 years, **Height:** 5', **Complexion:** Fair, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Normal, **Wearing:** Chocolate colour shirt, black colour pant and black colour sandal on his feet. If anyone has any information regarding this missing boy, kindly inform SHO/New Friends Colony, Delhi.

E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in  
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641  
Fax: 011-24368639  
P.S. New Friends Colony, Delhi,  
Ph. No. 011-26934863, 26834563

**SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED GIRL**

General Public is hereby informed that one girl namely Priyanka D/o Sanjay Singh R/o H.No. C-159, Gali No. 2, Vijay Nagar Colony, Bawana, Delhi Aged- 17 Years has been reported missing/kidnapped since 02.01.2021 at about 08:00 PM from the area of P.S. Bawana, Delhi vide FIR No. 8/2021 u/s 363 IPC Dated 03.01.2021 has been registered at Police Station Bawana, Delhi. Her physical description is as under:-

**Complexion:** Shallow, **Height:** 4'5", **Face:** Round, **Built:** Thin, **Hair:** Black-long, **ID:** Old burn mark on right leg, **Wearing:** White coloured jacket, pink coloured pajami and green coloured jutti in feet.

Any person having any information/Clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Bawana, Delhi at E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in or website : <http://cbi.nic.in>

Sd/-  
Tele No.: 011-24368638 or 24368641 SHO, Bawana, Delhi  
FAX No.: 011-24368639 Tel.: 011-27752534  
DP/719/ON/2021 Mob.: 7065036321

**APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION**

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of a male namely Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, was found on 20.01.2021 at 05:54 PM on KM Pole No. 4/2-4/4, Near Hallan Chowk, Old Selampur, Delhi. In this regard DD No. 23A dated 20.01.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Old Delhi Railway Station. Identification of unidentified dead body of male is as under:

**Name:** Unknown, **Age:** 25-30 Years, **Height:** 5'4", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Injury:** Head Injury, **Wearing:** Black Colour T-Shirt & Military Colour Lower.

If anyone have any information or clue about this male deceased may kindly be inform undersigned.

**SHO**  
Police Station, Old Delhi Railway Station  
Ph.: 011-23961522, 9968318499

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED**

See Section 82 Cr.P.C  
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Sajida W/o Abdul Hassan R/o C-2/1308, Sector-27, Rohini, Delhi has committed (or suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 525/2019 U/s 376/506/109 IPC PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Sajida cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Sajida has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said Sajida of FIR No. 525/2019 U/s 376/506/109 IPC PS Shahbad Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 02.03.2021.

By Order  
Shri Vaibhav Mehta  
Metropolitan Magistrate  
Rohini Court, Delhi

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED**

(See Section 82 Cr. P.C.)  
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Sonu, S/o Pankaj, R/o Tent wale School ke samne, Janta Majdoor Colony, Welcome Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case e-FIR No. 27450/18 U/s 379/411/34 IPC, dt. 05.08.2018 PS Harsh Vihar, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Sonu can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Sonu has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Sonu of case e-FIR No. 27450/18 U/s 379/411/34 IPC, PS Harsh Vihar, Delhi is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before 01.03.2021.

By Order  
Shri Ajeet Narayan  
Metropolitan Magistrate  
Karkardooma Court Shahdara, Delhi

DP/500/NE/2021

# 'Akalis and AAP spreading lies'

Centre's refusal to accept farmers' demands inhuman, says Punjab CM

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH



Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday accused the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) of spreading lies over the farm laws and dubbed the Centre's refusal to repeal them as 'inhuman'. He also announced jobs for one member of each of the families of the State's farmers who had lost their lives in the agitation against the new laws.

The Chief Minister said the Centre should repeal the laws, then sit with the farmers and frame new laws after

taking all stakeholders into confidence. Pointing out that the Constitution of India had already been amended many times, he asked why the Government of India was

adamant about not taking back the laws. Capt. Amarinder was speaking on a 'Facebook Live' session.

The Chief Minister said "we are losing our farmers to the cold every day, with an estimated 76 dying so far."

**Jobs for family members**

In addition to the ₹5 lakh compensation being given to the families of the deceased farmers, his government would also give a job to a family member, he added.

Capt. Amarinder said the Akalis and the AAP were spreading lies on the issue of the high-powered commit-

tee on agricultural reforms, as exposed by an RTI response.

Pointing out that Punjab was not even included initially in the committee, he said it was only after he wrote to the Centre that Punjab's name was added, by which time the first meeting had already taken place without the State's representation. The second meeting was attended by Manpreet Badal as financial issues were discussed, while in the third and final meeting, no politician was invited and only the Agriculture Secretary attended.

# Accept demands of farmers, says Hooda

'Government indifferent to their plight'

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
GURUGRAM

plaza in Hansi. The former Chief Minister said he stood with farmers whole-heartedly as he himself was the son of one and understood their pain.

**Nation deeply hurt'**  
Mr. Hooda said the nation was deeply hurt by the indifference of the government as many farmers had lost their lives in the struggle for their legitimate demands.

"We and the nation stands with the farmers. Their martyrdom will not go in vain," he said.

## Rajasthan Assembly session to begin from February 10

Governor gives his nod to convene it

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
JAIPUR

The budget session of the Rajasthan Assembly will begin from February 10. Governor Kalraj Mishra on Friday gave permission to convene the budget session, which will be the sixth during the current Assembly, after declaring the prorogation of fifth session.

The fifth session of the Assembly was adjourned sine die on November 2, 2020, after the passage of three Bills to stop the applicability of the Centre's new

The proposal was later approved through circulation among the Cabinet members before its referral to the Raj Bhavan.

"The discussion has been partially successful. The

agriculture sector laws in the State. The Bills were put to vote following a walkout staged by the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party.

The proposal for convening the budget session was to be placed in a State Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, but it was cancelled following the death of Congress MLA Gajendra Singh Shaktawat.

A delegation of BJP leaders met Revenue Divisional Commissioner (Northern) to discuss the bottlenecks in purchasing thousands of paddy packets lying under open sky in different market yards.

"The discussion has been partially successful. The

# Odisha BJP issues ultimatum on procurement

Party says it will hit the streets if purchasing was not streamlined in next 72 hours

**SATYASUNDAR BARIK**  
BHUBANESWAR

RDC assured us of resolution of problems that can be taken up at his level whereas he would recommend other issues to the government for redressal," said Sameer Mohanty, president, Odisha BJP.

The BJP has been at loggerheads with the government over the issue of non-procurement of paddy in western Odisha.

**MPs, MLAs take part**

MPs, MLAs and senior party leaders of western Odisha took part in the protest launched by the party on Thursday.

Mr. Mohanty, Leader of the Opposition in the Odisha Legislative Assembly Pradip Nayak, MPs and MLAs slept on the floor of the Sambalpur Town Police Station on Thursday night.

Jai Naryan Mishra, Samalpur MLA and convenor of the protest, said, "The RDC assured that he would take steps to stop the collection of a small portion of paddy by procurement agencies, and enable farmers whose token has been lapsed to sell their paddy."

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) had attributed disruption in paddy procurement to the

non-release of subsidy of about ₹6,039 crore by the Centre.

**No Central subsidy'**

Ranendra Pratap Swain, State Food Supplies Minister, wrote to Piyush Goyal, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution:

"Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation has so far borrowed a staggering sum of ₹15,000 crore to run the programme. This high volume of bank loan is mainly due to the non-release of subsidy by the Department of Food and Public Distribution."

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— Alok Kr. Ranjan

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**WEATHER WATCH**

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE & AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Saturday:** Heavy rain/snow likely at isolated places over Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh and Muzaffarabad. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning/hail likely at isolated places over Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Cold/severe cold day conditions likely in isolated pockets over Uttar Pradesh

| CITY        | RAIN      | MAX  | MIN | CITY          | RAIN      | MAX  | MIN |
|-------------|-----------|------|-----|---------------|-----------|------|-----|
| Agartala    | ... .23.1 | 13.6 | ... | Kozhikode     | ... .33.8 | 25.0 | ... |
| Ahmedabad   | ... .31.4 | 11.1 | ... | Kurnool       | ... .33.4 | 20.7 | ... |
| Aizawl      | ... .7    | ...  | ... | Lucknow       | ... .15.6 | 6.3  | ... |
| Allahabad   | ... .23.7 | 9.0  | ... | Madurai       | ... .32.8 | 23.8 | ... |
| Bengaluru   | ... .30.3 | 20.1 | ... | Mangaluru     | ... .33.5 | 22.1 | ... |
| Bhopal      | ... .28.5 | 9.4  | ... | Mumbai        | ... .31.3 | 17.0 | ... |
| Bhubaneswar | ... .31.4 | 15.0 | ... | Mysuru        | ... .32.4 | 16.8 | ... |
| Chandigarh  | ... .18.9 | 8.8  | ... | New Delhi     | ... .18.6 | 4.2  | ... |
| Chennai     | ... .32.0 | 24.5 | ... | Patna         | ... .20.4 | 10.6 | ... |
| Coimbatore  | ... .30.6 | 22.6 | ... | Pond Blair    | ... .30.2 | 21.4 | ... |
| Dehradun    | ... .18.4 | 5.0  | ... | Puducherry    | ... .31.7 | 24.0 | ... |
| Gangtok     | ... .0.1  | 13.4 | 5.2 | Pune          | ... .31.9 | 15.1 | ... |
| Goa         | ... .31.6 | 20.8 | ... | Raipur        | ... .29.2 | 9.4  | ... |
| Guwahati    | ... .23.8 | 11.9 | ... | Ranchi        | ... .25.7 | 8.8  | ... |
| Hubballi    | ... .31.0 | 18.0 | ... | Shillong      | ... .16.3 | 5.0  | ... |
| Hyderabad   | ... .32.2 | 18.5 | ... | Shimla        | ... .15.5 | 7.6  | ... |
| Imphal      | ... .22.4 | 5.6  | ... | Srinagar      | ... .6.2  | 5.5  | ... |
| Jaipur      | ... .26.6 | 9.4  | ... | Tiruchi       | ... .32.0 | 24.4 | ... |
| Kochi       | ... .31.8 | 25.2 | ... | Vijayawada    | ... .31.4 | 21.6 | ... |
| Kohima      | ... .15.0 | 4.6  | ... | Visakhapatnam | ... .29.4 | 23.8 | ... |
| Kolkata     | ... .26.0 | 13.6 | ... |               |           |      |     |

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

**Pollutants in the air you are breathing**

Yesterday

CITIES SO NO CO PM2.5 PM10 CODE  
Ahmedabad ... 23 107 .64 .144 .151 ...  
Bengaluru ... .6 .56 .31 .82 .88 ...  
Chennai ... .12 .25 .58 .74 ...  
Delhi ... 19 13 101 .491 .440 ...  
Hyderabad ... .6 .37 .19 .128 .123 ...  
Kolkata ... 39 .24 .57 .327 .201 ...  
Lucknow ... 10 .76 .54 .278 .338 ...  
Mumbai ... 19 .40 .66 .332 .205 ...  
Pune ... .156 .44 .120 .102 ...  
Visakhapatnam ... 20.4 .40 .225 .148 ...

In observation made at 4.00 p.m. Faridabad, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 376 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 32.

Air Quality Code: ■ Poor ■ Moderate ■ Good (Readings indicate average AQI)  
**SO:** 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:** 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.

**PM2.5 & 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

# Active cases dip below 45,000; 3,419 recoveries in Maharashtra

State records 2,779 fresh cases, 50 deaths; Pune reports spike of over 500 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

Maharashtra on Thursday recorded 3,419 COVID-19 recoveries and 2,779 new cases as active cases dipped to 44,926, while the total case tally touched 20,03,657.

Fifty more deaths took the toll to 50,684 and total recoveries now stand at 19,06,827. The State's recovery rate is 95.17%, while the case fatality rate is 2.53%.

Pune reported over 500 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,84,449. Three deaths saw the total death toll rise to 7,888. As per district administration figures, there are 4,790 active cases and recovery rate is 96.35%.

## 483 cases in Mumbai

Mumbai city reported 483 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,05,136, of which just 6,442 are active. Nine fatalities saw the city's death toll reach 11,287.

Nagpur district in Vidarbha reported more than 250 new cases, taking the dis-



**Waiting for a jab:** Beneficiaries queue up at a registration desk at a vaccination centre in south Mumbai on Friday. ■ EMMANUEL YOGINI

trict's case tally to 1,33,415, of which 4,157 are currently active. A single death saw the total death toll reach 3,319.

In western Maharashtra, Satara reported two deaths, while 70 fresh cases saw the total case tally rise to 55,896, of which just 727 are active. Its death toll stands at 1,670.

In north Maharashtra, Nashik district reported over 100 cases and three fatalities as its total case tally reached 119,858, of which 1,217 are active. Its toll stands at 1,975.

Neighbouring Sangli reported 18 cases and a single death as the district's reported cases reached 50,684, of which just 481 are active. Its

death toll stands at 1,779.

Kolhapur reported 22 cases and no deaths as its tally reached 49,052, of which just 172 are active. The total death toll stands at 1,474.

"Of 1,40,80,930 laboratory samples tested thus far, 20,03,657 (with the case positivity rate down to 14.23%)

have returned positive with over 61,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

A total of 2,13,414 people across the State are in home quarantine and 2,019 are in institutional quarantine.

## 2nd clean slate day in Dharavi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI

Dharavi did not report a single new case of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours, the second such instance since December 25, a civic official said on Friday.

which 457 are active, while its death toll stands at 1,474.

"Of 1,40,80,930 laboratory samples tested thus far, 20,03,657 (with the case positivity rate down to 14.23%)

have returned positive with over 61,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

A total of 2,13,414 people across the State are in home quarantine and 2,019 are in institutional quarantine.

Mumbai Congress leaders, ministers, MLAs, and corporators joined the rally from Jambori ground. "India lost 42 jawans in the Pulwama attack, but he was happy his channel's TRP was going up. If Deepika Padukone's WhatsApp chats can be made public, why can't Goswami?" he asked.

Mumbai Congress executive president Charan Singh Sapra said the probe should find out who leaked the information. "Was it the PM's Office or the office of Amit Shah? Those who did this should be probed and treated as traitors," he said.



**Irate:** Mumbai Congress president Bhaji Jagtap leads a march to Arnab Goswami's office in Worli on Friday. ■ VIVEK BENDRE

## Congress leaders take out rally to Arnab's office

Party seeks probe into WhatsApp chats

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

Mumbai Congress leaders on Friday termed Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami a 'traitor' and led a march to his office in Worli, demanding his arrest.

"How did the Prime Minister's Office leak information on a secret operation to Goswami? Who are the traitors who did this? Goswami not only used the sensitive information to increase his channel's TRP but also jeopardised national security. He should be arrested and probed," said Mumbai Congress president Bhaji Jagtap.

Mumbai Congress leaders, ministers, MLAs, and corporators joined the rally from Jambori ground. "India lost 42 jawans in the Pulwama attack, but he was happy his channel's TRP was going up. If Deepika Padukone's WhatsApp chats can be made public, why can't Goswami?" he asked.

Mumbai Congress executive president Charan Singh Sapra said the probe should find out who leaked the information. "Was it the PM's Office or the office of Amit Shah? Those who did this should be probed and treated as traitors," he said.

## Illegal construction case: Sonu Sood moves SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Actor Sonu Sood moved the Supreme Court on Friday, challenging the Bombay High Court's order dismissing his appeal against a Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) notice over alleged illegal construction at his building in Juhu.

Advocate Vineet Dhanda, who has filed the plea, said, "The petitioner has not

made any changes in the building that warrants permission from the BMC. Only those changes that are allowed under the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act have been done."

As per the BMC, the actor carried out structural changes in the six-storey residential building, Shakti Sagar, and converted it into a hotel without taking requisite permissions.

## Farmers to begin vehicle march to Mumbai today

Journey will start from Nashik

STAFF REPORTER  
MUMBAI

To demand repealing of the three farm laws, 20,000 farmers from across the State will begin a march to Mumbai from Nashik on Saturday, the birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha had given a call for a nationwide protest from January 23 to 26. Ashok Dhavale, chief general manager of the All India Kisan Sabha, said the organisation's Maharashtra unit will be spearheading the vehicle march. "This march will support the historic two-month-long farmers' struggle in Delhi for the repeal of the three farm laws and for a Central law to guarantee a remunerative MSP and procurement all over the country," he said.

The march will halt at Ghatandevi for the night and resume at 9 a.m. on Sunday. Farmers will march down Kasara Ghat and continue

their journey to Mumbai.

Over 100 organisations affiliated to the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, Trade Unions Joint Action Committee, Struggle Committee of Mass Movements, Nation for Farmers, and Hum Bharat ke Log had formed the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (Maharashtra) in a meeting

with this sit-in on Sunday.

On January 25, farmer leaders, top leaders of the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi, and leaders of Left and democratic parties will address a public meeting. At 2 p.m., the farmers will march to the Raj Bhavan and submit a memorandum to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari.

NCP president Sharad Pawar, State Congress chief Balasaheb Thorat, and Sena minister Aaditya Thackeray have agreed to join the march to the Raj Bhavan.

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## Helpful pause

When the government and the farmers restart talks, the Supreme Court must step back

The Centre's offer to suspend for 18 months the implementation of the three laws that are at the heart of the farmers' unrest is a conciliatory gesture. It is regrettable that the farmers protesting against the laws that encourage market forces in the sector have rejected the government offer. They have been demanding the repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price for their produce. The government has refused to concede these demands, but its willingness to put off the implementation of the laws is a right step that could lead to a viable reform package for the agriculture sector. A toxic combination of the Centre's intransigence, ignorance and insensitivity led to the current flare-up. That India's agriculture sector requires reforms is not in dispute. The challenge is in identifying the viable measures from the economic, environmental and scientific perspectives and building a wide political agreement for them. The government has now shown wisdom and sagacity by offering to start consultations. Farmers should now not allow their maximalism to obstruct the path to an agreement. It is a case of better late than never.

By creating an environment of trust with the aggrieved farmers, the government can reclaim its authority and role. Further consultations must be through a government-led political process, and the Supreme Court which has assumed an unwarranted role for itself must step back. As Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar pointed out, if the agitation can be ended with this concession from the government, it will be a victory for democracy. The government should do more. Harassment of farmer leaders by investigative agencies must immediately stop. The BJP should restrain its functionaries from labelling protesters as anti-nationals. The farmers, who are being represented by several organisations, must arrive at a common platform for talks with the government. Having been successful in winning the attention of the government and the larger society towards their grievances, the farmers must now suspend their protest, including the plan for a tractor rally in Delhi on Republic Day. The consultations on the three laws and reforms in general must take place in an ambience of mutual trust and a spirit of give and take. The talks must be without preconditions but with an agreed premise that agriculture and farmers cannot be left at the mercy of market forces, and the current crop and remuneration patterns are not sustainable. This requires both sides to be more open-minded than they have been so far. A pause of the laws can be helpful.

## Fire warning

The Serum Institute blaze highlights the need for zero tolerance safety protocols

The deadly fire in an upcoming production facility at the Serum Institute of India (SII), in Pune has sent shock waves because of the key role played by the company in producing the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covishield COVID-19 vaccine. Five workers engaged in construction have perished, and there are indications that expensive equipment has been destroyed. There is understandable concern about the accident at the SII building, which is located away from the Covishield unit, as the company, reputedly the world's biggest vaccine manufacturer, is now an institution of global importance. It is scheduled to deliver several hundred million doses of Covishield to a host of countries, including less affluent nations depending on the COVAX initiative led by WHO to protect their populations and move towards normality. Such a position of indispensability for the Pune facility in the war against the pandemic casts upon India, Maharashtra and SII, the responsibility of ring-fencing vaccine production against all threats, including the one that normally gets low importance in India, which is fire safety. The initial assessment indicates that Thursday's blaze may have been triggered by flammable materials set afire by sparks generated during construction work, trapping and asphyxiating workers. It is welcome that the company has offered a solatium to the families of the victims, who included migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, but the bigger task is to convince the world that critical vaccine supplies are not jeopardised by lax safety protocols.

The storage and transport of vaccines, which are time and temperature-sensitive pharmaceutical products, require special care, and COVID-19 has come as a wake-up call to governments to overcome supply bottlenecks and capacity constraints. Even the creation of new vaccine plants to meet future needs would be entirely justified. With a scramble for approved vaccines and inability to produce enough for all countries, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that bilateral deals were threatening the smooth rollout of the COVAX initiative. At close to 3 billion doses, it is the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine that forms the bulk of over 10 billion doses of different vaccines ordered so far. Clearly, Indian production is vital to meeting this demand. Pharmaceutical production must satisfy precision, quality and safety standards comparable to high-technology sectors such as defence and space. High standards of fire safety form the core of all manufacturing: WHO model guidance for pharma units emphasises the availability of site security, automatic fire detection systems, mechanical or manual ventilation, sprinkler systems and fire drills, among other aspects. Too often, safety during construction and operation suffers dilution due to cost considerations, with almost no fire awareness among workers. The Pune fire shows that lives and reputations depend on full adherence to good practice.

# A new framework around caste and the census

There needs to be closer engagement between all stakeholders of the Census and the Socio-Economic and Caste Census



DIVYA VAID

**E**numerating, describing and understanding the population of a society and what people have access to, and what they are excluded from, is important not only for social scientists but also for policy practitioners and the government. In this regard, the Census of India, one of the largest exercises of its kind, enumerates and collects demographic and socio-economic information on the Indian population. However, no data exists in a vacuum. It has its own history, context and purpose.

### About the Census

The synchronous decennial Census going back to the colonial exercise of 1881 has evolved over time and has been used by the government, policy makers, academics, and others to capture the Indian population, its access to resources, and to map social change. However, as early as the 1940s, W.W.M. Yeatts, Census Commissioner for India for the 1941 Census (<https://bit.ly/2MbCSAz>), had pointed out that, "the census is a large, immensely powerful, but blunt instrument unsuited for specialised enquiry".

This point has also surfaced in later critiques offered by scholars who consider the Census as both a data collection effort and a technique of governance, but not quite useful enough for a detailed and comprehensive understanding of a complex society. As historian and anthropologist Bernard Cohn

had demonstrated, the Census may in fact produce an imagination of society, which suggests the epistemological complexities involved.

While the usefulness of the Census cannot be disregarded, for instance with regard to the delimitation exercise, there is a lack of depth where some issues are concerned. In this context, the discussion around caste and its enumeration have been controversial. Since Independence, aggregated Census data on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on certain parameters such as education have been collected. With demands to conduct a full-scale caste census gaining traction over time, some have seen the inclusion of broader caste information as a necessity to capture contemporary Indian society and to understand and remedy inequalities, while others believe that this large administrative exercise of capturing caste and its complexities is not only difficult, but also socially untenable. Following decades of debate, the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted in 2011 (<https://bit.ly/2LYsbkR>) and took a few years to complete; this was a distinct exercise from the Census of 2011. The SECC, which collected the first figures on caste in Census operations since 1931, is the largest exercise of the enumeration of caste. It has the potential to allow for a mapping of inequalities at a broader level.

### The main concerns

It would be disingenuous to ignore the emotive element of caste and the political and social repercussions of a caste census. There have been concerns that counting caste may help solidify or harden identities, or that caste may be context-specific, and thus difficult to mea-



sure. These discussions along with various counterarguments are not new. Commenting on the 1941 Census, Census Commissioner Yeatts observed that, "Thanks to the acute interest in community figures, practically all communities this time were census-conscious and took pains to see that their houses were in the list and that they themselves were counted." In discussions around caste, scholars such as Nicholas Dirks and Cohn have demonstrated that the Census had the effect of marking out caste and community in the forms we see today.

The other concern is whether an institution such as caste can even be captured completely by the Census. Questions remain on whether the SECC is able to cover the effects of caste as an aspect of Indian social structure in everyday life, or at least to illuminate our understanding of its impact at varying scales – from the local, to the regional and to the national scale. Can the SECC take into account the nuances that shape caste and simultaneously the ways in which caste shapes everyday life in India?

The Census and the SECC have different purposes. Since the Census falls under the Census Act of 1948, all data are considered confidential, whereas according to the SECC website, "all the personal in-

formation given in the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) is open for use by Government departments to grant and/or restrict benefits to households". The Census thus provides a portrait of the Indian population, while the SECC is a tool to identify beneficiaries of state support. This difference is significant since it influences not only the methods of collection but also the use and potential for misuse of data.

### A road map

What is needed then is a discussion on the caste data that already exists, how it has been used and understood by the government and its various departments to grant or withdraw benefits, and also its utility for the important academic exercise of mapping social inequalities and social change. Linking and syncing aggregated Census data to other large datasets such as the National Sample Surveys or the National Family Health Surveys that cover issues that the Census exercises do not, such as maternal health, would be significant for a more comprehensive analysis, enabling the utilisation of the large body of data that already exists. This linking of the Census with the National Sample Survey data has been suggested in the past by scholars such as Mamta Murthi and colleagues (<https://bit.ly/3oauTMx>). Statisticians such as Atanu Biswas point out that Census operations across the world are going through significant changes, employing methods that are precise, faster and cost effective, involving coordination between different data sources (<https://bit.ly/2YIsOaP>). Care must however be taken to ensure that digital alternatives and linking of data sources involving Census operations are inclusive and non-dis-

criminatory, especially given the sensitive nature of the data being collected.

### Time lag and planning

Apart from themes specific to enumerating caste, there are other issues that the Census and the SECC in particular face. The first relates to the time lag between each Census, and the second to the delay in the release of data. The first of these is inherent in the way the Census exercises are planned. The second, however, also has important repercussions to understanding social change since data may remain un-released or released only in parts. Nearly a decade after the SECC for instance, a sizeable amount of data remains unreleased.

While the Census authorities present documents on methodology as part of a policy of transparency, there needs to be a closer and continuous engagement between functionaries of the Census and SECC, along with academics and other stakeholders concerned, since the Census and the SECC are projects of governance as well as of academic interest. Before another SECC is conducted, a stocktaking of the previous exercise, of what has been learnt from it, and what changes are necessary, beyond changing exclusionary criteria for beneficiaries of state support, are crucial to enable the Census to facilitate effective policy work and academic reflection. Concerns about methodology, relevance, rigour, dissemination, transparency and privacy need to be taken seriously if this exercise is to do what it was set up to do.

Divya Vaid teaches at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University

# A pick between dark politics or collective resistance

The democratic world has a choice — either accept the politics of violence or kindle the urge to resist the status quo



SHELLEY WALIA

"All politics is a struggle for power; the ultimate kind of power is violence." — C. Wright Mills

Donald Trump's drive to upend a legitimate election has shaken faith in the functioning of democracy worldwide. When a president of a country himself condones the rioters or calls them "patriots", a grim reality awaits democracy in the face of the pervasive political polarisation ripping apart the very political fabric of a nation. Politicians across the globe sink to new levels of unwarranted incitement of a malleable public, a disastrous and politically debasing tendency of constitutional democracy.

### History as a pointer

The loss of faith in the ruling elite points towards a disturbing future. The long and cyclic dark history of civilisation, of wars and violence, of religious fanaticism and irrationality is a loud indication of the failure to model society on rational principles. Our inherently dialectical history confirms the simultaneous birth of opposing forces at the very moment of assertion of any "truth". For example, the trajectory of liberal democracy evolv-

ing into totalitarianism is evidently present in the brute forces of Italian fascism or German Nazism, two striking examples of the birth of vulgar nationalist fervour and racial superiority.

### The shock of Capitol Hill

In the wake of the debacle on Capitol Hill, the world awakes to the reality of the scourge of violence within democracy, rousing a serious national debate on what comprises aggression, who perpetuates it, and why. It is imperative to halt the runaway course of democracy towards an environment increasingly subsumed in the violence of fear and hatred, an overwhelming plague in any civil society. Breaking, therefore, through the intellectual vacuity of the official discourse and coming to grips with the history of electoral violence we see that what happened on the Potomac is nothing new in the long history of racist and electoral violence.

But it is not Mr. Trump who is solely responsible. The people are as much to be blamed. Jason Brennan, in his valuable and bracing book, *Against Democracy*, makes the contrarian conclusion that democratic participation promotes human beings to forget common sense and common politesse. Voters, as he puts it rather uncharitably, are "biased, ill-informed football hooligans" who "can present arguments for their beliefs, but cannot explain alternative points of view". Along with them are the



"hobbits", a section that lacks fixed strong views on political matters. These two categories have their antithesis in the "Vulcans" who, Brennan argues, "think scientifically and rationally about politics". Nazism, Trumpism or Hindutva are outstanding examples of this syndrome and the analogy fits aptly with the credentials of the demonstrators in Washington DC, the "super-biased" who mindlessly fall in line with the manifesto of the ruling dispensation.

### Evasive promise

Philosophical democratic theory is, therefore, rather perplexing. One aspect is the idealised view of democracy as an inimitably just form of government where people have the right to equal share of political power that empowers the people. However, judging by the history of violence, this could be an absolutely off the mark argument within real-world politics. It only shows that political participation has the potential of making people more irrational, prejudiced and mean. It pulls apart, impedes

the social order and creates antagonists of civic order. A higher form of life that democracy promises seems to evade the public.

The debatable questions, therefore, would be: Does democracy leave you smart and active, or dumb and uncivilised? Does it give us a broad outlook or is it selfishly limiting to one's immediate needs? Does it not make people live in a world of delusion and deceit expediently passing the blame on to the Left or the "professional anarchists" responsible for violent acts of arson and loot, while thousands of protesters sustaining the powerful state apparatus are labelled as "peaceful" or as "patriots". Death, pain and physical injury of people fighting back for civil liberties and human rights are of no consequence.

The power and brutality of state violence therefore stands legitimised while justifiable or innocent violence accompanying demonstrations against racism or police ferocity result in ruthless consequences. The nightmare of history indeed, brings us face to face with sinister times that impel the need to oppose the offensive right-wing narrative that discourages dialogue, economic welfare and freedom of expression. The erosion of egalitarianism and freedom through unprecedented challenges from anti-humanist forces pushing democratic institutions to the brink of failure is effectively in operation globally.

At the irreducible moment of

confronting the nightmare of history, we have a choice before us. Either we accept the politics of ethnic intolerance, inequality and violence or arouse within us the unfaltering urge to resist the *status quo*. In the absence of activism, people are bound to fall prey to irrationality, resentment, xenophobia and the inexorable yearning for fear-inducing power. Shockingly, the right-wing fringe element anywhere in the world, America or India, seem untouched by the state brutality on the innocent and the marginalised.

### Political beginnings

Recognising the failures of the past while retaining hope for the future, we need to develop a critique of violence within democracies that is adequate to the times. Understandably, there is always a political struggle basic to the recognition of evident and hidden forms of injustice and violence that make people mindful of it, deliberate on it, and act. These are the "political beginnings" that Hannah Arendt optimistically spoke of in her perennially relevant book, *Men in Dark Times*. To her, the collective power of the people mattered more than the power of the state, but only when the struggle is against authoritarianism and bigotry, not when the masses begin to prop a fascist disposition.

Shelley Walia, a professor, has taught Cultural Theory at the Department of English, Panjab University, Chandigarh



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to [letters@thehindu.co.in](mailto:letters@thehindu.co.in) must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Housework valuation

In India, even in today's world, there is a demarcation between the 'work done by women' and 'work done by men'. This attitude of men and society in general is what makes it difficult to undertake a valuation of housework, moreso when there are women who feel that what they do is not worthy of remuneration. In this context, to bring in a prenuptial contract on this issue would be difficult.

In a fair valuation, perhaps women need to take pride in the housework they are doing. In addition, housework should not be considered as 'work done only by women'.

MAYA HEMANT BHATKAR,  
Mumbai

■ While recognition of women's work is welcome,

payment for the same would only further stereotype domestic work as solely the women's responsibility. Domestic work in the household needs to be treated as a shared responsibility. There needs to be a long-term solution such as promoting the involvement of men, the use of technology and devices to reduce the burden of household chores, teaching all children early to learn life and household skills.

Payment could only cage women within the four walls and limit their aspirations.

NEHA YADAV,  
New Delhi

■ There have been several articles now on "wages for housework". But let us not forget that in India, there are countless women off the radar in this connection.

There are agricultural tasks

performed by women that are a part of their household work, and taken for granted. Economists such as Bina Agarwal have recognised this to be a woman's hidden work, not reflected in the NSSO statistics on work. Another issue is "double work". Working women also do household work. Some of them have the capacity to hire domestic help, others do not. Will the political parties concerned now give them double wages? The best solution would be to promote a culture of sharing at home to do the mundane tasks necessary for the maintenance of home and family — something that the Cuban Family Code has tried to enforce.

ANURADHA AGARWAL,  
Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh

■ Some of our politicians have only revived an age-old

topic. The issue is more about removing the gender bias from the normal chores of life. No amount of glorification is required to highlight what a vast number of women do in contributing to family life and which escapes statistics when it comes to valuing their output.

Yes, they need security, and yes, they deserve respect. Monetising their efforts alone would add another arrow to the quiver of patriarchy.

PRIYADESHINI S.,  
Thiruvananthapuram

■ Dr. V. Shanta

While there are many who still think that cancer is deadly, Dr. V. Shanta was the one who dispelled that misconception: first, by instilling confidence in the minds of the patients, and second, with treatment next.

D. SETHURAMAN,  
Chennai

### The India win

Much has been and will continue to be written about how India went on to script one of the most sensational comebacks in international Test cricket history. This historic win will long be remembered for the determined show put up by a band of cricketing rookies who made the impossible come true through sheer grit and mental toughness that only seemed to improve with every outing. In any sporting spectacle, people have generally rooted for the underdogs and in this contest too, between two apparently unequal foes, it was David who overcame Goliath. The valiant efforts should boost the mood of the nation.

PACHU MENON,  
Comba, Margao, Goa

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# Flu among the feathers

The bird flu outbreak in the Kuttanad region was the last straw for farmers already struggling to come to terms with the losses inflicted by the 2018 floods and the ongoing pandemic. **Sam Paul A.** and **Hiran Unnikrishnan** report on the poultry industry that is reeling under several blows

**T**he Pampa river flows gently, its water glittering in the warm January sun. A lush green carpet of paddy saplings stretches out for miles near the water body. But a sombre mood prevails in this picture-perfect setting at SN Kadavu, a village near Karuvatta in Kerala's Alappuzha district.

A levelled patch of uncultivated paddy field abutting a road along the village looks diseased, sprinkled with bleaching powder. A nearby board reads: 'Warning! Bird Flu 2021 carcass burning site'.

Seated on a bench outside a thatched structure close to his two-bedroom house a few metres away from the culling site is Devaraj KV, 52, a second-generation duck farmer. He looks shaken. Devaraj lost 9,240 ducks, his only source of income, to avian influenza (H5N8) in a span of just two weeks.

"It's been a horrendous couple of seasons," he says. With an eye on the Christmas market, Devaraj had bought 8,240 one-day-old ducklings at ₹22 per chick from a hatchery at Thuruthy near Changanassery in Kottayam district in August 2020. Two months later, he purchased another 1,000 egg-laying ducks at ₹280 per bird from Valanchery in Malappuram district, all to help recoup his business that was reeling from the COVID-19-induced lockdown and the closure of restaurants and eateries.

The ducklings were hand-fed for the first 30 days. In the following months, the birds were taken to the Chalunkal and Manthara paddy fields for foraging with the help of seven labourers. "Things were going smooth. I had even struck a deal with poultry traders in Ernakulam to sell my ducks two days before Christmas when the bird flu hit like a bolt from the blue," says Devaraj.

His ducks started to fall ill on December 20 and began to die one by one. In the next couple of days, some 3,000 ducks in his farm perished. The rest of the birds were culled by the authorities in the second week of January after the outbreak was confirmed in the Kuttanad region. Devaraj estimates his losses at ₹8 lakh.

## Recurring outbreaks

The bird flu outbreak in Kuttanad, a vast area of land reclaimed from the Vembanad Lake spread across Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam districts, was the last straw for these farmers, who were already struggling to come to terms with the losses inflicted by the great deluge of 2018 and the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the third outbreak of avian influenza in the region in the past seven years.

The outbreak was detected in Karuvatta, Pallippad, Nedumudi, Thakazhi and Kainakary in Alappuzha district and Neendoor in Kottayam district. Following the mass death of ducks last month, the authorities sent samples of dead birds to the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIH-SAD), Bhopal. Six of them tested positive for bird flu. On January 5, rapid response teams were despatched to the affected areas, except Kainakary where the disease was confirmed much later, on January 20. In three days, men wearing personal protective equipment culled and burnt the carcasses of 57,687 birds, almost entirely ducks, within a one-km radius of the hotspots in the two districts to keep the virus at bay. The teams destroyed 32,592 eggs and 5,078 kg of feed. The number of ducks that died due to H5N8 stood at 25,265. In Kainakary, 349 ducks, 297 chickens and two geese were culled on January 20 and 21.

A Ramsar site and a designated Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, Kuttanad, nicknamed the rice bowl of Kerala, is one of the areas where farming is carried out below the sea level. Duck farming to the villages here is what tapioca is to the tropical hills of Central Travancore. Nearly all households in the region keep at least a few of these birds in their backyards, which are a consistent source of income for several families and form the crux of their food security, besides offering jobs to several thousands. It is common to see duck flocks quacking and waddling across roads and paddy fields post-harvest, being guided and goaded by 'masters', across the region.

The transformation of duck rearing in Kuttanad from the turn of the 21st century till the first bout of bird flu outbreak in 2014 was staggering. From 6.61 lakh in 2003, the total number of birds grew to touch 9.94 lakh in 2007. On the back of a slew of duck rearing schemes rolled out by the State government, the sector grew further over the next five years up to 2012, to take the bird count to 17.09 lakh.

The bird flu outbreaks in 2014 and 2016, however, put the brakes on this flourishing sector. As per estimates by the State Animal Husbandry Department, around 15 lakh of ducks and ducklings were destroyed in Kuttanad during these outbreaks, while another four lakh ducks died in the floods of 2018,



A team of experts visiting bird flu-hit Karuvatta in Alappuzha district, Kerala. (Below) Carcasses of culled birds being burned in Kuttanad, Alappuzha. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT, SURESH ALLEPPY



which also caused the destruction of eight lakh eggs besides 75,000 ducklings. The flock size kept by the farmers began to fall and in the years between 2012 and 2019, the bird stock grew by just 3.96% to take the number of birds to 17.76 lakh.

"We conduct duck farming throughout the year with a focus on Christmas and Easter. If ducks survive through the period, we can make some good money even after labour cost and expenses for medicine. But if there's bird flu or a bacterial infection, our lives turn upside down. After 2014 and 2016, we are unfortunately reliving the difficult moment again. It will take some time to rebound from this crisis," says Samuel K., a duck farmer from Pallippad who lost a few thousand ducks to the flu outbreak.

## Traditional duck rearing

Unlike the modern poultry farming methods of rearing birds indoors, duck farmers of Kuttanad rear ducks in the open, although it makes the birds more vulnerable to diseases like avian influenza. "Ducks are voracious eaters," says Thomas Kutty, a duck farmer from Karuvatta. "It is not sustainable to hand-feed the birds beyond a specific period. Kuttanad with its vast paddy fields and backwaters is conducive for duck farming.

Immediately after the paddy harvest, we move the birds to vast fields for feeding. We keep the birds on the move from one field to another until they are saleable," says Kutty. According to him, allowing ducks to forage fields is mutually beneficial. The ducks get enough food in the form of rice, worms and insects, and the paddy owners stand to get a few bucks. The 'Kuttanadan' ducks (Chara and Chembally – two local breeds) reared like this are branded and in high demand.

With a dramatic increase in the consumption of poultry protein over the last decade, Kerala is now experiencing a huge gap between the demand and supply of duck meat. The prices rose

consequently, from ₹160 to ₹210 per bird, show estimates available with the Government Duck Farm, Niramam.

While consumers deal with higher prices, about 80% of 'Kuttanadan' ducks grown by traditional farmers are now sold for meat at the age of 2.5-3 months – a sharp deviation from the earlier practice of maintaining the female ducks for egg production.

"This is not at all an ideal situation since all the good quality birds are now sold for meat while the State looks to neighbours for duck eggs," explains Thomas Jacob, Chief Veterinary Officer, Pathanamthitta.

## Ban on poultry trade

According to farmers' associations, there are more than 1,000 big duck farmers in the region, while several thousands, including small farmers, meat traders and egg sellers, are allied to the sector. The bird flu has directly impacted only around 30 duck farmers, but it has rattled the entire poultry sector in the region with the authorities regulating the trade of meat and egg of ducks, chicken and quail in a bid to tame the spread of the disease.

The 24.14-km Alappuzha-Changanassery road has parrot green paddy fields and palm-studded backwaters on either side. Small stalls selling 'Kuttanadan' ducks, eggs and local fish along the road stand testimony to the agricultural tradition of the place. However, after the outbreak, the traders whose lives depended on roadside vending have closed the duck stalls. "We are not farmers, but small-time traders. We buy ducks from farmers and sell them for a small profit. The ban on poultry trade has upended our lives," says Jose K., a trader.

The reports of a bird flu outbreak in the region, which sits next door to some of the most renowned international tourist destinations including Kumarakom, also came at a time when the tourism industry was looking for a revival after being in limbo thanks to the pandemic. In a quick fire-fighting act, most restaurants and houseboats operating in the region have stopped serving chicken and duck delicacies to guests.

"Enquiries seeking the status of the outbreaks have already begun pouring

in though we have got no cancellations so far. The bookings, however, will be affected if the scare continues for a longer time as had happened in 2014," says K. Rupesh Kumar, coordinator, Responsible Tourism, Kerala.

## Huge losses

At Vaisyambagom, 9,000 fully grown ducks including drakes, healthy and unaffected by the outbreak, belonging to Thankachan Kaithakalam, are enjoying their time in the Pookaitha river. "These birds were to be sold in the new year. The outbreak and subsequent restrictions have changed everything," says the veteran duck farmer. He had sold 12,000 birds on the eve of Christmas but is now spending ₹25,000 daily to feed the remaining flock.

"The punchy paddy cultivation season is on and there are hardly any fields in the region for ducks to eat from. The only way to maintain the birds is to provide them with compounded feeds. In normal conditions, rearing a duck for meat costs around ₹175, while a 120-days-old duck could fetch ₹250. All the money I am spending now on the flock is additional cost. If the ban is to remain in place, I will have to suffer huge losses," says Kaithakalam. He has with him 30,000 duck eggs, which he says "will spoil within days" with no proper facility to store them.

Although duck farmers used to transport the birds to other districts and sometimes across the State as far as Andhra Pradesh for feeding based on the availability of fields, the restrictions in place mean that they cannot take the birds outside the region.

The State government's compensation plan for the owners of dead/culled birds due to the bird flu has been slammed by poultry farmers as being inadequate. The government has announced a compensation of ₹200 for a bird older than two months and ₹100 for those less than two months old. Besides, ₹5 will be given for each egg destroyed. "The government had given the same amount as compensation during the previous bird flu outbreaks. The prices of ducklings, feed and labour cost have increased in recent years and the government should have considered that while fixing the compensation. I

have taken loans from money lenders at exorbitant rates and my family is staring at a debt trap," Devaraj says. Some farmers say they might not be able to prove the number of birds that perished before the avian influenza was officially confirmed. "I am going to get compensation for the culled birds alone," says Kutty.

While farmers like Devaraj and Kutty are set to get some compensation, people like Kaithakalam who are unaffected by the disease but are prevented from selling the birds, eggs and meat are left in the lurch. "The government should at least provide the feed free of cost until the ban is lifted," Kaithakalam says.

## Economic impact

The first alarm of a potential bird flu infestation in Kuttanad came from a duck farm at Aymanam in Kottayam on November 25, 2014. Recognising its potential to set off a crisis in Kuttanad, a region well connected through a network of water bodies, the Animal Husbandry Department ordered the culling of all the poultry birds within a one-km radius of the outbreak zones. The Rapid Response Force teams comprising personnel of the Animal Husbandry and Health Departments were formed to respond and contain the outbreak.

They culled 0.277 million poultry birds from 288 farms across the region.

A study on the economic impact of the 2014 bird flu outbreak on Kuttanad, which was published by the ICAR - National Institute of Veterinary Epidemiology and Disease Informatics in 2017, had found that the loss due to destruction of feed and eggs was relatively high in backyard farms than their commercial counterparts. This was primarily due to easy access to stored feed and eggs for destruction and also lack of compensation for the destroyed feed.

The analysis revealed a total loss of ₹10,203 per hatchery on an average. Of this, 59% was destruction of hatchery eggs. The transfer payments (compensation) had alleviated the loss partially to the farmers-producers and hatcheries though it could not offset other stakeholders, it noted. For instance, the decline in tourist inflow to Kuttanad post the outbreak was drastic, severely affecting the backwater tourism sector as a whole. While the loss in gross returns varied based on the types of boats, the loss per tourist boat was estimated to be ₹2,280.

Pointing out that control measures are only post-incidence, the study also called for the adoption of preventive bio-security measures at the farm level besides periodical screening of domestic birds.

"Frankly speaking, you do not have many other options as long as Kuttanad remains to be a major flyway location for migratory birds. There is always a chance of a bird flu outbreak in the region, especially in November-December. The widespread presence of bird sanctuaries and the huge network of water bodies are not helping the crisis

either. For a rural community, that's a pretty tough hit to take," says G. Govindaraj, senior scientist with the ICAR-NI-VEDI, who led the study.

The Kerala State Planning board, in its proposal for a special package for post-flood Kuttanad, also noted that around 90% of the ducks in Kuttanad are reared without any systematic or scientific feeding practices or disease-control measures. According to the board, the high level of duck mortality due to Duck Pasteurellosis, Duck Plague and New Duck diseases is a major issue faced by the sector in the region.

"Lack of knowledge about vaccination against these diseases and scarcity of vaccination experts are some of the other factors leading to high levels of duck mortality. Kuttanad urgently needs a large project that would vaccinate most of the ducks within a strict time frame. It also needs proper disease surveillance programmes and vaccination of nomadic ducks to prevent mass deaths. A cadre of field workers has to be created for this purpose," the report pointed out.

The board also recommended that the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Pookode, be allotted a project with infrastructural facilities to provide and distribute five lakh ducklings each year, besides facilities for providing services like disease diagnosis, feed analysis, training, custom hatching facilities and field veterinary services.

## Risk to humans

Soon after the bird flu was confirmed, the Centre rushed multi-disciplinary teams to study the outbreaks and evaluate the public health risk of H5N8. Although the risk of transmission of the H5N8 subtype of the Influenza A virus to humans is considered to be very low, experts warned that mutations might occur and the virus could become more aggressive. "We have tested several samples. No case of H5N8 and H5N1 has so far been detected in humans in India. However, virus mutations remain a threat," says a scientist with the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

Santhosh Kumar P.K., District Animal Husbandry Officer, Alappuzha, says that there is no conclusive evidence yet that the source of infection was migratory birds. "But there is a high chance that the ducks in Kuttanad got the virus from the migratory birds that arrive in the region in large numbers," he adds.

With recurring avian influenza outbreaks poised to disrupt the sustainability and viability of duck farming in the region, experts have called for detailed studies. "The need of the hour is to set up a biosafety level-3 lab in the State. After duck deaths were reported in December, 2020, it took two weeks to ascribe it to bird flu as samples had to be sent to NIHAD," says an official with the State Animal Husbandry department.

Looking at the frightening regularity of the outbreaks, it is time the State adopted these remedial measures.



FROM PAGE ONE

## No further concessions, govt. tells farmers

Mr. Tomar accused outside "forces" of prolonging the protest for their own motives, saying that a resolution was not possible if the sanctity of the agitation was lost. "These laws are in the interest of farmers, but out of respect for the unions and the protest, we have put forth one proposal after another to amend the laws. Now we have given them our best proposal – to suspend the laws for one to one-and-a-half years while a committee is set up to resolve their issues," he told journalists after the meeting.

"This is now simply an ego issue with this government. If they can suspend the laws for one-and-a-half years, why don't they repeal it and hold consultations and then re-enact it after one and a half years?" asked Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh leader Abhimanyu Kohar.

However, Mr. Kohar added that the union leadership may hold further discussions on the Centre's proposal again on Saturday.

The leader of one of the 15 Punjab unions that voted against outright rejection of the Centre's proposal on Thursday also advocated for further discussions.

"I feel we should bargain for a three-year suspension, and an ordinance on MSP. But there is no question of separate negotiation with the government. We will ultimately stand by whatever the unions decide together," said the leader, who did not want to be named.

One of the reasons that farm unions decided to reject the government's proposal is that they received legal advice that the Central government has no power to stay or suspend a law passed by Parliament, according to All India Kisan Sabha leader P. Krishnaprasad.

The Centre's proposal "is a violation and encroachment over the powers of Parliament and cannot be sustained legally," he said.

## Congress leaders spar at meet, defer party polls

Senior leader Ambika Soni, however, asked if the move would involve changing the party constitution. While both Mr. Sharma and Mr. Wasnik explained that the current constitution allows the party to do so, sources said, Rajasthan Chief Minister (CM) Ashok Gehlot jumped right into the debate.

Mr. Gehlot, claimed sources, asked about the standing [*haisiyat*] of those demanding internal polls, their faith in the Congress leadership, asking whether arch rival BJP fields such elections and the hurry to hold elections at a time when the BJP was destabilising elected Congress governments.

Hitting back, Mr. Sharma expressed hurt at Mr. Gehlot questioning their intent, recalled his association of 47 years with the Rajasthan CM and asserted that "the CWC was not a forum to use in-temperate language". Ms. Soni tried to calm tempers by telling Mr. Sharma that the Rajasthan Chief Minister had not named anyone and didn't mean him.

Speaking after the two

leaders, Mr. Gandhi said he "understood the differing viewpoints and asserted that only elections can end the debate". "Rahul ji said that hard words should not have been used and this meeting should have focused only on farmers," a CWC member said.

A.K. Antony, Harish Rawat, Randeep Surjewala and Avinash Pandey were the other CWC members who did not endorse the idea of an elected CEC.

Trying to downplay internal differences, general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal told reporters:

"There is no dispute for conducting organisation election; everybody is for organisation elections."

The CWC also discussed about the party's preparedness for these Assembly polls, said a leader.

In her opening remarks to the CWC, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi touched upon all the issues that were adopted as resolutions and accused the government of "shocking insensitivity towards farmers" and a "deafening silence" over the leaked WhatsApp chats.

## Posts against Ministers may land you in jail

"As many as 60 scams happened during Nitish Kumar's regime. He is Bhisham Pitamah of corruption, patron of hardened criminals and weak head of an illegal and immoral government," Mr. Yadav tweeted.

RJD leader and party spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwari said this government had become intolerant to criticism. "It's an arbitrary move and a sign of nervousness, and we'll oppose such a move."

## No second attempt for UPSC aspirants: govt.

The court asked Mr. Raju to put the submission on record in an affidavit. The case is scheduled again for January 25.

In previous hearings, the government had been telling the court that a decision to grant another chance for the UPSC aspirants was under active consideration.

The petition was filed by several persons who had appeared in the prelims on October 4, 2020. They had sought another shot at the exams in view of the "innumerable, inevitable circumstances suffered by them due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevailed

in the entire country during the crucial period of their preparation and even on the date of examination".

They said some of them were even rendering services as corona warriors, while others were dealing with infection in the family, physical and mental trauma and even lack of minimal proper infrastructure to prepare for the exams and loss of income, making it difficult to even survive during the pandemic.

The petition especially highlighted the plight of those among them whose last chance was on October 4.

## A.P. challenges HC order to hold polls

If gram panchayat elections are conducted in February, it will clash with vaccination drive, it tells SC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner.

The Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government on Friday challenged in the Supreme Court an Andhra Pradesh High Court order allowing the State Election Commission to conduct local body elections in February, amid the COVID-19 vaccination drive.

The High Court, on January 21, set aside its Single Judge Bench decision on January 11 to halt the election process for the time being.

Seeking a stay of the January 21 order, the State government, through advocate Mahfooz A. Nazki, arraigned as respondent parties the State Election Commission (SEC) and N. Ramesh Kumar,

Besides, the SEC had not consulted any health experts



N. Ramesh Kumar

before giving the go-ahead for the polls.

"Not only has the respondent rejected the concerns raised by the State [which were shared only after consulting the health experts of

the State], a perusal of the material on record would reveal that no health experts have been consulted by the respondent to take such a decision," the State government said, criticising the decision.

### 'State not consulted'

The State submitted in the petition that even the mandate of the High Court to hold effective consultation with the State was ignored.

"The directions passed by the High Court, the respondent was under a mandate to take into account the views of the petitioner/State government before taking any decision on holding of elections in the State... The peti-

tioner has duly shared these concerns. However, the same have been summarily rejected," the petition said.

The State said it was in an "unfortunate position" to apprise the top court that the "only consideration that appears to have weighed with respondent No.2 (Mr. Kumar) had acted unconstitutionally by floating masala bonds to raise funds for the State's development from foreign financial markets.

The House voted predictably along party lines to pass a resolution moved by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan seeking the rejection of the adverse remarks related to KIIFB in the CAG's State Finance Audit report ended 2019 fiscal.

## Kerala House rejects CAG's findings

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Assembly on Friday rejected the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) finding that the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) had acted unconstitutionally by floating masala bonds to raise funds for the State's development from foreign financial markets.

The fact that such election can put the vaccination drive into a disarray and endanger the lives of lakhs of citizens does not appear to have weighed with the respondent No.2... Any election at this stage would be ill-conceived," the State said.

The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) voted against the resolution. The Bharatiya Janata Party's sole legislator O. Rajagopal also threw in his lot with the Opposition. The CAG had tabled the contentious report in the House on January 19.

Mr. Vijayan damned the CAG for imperilling Kerala's developmental aspirations. The CAG's remarks were "unfounded, unprofessional, politically prejudiced and patently inimical to Kerala's development."

The resolution sparked off a nearly three-hour heated debate.

Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac said the CAG had "erroneously concluded" that KIIFB's off-budget and non-governmental borrowings violated the Constitution's Seventh Schedule and infringed on the Centre's financial prerogatives.

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said the Assembly should not pass any resolution that undermined the CAG's constitutional role.

## Court stops man from pronouncing *talaq*

His wife had appealed to family court

SYED MOHAMMED

HYDERABAD

The family court in Hyderabad directed a respondent not to pronounce second or third *talaq* until further orders, after his wife approached the court seeking its intervention.

Family court-cum-additional chief judge P. Laxmi Sarada was dealing with the original petition filed by Amtul Mukashraf against spouse and respondent Syed Yousof.

Petitioner's counsel Syed Mounis Jafer Abidi contended that according to a memorandum of compromise between the two parties in 2013, the respondent had given an assurance that he would look after the petitioner, and both parties would take steps to protect

their marriage. However, divorce by means of *talaq-e-bayyan* had been pronounced.

### Restraining orders

In the interim injunction, the court held that the welfare of the children of the couple as well as the interest and right of a wife were involved in the said case. It also observed that "if the respondent proceeds with his attempts, the very purpose of filing this case is defeated, resulting in a permanent break-up in marital ties. As such, necessary restraint orders are to be given dispensing urgent notice."

The court directed the respondent to appear before it and submit explanations to the contentions of the petitioner.

## SC allows Kappan to see his mother on video call

Journalist has been detained in a jail in UP.

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed a request made by the Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) for its secretary Sidhique Kappan, detained in a jail in Uttar Pradesh, to see his sick 90-year-old mother via videoconference.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde was assured by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, for Uttar Pradesh, that arrangements would be made.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for the KUWJ, said Mr. Kappan's mother had some time ago expressed her wish to see him before she fell into an unconscious state.



Journalists staging a protest in Delhi seeking the release of Sidhique Kappan. ■ PTI

In December, the U.P. government objected to a plea by the KUWJ to release Mr. Kappan. It described him as a "mastermind" with links to riots nationwide. He was detained in October while on his way with some others to visit Hathras, where a Dalit woman who was allegedly gang-raped had died.

The State alleged that Mr. Kappan was closely associated with PFI members, who were executive members of the banned terrorist organisation SIMI (Students' Islamic Movement of India).

Mr. Kappan and his co-accused were later booked under the UAPA (Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act) and offences under other criminal laws.

The State alleged that Mr. Kappan was closely associated with PFI members, who were executive members of the banned terrorist organisation SIMI (Students' Islamic Movement of India).

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said the Assembly should not pass any resolution that undermined the CAG's constitutional role.

## 5 labourers killed in blast at stone quarry in Karnataka

One more worker suspected to have died; three held

STAFF REPORTER

HUNASODU

Bodies of five labourers were recovered from a stone quarry at Hunasodu on the outskirts of Karnataka's Shivamogga city, where there was a high-intensity blast late on Thursday night. One more person is suspected to have died in the incident.

A truck carrying explosives was blown to pieces, killing all the five at the site. What triggered the blast is not yet known, say officials.

The intensity of the blast was such that tremors were felt in a radius of several kilometres from the site. A high-level inquiry has been ordered. Three persons have



Mangled remains: Minister for Mines and Geology Murugesu Nirani at the blast site near Shivamogga. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

been taken into custody.

S. Ravi, Inspector-General of Police, Eastern Range, said one more skull and back portion of a body had been found. "It is yet to be ascertained if it is another person," he said, adding that the magnitude of the tragedy could have been worse had

14 other workers not gone for dinner at the time of the blast.

Two of the five victims were from Bhadravati taluk. The rest are said to be from a neighbouring State. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has announced ₹5 lakh each for the affected families.

## Yediyurappa reshuffles berths again

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

Under pressure from within the Cabinet, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa again reshuffled portfolios on Friday, just a day after he allotted berths to the newly inducted Ministers.

Nagaraju (MTB), who was unhappy with the Excise Department allotted to him, has now been allotted Municipal Administration and Directorate of Sugar from Industries and Commerce Department, earlier allotted to R. Shankar.

K. Gopalaiyah, who was upset at being divested of the Food and Civil Supplies Department, has now been made the new Excise Minister. Mr. Shankar has now been allotted Horticulture and Sericulture Departments.

## Yet another mysterious disease in A.P. village

25 suffer epilepsy, fever, convulsions

palli and enquired about their health.

Mr. Das said the Medical and Health Department was prepared to tackle the situation and samples had been collected from patients.

### 700 cases

In the last one-and-a-half months, about 700 people from the district have fallen ill due to an unknown disease. Expert doctors and researchers had then collected samples from Eluru and other villages in the district.

They found nickel and lead in the blood samples of the patients. But the doctors did not reveal how the chemicals entered the patient's bodies.

Recently, 29 persons fell sick with similar symptoms in Pilla village in Bhimadole mandal of West Godavari.

## MLA censured for remarks against nun

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Assembly on Friday censured MLA P.C. George for making disparaging remarks against a nun, who was a victim of rape.

Mr. George, of the Kerala Janapaksham (Secular), made the derogatory comment against the backdrop of the rape case against Bishop Franco Mulakkal.

The Privileges and Ethics Committee weighed the remark and registered severe disapproval. The committee said lawmakers should serve as an example to society. They should conduct themselves with the utmost decorum in action and speech.

The petition especially highlighted the plight of those among them whose last chance was on October 4.

## Tribal taboo haunts Kerala couple

Ostracised for over two decades, Chellapan & Yasodha are denied all govt. benefits

M.P. PRAVEEN

KOCHI

For almost two decades now, Chellapan and his family have been forced to lead a nomadic life after being 'banished' from their tribal colony.

The punishment came after Chellapan, who belongs to the Muthuvan tribe, married his maternal cousin, which is prohibited in the community. He and his wife Yasodha were ostracised from the Adichiththoty tribal colony in Athirappilly panchayat in the Edamalayar forest range, straddling Er

INTERVIEW | ANDRE ARANHA CORREA DO LAGO

# 'Delay in releasing vaccines is understandable'

Brazilian Ambassador says India, Brazil must build a relationship based on a contemporary approach

SUHASINI HAIDAR

*After weeks of suspense, Brazil received the India-made Covishield vaccine on Friday, after the government decided to clear commercial exports to Brazil and Morocco. Thanking the government and the Serum Institute of India (SII), Brazilian Ambassador Andre Aranha Correa do Lago spoke of the challenges ahead for his country, which has the world's second highest deaths from the coronavirus pandemic.*

Two weeks after President Bolsonaro wrote to Prime Minister Modi, 2 million doses of Covishield vaccine from SII are finally reaching Brazil. What's your reaction?

These vaccines were ordered and paid for by Fiocruz, the federal institution that is going to be the producer of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine in Brazil. It's a public company and so, unlike Pune's SII, it started production much later, after the approvals came. As an interim arrangement, Fiocruz decided to order these 2 million vaccines for the beginning of the immunisation programme in Brazil that was originally scheduled for January 20.

Apart from the letter you spoke of, our Health Ministers (Dr. Harsh Vardhan and General Eduardo Pazuello) spoke, and the Foreign Ministers (S. Jaishankar and Ernesto Araújo) spoke on two occasions (on January 16 and January 19), and in all our communications, we too had stressed the need for the vac-

cines by January 20. But President Bolsonaro very clearly stated that Brazil would not interfere with Indian vaccination needs.

I think this is a very important point. Because Brazil, like India, knows how delicate these issues are in internal politics. Since our health regulator ANVISA had by then cleared two vaccines for emergency use: the AstraZeneca [vaccine] as well as [China's] Sinovac, and [as] we had produced enough of Sinovac at the Butantan Institute, we decided to start with those.

There was also some doubt about whether India would release the exports, given that our flight last week had not received permissions.

Eventually, once India cleared them, we dispatched the vaccines on an Emirates cargo plane and are very grateful for that.

Given that India and Brazil have a close partnership and they are both part of BRICS, was there some disappointment that India



**C**Brazil is still discussing the role of private vaccination, and whether that is needed, given our national procurement

did not clear the exports sooner?

There was some frustration that vaccines were not there before. But the reasons given by India were perfectly understandable because Brazil also would not export its vaccines before starting to vaccinate its own population.

Do you expect more shipments from India in the future? Also, will Bharat Biotech's Covaxin likely to receive ANVISA clearance?

I understand Bharat Biotech has already asked for the approval of COVAX [Covaxin] at ANVISA, as some private groups would like to buy the vaccine. Much will depend on how long we will take to complete vaccinating people with the 6 million doses of Si-

novac and now 2 million of Covishield that we have, and how many more would have been produced by then. Brazil is still discussing the role of private vaccination and whether that is needed, given our national procurement.

The Brazilian government went ahead with the Chinese-developed Sinovac vaccinations despite questions about its efficacy...

Well, I think one of the biggest problems in our relations is that most Brazilians don't see India as the country does today, and vice versa. And I believe that this case has shown very strongly to all of Brazil, which now knows that India is the largest producer of vaccines in the world, that India is an industrialised country, not only the romantic picture of many religions, yoga, etc., that most Brazilians know about.

I think it's very important that India understands how much Brazil has advanced as well, and both must build a relationship based on a contemporary approach to each other. We are both advanced but developing countries that have the same challenges like the economic divide, the demographic and skill divide, etc. So, if we get together, it's a total of 1.5 billion people, which have the same willingness and drive to make the life of all their populations better.

Despite that, Brazil's entire response to the coronavirus has been criticised, right from the denial of the virus to President Bolsonaro's criticism of vaccines and more than 2,00,000 deaths now. Should Brazil have reached out to India earlier?

I think that would have been difficult because our State-owned institutes, Fiocruz and Butantan, could not

have gone ahead with the production of vaccines earlier without waiting for the approval process. Those have taken time, naturally, and many countries have taken time approving vaccines.

Given the unprecedented nature of the crisis, what has this entire vaccine process meant for India-Brazil ties?

Well, I think one of the biggest problems in our relations is that most Brazilians don't see India as the country does today, and vice versa. And I believe that this case has shown very strongly to all of Brazil, which now knows that India is the largest producer of vaccines in the world, that India is an industrialised country, not only the romantic picture of many religions, yoga, etc., that most Brazilians know about.

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# Covaxin's efficacy against U.K. strain not proven yet

Report in *Lancet* calls for 'long-term safety assessment'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine candidate Covaxin can produce neutralising antibodies – a requirement to study its efficacy – against multiple coronavirus variants, but is yet to demonstrate efficacy against the variant 'B.1.1.7' or the 'U.K. strain' as the new virulent strain is commonly known.

A report in the medical journal *Lancet*, published on Friday, underlines the need for "more extensive phase 2 and phase 3 trials" for "long-term safety assessments" of the vaccine.

The study centres around establishing the safety and immune response generated by different doses of the vaccine in 375 volunteers. The authors of the study include scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Bharat Biotech.

Covaxin and Covishield have been approved for emergency use in India. The former, though its efficacy was unknown, was approved because it relied on an established vaccine platform and – being a whole inactivated virus – was purported to be more effective against a wider family of coronavirus strains.

Days after the company got approval from the DCGI, Chairman of Bharat Biotech Krishna Ella told reporters at a press conference on January 4 that evidence of the potency of Covaxin against the U.K. strain would be furnished within a week.

Though much of the data in the *Lancet* has already been reported in a pre-print and made public on December 15, Friday's article has an update on the antibody response to three different kinds of coronavirus strains.



**On trial:** Covaxin is purported to be more effective against a wider family of coronavirus strains.

## Co-WIN dry run revealed several software glitches

JACOB KOSHY  
SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

There were at least 13 kinds of glitches that were identified during dry runs of the Co-WIN vaccine management application.

These were listed out in a presentation on Friday to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health by K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Advisor to the government.

Co-WIN is the backbone of the government's drive to vaccinate 30 million healthcare workers and frontline beneficiaries in the first phase.

These snags include the absence of a mechanism to record reasons if a beneficiary wasn't vaccinated, delays in the

SMS delivery to beneficiaries, the web link that allowed adverse events to be reported not working and the software module being unable to account for the vials returned after a session was completed.

Of the 13 "issues" identified, 12 have been resolved, according to a copy of the presentation viewed by *The Hindu*. Dr. VijayRaghavan referenced data from the NITI-Ayog and the Health Ministry for the presentation.

So far, 1.2 million beneficiaries have been vaccinated with either Covishield or Covaxin in 24,397 sessions, or about half of what should have been ideally targeted since the vaccination drive began last Saturday.

ponse. However, no data was furnished on how it reacted to more recent strains, such as B.1.1.7.

"Because this is an interim report, we are not reporting any data on the persistence of vaccine-induced antibody responses or long-term safety outcomes. The analysis of safety outcomes requires more extensive phase 2 and 3 clinical trials," say the authors.

## Myanmar, Mauritius and Seychelles receive Covishield

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Large consignments of Covishield vaccine doses were flown in special Indian aircraft to Seychelles, Mauritius and Myanmar on Friday.

The shipments of the vaccine, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune, is part of the Vaccine Maitri diplomacy that the Ministry of External Affairs said will also cover Africa, which is in need of afford-

dable COVID-19 vaccine doses.

"Today, consignments of 15 lakh doses for Myanmar, 1 lakh doses to Mauritius and 50,000 doses to Seychelles are being airlifted," said official spokesperson Anurag Srivastava, who reiterated that there is "interest in many countries in accessing vaccines from India".

"Supplies as grant assistance to Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will be undertaken



**Wider reach:** The vaccine at Casablanca airport, Morocco. ■ANI

## Death of health worker not due to vaccine'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

A 56-year-old woman health worker, who was administered the COVID-19 vaccine on January 16, died in her sleep here on Friday.

Chief Medical Officer, Gurugram, Virender Yadav said the preliminary report of Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) committee could not directly relate the death to vaccine.

Rajwanti, posted as lady health visitor at Bhangrola

Primary Health Care centre was declared brought dead at Medanta Hospital around 7 a.m. Her husband Lal Singh Saroha told presspersons that Rajwanti was doing fine and did not show any adverse signs after taking the vaccine.

"The autopsy is done, but no definite cause of death found. Her viscera has been sent for chemical examination. The probable cause of death is cardiac arrest," he said.

## Scientists cleared vaccine, says PM

He seeks to reject criticism over emergency nod to shots

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. Mr. Modi said currently the world's largest vaccination programme is going on in our country.

**'India is self-reliant'**

"India is completely self-reliant when it comes to COVID-19 vaccine and is also helping many countries. Today, the effort is to ensure that vaccines reach every corner of the country at a rapid pace," said Mr. Modi adding that the purpose of the

interaction is to enquire about the arrangements and issue, if any, about the vaccination drive.

Stating that the feedback from Varanasi will help in understanding the situation elsewhere also, the Prime Minister expressed the country's gratitude to the scientists, healthcare and frontline workers and complemented Corona warriors for their contribution towards creating awareness about the pandemic.

## SII fire damage estimated at ₹1,000 crore: Poonawalla

Covishield production and storage unaffected, he says

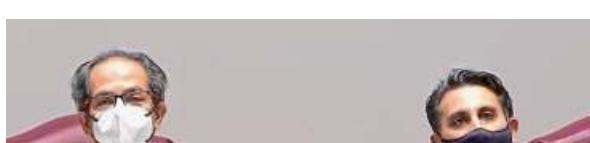
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PUNE

A day after a massive fire at vaccine manufacturing major Serum Institute of India's (SII) Manjari facility in Pune claimed five lives, its chief executive officer Adar Poonawalla on Friday said the extent of the damage was more than ₹1,000 crore.

Mr. Poonawalla asserted that the supply of Covishield vaccine would remain unaffected.

Addressing a joint press conference with Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who was in the city to take stock of the situation, Mr. Poonawalla said: "The losses are mainly financial in that ₹1,000 crore worth of equipment and products were damaged by the fire. This was a brand new facility, which was to be used for the future production of BCG and Rotavirus vaccines. No actual vaccine was currently being pro-



**Fire impact:** Adar Poonawalla addressing the media with Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray in Pune on Friday. ■ANI

duced there, so there was no damage to supplies."

The fire had no impact on the production or storage of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine owing to multiple storage facilities, he reiterated.

Mr. Thackeray visited the accident spot, accompanied by his son and Minister Aaditya Thackeray, as well as Mr. Poonawalla and Dr. Cyrus S. Poonawalla, chairman and managing director, SII, and top officials from the Pune

## DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

9th & 10th Floor, Vishveshwaraiah Mini Towers,  
Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru-560001,

Ph.080-22265401, 22868870, 22865747, 2286194, 22861986

Date : 22-01-2021

No:ADCL/GKS/B&P/Tender/2020-21/11364

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through e-Portal)**

The Tenders are invited from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Development Corporation Limited under Ganga Kalyana Scheme for Individual Companies /Firms package wise.

- 1) Drilling of Irrigation Borewells of 165 mm Dia on "No Water No Money Basis" along with Supply, Installation & Electrification (Energization) of Irrigation Submersible Pumpset with Accessories Suitable for 165 mm Dia Borewells under "Ganga Kalyana Scheme" in Malur and Bangalore Constituencies, Kolara District for the years 2016-17 and 2017-18, (Number of Units - 48).
- 2) Drilling of 165 mm Dia Borewells in Raichur District for the year of 2018-19, (Number of Units - 333). Package - 1, Devadurga and Lingasguru Constituencies, Package - 2, Marvi, Sindanuru and Maski Constituencies.
- 3) Supply Installation & Electrification (Energization) of Irrigation Submersible Pumpset with Accessories Suitable for 165 mm Dia Borewells in Kolara District for the years 2016-17 and 2017-18, (Number of Pumpssets - 403). Package - 1, Kolar, Srinivasapura and K.G.F. Constituencies, Package - 2, Malur, Mulabagilu and Bangalore Constituencies.

For information on Eligibility Criteria, Procedure for participating in the tender, terms & conditions, Tendered amount for package, No. of Borewells, No. of Pumpsets and other information can be accessed from Website <https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in> or concerned officer during office hours on all working days.

1) Tender document may be downloaded from e-Procurement Portal from 22-01-2021. 2) The last date for submission of Tenders through e-Procurement before 05.00 p.m. on 09-02-2021. 3) Pre-bid Meeting is on 29-01-2021 at 11:00 a.m. 4) Tender corrigendum if any, will be published in e-portal only. 5) Conditional Tenders will not be entertained.

**Sd/- Executive Engineer  
Tender inviting Authority.  
Dr. B.R.A.D.C.L., Bangalore - 01**

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



| Project Management Unit   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| Uttarakhand Public Financial Management Strengthening Project<br>91, Race Course, Near Police Line, Dehradun, PIN-248001, Uttarakhand<br> |  |  |  |  |

## IN BRIEF



Z plus security cover for Ranjan Gogoi

The Ministry of Home Affairs has accorded Z plus security cover to former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi. Justice Gogoi is currently a Rajya Sabha member. He has been provided all-India security cover of the Central Reserve Police Force personnel, a senior government official said. About 8-10 CRPF commandos will be deployed in his personal security detail round the clock. The CRPF has a VIP security unit that provides personal security cover to 62 other individuals, including Home Minister Amit Shah.

## PGIMER removes tumour in rare surgery on child

CHANDIGARH  
The Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh has said that its team of endoscopic skull base surgeons successfully removed a large brain tumour through the nose on the youngest ever patient — a one-year-old girl — in the world. The operation was conducted by a team including neurosurgeons Dr. Dhandapani S.S. and Dr. Sushant and ENT specialist Dr. Rijneeta.

## Call to maintain data of crimes against disabled

NEW DELHI  
A group of over 90 disability rights organisations, activists and academics has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging that the National Crime Records Bureau maintain data of the violent crimes committed against persons with disabilities. The group said it was "dismayed by the fact that despite the large number of reported cases of sexual assaults on disabled girls/women, the NCRB does not maintain disaggregated data on such violence, as a separate category".

## Volunteer forces won't be involved in Bengal polls

No civic police involved, clarifies CEC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora on Friday said that civic police volunteer force and green police volunteer force will not be involved in any election related work in West Bengal Assembly polls.

Civic police and green police are a volunteer force raised by the State government on a contractual basis and helps the police in traffic and law and order management.

"Several political parties have raised concern about something called civic police. We have not heard this word before... We have asked assurance from Chief Secretary, Home Secretary and Director General of Pol-

## CBI books Cambridge Analytica, another firm in data theft case

About 5.62 lakh Indian users of Facebook may have been affected, says FIR

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has booked Cambridge Analytica (U.K.) Limited and Global Science Research Limited (U.K.) for alleged illegal harvesting of personal data of about 5.62 lakh Indian users on Facebook through an application.

The FIR names Global Science Research Limited (GSRL), represented by Dr. Aleksandr Kogan, and Cambridge Analytica, represented by Alexander Nix, as accused. It stems from a preliminary enquiry launched by the agency in July 2018 on a complaint from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) follow-



Long probe: The IT Ministry had sought details from Facebook and Cambridge Analytica on the possible misuse of data.

ing media reports alleging the illegal harvesting of personal data.

MeitY had earlier sought details from Facebook and Cambridge Analytica about the alleged violations, the extent of leak of personal data of Indian users and their possible misuse by Cam-

bridge Analytica for profiling and influencing elections in India. "Facebook reported that the data of potentially 5.62 lakh Indian users might have been illegally harvested," said the FIR.

Cambridge Analytica replied that it had received data from GSRL pertaining to

U.S. citizens only. It did not respond to MeitY's further correspondences. The Ministry then sought a legal opinion, based on which it referred the matter to the CBI.

The CBI found that Dr. Kogan, founder and director of GSRL, had created an application that was named "thisyoureditallife."

As per Facebook's platform policy, the app was authorised to collect certain specific data of users for academic and research purposes. It, however, illegally collected unauthorised data of users as well as their friends' network on Facebook, as alleged in the FIR.

The data was collected without the knowledge and consent of users.

## Perarivalan pardon plea to be considered in a week, says SC

Earlier order said petition would be looked into in four weeks

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL  
NEW DELHI

An altered order of the Supreme Court on Friday recorded that Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit will consider a plea for pardon filed by Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convict A.G. Perarivalan within a week.

A January 21 order by a Bench led by Justice L. Nagendra Rao had recorded Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, on behalf of Governor Purohit, as stating that Perarivalan's plea would be considered within four weeks.

In fact, Mr. Mehta clearly stated during the January 21 court hearing that the Governor would consider the pardon plea in the "next three or four days" and not a month, unlike what the order said.



A.G. Perarivalan

On Friday, Perarivalan's lawyers, senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, advocate Prabir Ramasubramanian and K. Paari Vendhan, made an urgent mention before Justice Rao's Bench about the variation in what Mr. Mehta actually stated in court and what was ultimately recorded in the January 21 order.

This led the court to change its January 21 order

on Friday. The latest order records that "the Solicitor General submitted that the application filed by the petitioner [Perarivalan] under Article 161 of the Constitution of India shall be considered within a period of one week from today".

The court also advanced the next date of hearing by two weeks.

The January 21 order had posted the case after four weeks.

Confusion prevailed on Thursday after the court's order was published on the Supreme Court website late in the night.

Mr. Ramasubramanian said the Bench, when the case was mentioned on Friday morning, agreed to make the necessary changes in its order.

## Labour codes to be depicted in tableau

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Union Labour and Employment Ministry's tableau for the Republic Day parade will depict the recent labour reforms brought by the government, a Ministry statement said on Friday.

The theme of the tableau is "respect for hard work and equal rights for all," it said. "The tableau art portrays the transformation that will come into the life of organised and unorganised workers after the implementation of the recent labour codes," the statement said. Passed by Parliament in 2020 and 2019, the four labour codes have amalgamated 29 Central labour laws.



Grand show: The tableau by Uttar Pradesh displayed during a media preview. ■ PTI

## U.P.'s R-Day float to showcase Ayodhya

It will include a model of the Ram temple

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
GHAZIABAD

The Uttar Pradesh tableau in this year's Republic Day parade will showcase Ayodhya's cultural heritage and include a model of the Ram temple being built in the ancient city.

An official release by the State government says the tableau mirrors "Ayodhya's ancient cultural heritage, values and beauty".

In the first part of the tableau, Maharsi Valmiki has been shown composing the *Ramayana*. "In the middle part, Shri Ram Mandir, the epitome of Ayodhya's cultural identity associated with mass sentiments and devo-

tion, has been shown. The model of temple in itself generates the feeling of devotion and reverence," the release said.

The mural shows important socio-religious episodes from the *Ramayana*: the em-

bracing of Nishadraj and eating of Shabri's berry by Lord Ram; the salvation of Ahilya; 'Kewat Samvad'; Hanuman bringing the *sanjivani buti*; Jayayu-Ram Samvad; Ashok Vatika, and other scenes.

"The forepart of the middle tableau shows Deepotsava of Ayodhya, in which millions of earthen lamps are lit," the release said.

*Sadhus* and *sants* (holy men and women) would walk on both sides of the

tableau.



A Navy contingent rehearsing for the Republic Day parade.

were undertaken as part of Operation Trident on December 3 and 4 night and Operation Python on December 8 and 9 night," Vice Admiral Ghormade said.

The tableau depicts a missile boat firing the missile and also the route taken by the attacking units during both the operations as track charts on its sides.

## TMC expels Bally MLA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA

Cracking the whip against dissenting party leaders, the Trinamool Congress on Friday expelled Baishali Dalmiya, MLA from the Bally Assembly constituency in Howrah district and daughter of well-known cricket administrator Jagmohan Dalmiya.

Ms. Dalmiya said the party will have to specify what anti-party activities she has been accused of. The MLA said she was spared the task of tendering her resignation and would expose the Trinamool's corruption. She came out in support of Forest Minister Rabindra Banerjee, who has resigned.

The decision to expel the Bally MLA was taken at a disciplinary committee of the Trinamool Congress.

## BJP only party without dynasty politics: Nadda

Party chief holds meeting in U.P.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
LUCKNOW

There are 1,500 political parties in the country, both national and regional, but the BJP is the only party where a person from an ordinary background can rise to become the Prime Minister of the country, national party president J.P. Nadda said on Friday.

Addressing a district booth-level meeting on his visit to the Uttar Pradesh capital, Mr. Nadda accused all other parties of promoting dynasty. "All parties are in the grip of *parivarav* (dynasticism). No party is spared. The father will hand over the baton to the son," Mr. Nadda said.

The BJP is the only party, he said, where a person

from an ordinary family can become the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Home Minister or President of India. Or the Chief Minister of U.P., he said in a reference to CM Yogi Adityanath.

Mr. Nadda's visit to Lucknow assumes significance as it comes at a time when speculation is rife about a possible portfolio allocation to Arvind Kumar Sharma, an IAS officer who worked closely with PM Narendra Modi in Gujarat and Delhi.

Looted cash, gold and silver worth ₹35 lakh were recovered from them, Gorakhpur SSP Jogendra Kumar said.

The accused confessed to another crime, added the SSP. On December 29 last, in Gorakhpur district's Shahpur area, the accused pretended to be Customs offic-

ers and looted four kg. silver from a trader.

The S-I and the two constables were posted in the Gorakhpur district are set to

slap the National Security Act (NSA) against a police sub-inspector who, along with two constables, a 'journalist' and two others, was arrested on charge of looting jewellery traders under the garb of checking.

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## Instapick

**Bundled-up Bernie Sanders:** Meme makers collectively felt the 'Bern' when Sanders went viral for his sensible winter coat look at the Presidential Inauguration earlier this week. He has since been edited next to Forrest Gump, Deadpool and riding a New York subway train. As for the mittens, they were crafted by Jen Ellis of Essex Junction, who upcycled them from an old sweater.



## Talking point

**72nd Republic Day:** For the first time in 50 years, India's Republic Day celebrations will be held without a foreign dignitary as a chief guest. Flight lieutenant Bhawana Kanth is set to become the first woman fighter pilot to be a part of the parade this year, while the Rafale jets will also make a debut appearance at Rajpath. And for history buffs, there's an online quiz at quiz.mygov.in

### YARN IT!

A tech service that takes all your instructions to heart

# The honest auto-response

JANE DE SUZA

Dear Sir, we are delighted to inform you that our Auto Response service has been upgraded to superior human-like, honest, friendly responsiveness.

Dear Sir, this is an auto response. Please do not reply. Because you will get yet another auto response, unless, of course, you're the sort who collects auto responses, like people collect magnets and stamps and annoying habits.

Dear Sir, thank you for your reply despite our friendly advice. This is still your friendly auto response. The intended recipient of your mail is on leave. After a week, you may deduce that he has been sacked/

quit/returned but forgotten to turn his auto response off. As his faithful mail service, we will continue to blatantly lie that he is on leave.

Dear Sir, thank you for informing us that you are not a Sir. We will change your sex immediately. Is there anything else we can do for you?

Dear Sir, we are happy to inform you that you are now Female. Congratulations!

Dear Madam, we are not trying to be funny. Or rude. We are your friendly honest auto response. We have taken note that you are a Madam.

Dear Madam, once our server deleted the profanity in your mail, we could not understand the mes-

sage any more. So your request for us to (Deleted) off cannot be complied with.

Dear Madam, we are not being patronising or flirtatious by calling you 'dear madam'. We are your honest friendly auto response. We will personalise our message to whatever you sign off with.

Dear Deleted, this is an auto response that your mail – telling us to (Deleted) off – is much appreciated and of great value and will be attended to immediately. The recipient of your mail is very busy at work and will attend to your important mail in due course.

Dear Deleted, we have registered your complaint that the recipient of your mail is NOT busy at work at all, and that you see him posting selfies all over social media. We hope you had a pleasant experience and that we will be able to extend our excellent service to you soon again.

Dear Deleted, this is an auto response to inform you that most of the words in your reply were deleted by our server.

However, to be true to our policy of exceptional customer service, we will (Deleted) off and (Deleted) transfer you to another (Deleted) more appropriate (Deleted) who may be able to communicate in your language.

Dear Deleted, to help serve you better, your account has been deleted.

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

## Pick of the week

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



### Weekend getaways

For Republic Day, **Piggy Hostel**, on picturesque Calangute beach, Goa, is offering a 4 nights/5 day package with a detox menu and a four-day beginners yoga course. At ₹5,999 + taxes per person. **#7719974449** **Svatma**, a heritage hotel in Thanjavur, is offering a 2N/3D weekend package at ₹20,000 for individuals and ₹25,000 for couples. Or take a WFH week away with their 6N/7D package at ₹50,000 (for two) and ₹45,000 (for one). Corporate getaways are also available. **#62273222**



### Best foot forward

A year after launching in India, **Birkenstock**, the German footwear brand, brings their e-commerce vertical, **1774**, with collabs by design mavens like Valentino, Proenza Schouler and others. The site, which began operations yesterday, will also carry the 1774 capsule – a new, season-less unisex drop. Details: [birkenstock.in](http://birkenstock.in). French label Chanel has the airwaves with their **Chanel Connects** podcast. Guests like Tilda Swinton, Pharrell Williams and Keira Knightley talk about the future of art and style. On Spotify, Apple and chanel.com.



### Virtual atelier

Going beyond an e-commerce site, designer **Manish Malhotra** recently launched a virtual space for customers to take an immersive walk-through of the label's Delhi flagship store. Created by Bengaluru-based GMetri, to browse couture, jewellery and beauty products too. [manishmalhotra.in](http://manishmalhotra.in). Meanwhile, **Amit Aggarwal** has worked with **Dusala Kashmir** to bring out a line of shawls. The brand, founded by Sugandha Kedia, blends pashmina weaves with zari, and Aggarwal's metallic polymer. Details: [dusala.in](http://dusala.in), [amitaggarwal.com](http://amitaggarwal.com).



### Art and poetry

Till January 30, Delhi-based gallery Art Magnum and Singapore-based platform Art Podium will showcase **Timeless Treasures**, featuring pioneers of modern art movements in India. Part of the ongoing **Singapore Art Week**, the lineup includes works by Satish Gujral, Jamini Roy, MF Husain, among others. Details: [artpodium.com.sg](http://artpodium.com.sg). **Poetry with Prakriti** celebrates the multi-faceted writer, Margaret Mascarenhas. In a virtual event, Peter Griffin, Nilanjana Roy, Tishani Doshi and others will read her work. Today at 7 pm on [insider.in](http://insider.in).



### Taste of home

**Bhadang** from Kohlapuri and **gud revdi** from Meerut, Indori **poha**... These lesser-known snacks have been curated on **Postcard**. The online store was founded by Ashish Nichani and Sudarsan Metla, who also launched Place of Origin (a marketplace for specialty Indian foods). The new platform offers 31 varieties of snacks. On [postcard.in](http://postcard.in). There's a new craft kota on the list of Indian spirits: **Rahasya**, produced and retailed in Goa. Made with corn and wheat grain from Punjab, it is priced at ₹850 for 750ml.



### Design collaborations

**Rahul Mishra** is the latest designer on Swarovski's **Confluence** roster. 'Ode to Spring' is his first jewellery line, translating the 3D embroidery that he is best known for into crystal-embellished necklaces, bracelets, earrings and rings. On [confluence.com](http://confluence.com) from ₹2,050 onwards. **Payal Singh** has collaborated with fusion brand **Indya** for a summer-festive capsule collection that will drop on February 1. Jackets, jumpsuits and other separates come in a sorbet palette with pops of colour. From ₹1,200 onwards at [houseofindya.com](http://houseofindya.com).



When two people who have made it their life's mission to document food history and tradition meet, there's plenty for them to talk about. In a recent Zoom interaction for **The Hindu Weekend**, author **Shoba Narayan**, and chef and TV host **Rakesh Raghunathan** compared notes on how religious, agricultural and social practices were interlinked in various parts of India, as well as Narayan's new book, **Food and Faith: A Pilgrim's Journey Through India** (HarperCollins). Read the full story and watch the interaction on [weekend.thehindu.com](http://weekend.thehindu.com).



### SplashLearn

Started by four IIT-Kharagpur graduates who saw potential in the iPad as an early learning device, **SplashLearn** (aimed at ages 3 to 11) has had a 300% jump in sign-ups since the pandemic began. My three-year-old enjoyed counting monsters and jumping across numbered islands in the arcade-styled games, despite not getting it right the first time. The lack of focus on concepts – the building blocks of any topic – in the Indian education system is the gap that they are trying to fill, especially for widely-despised subjects such as mathematics. "It is not about the subject; it is about how you introduce it. Even if they fail, they should be more motivated to learn," says co-founder Joy Deep Nath.



# iPads for infants

Even as older students tackle the challenges of remote learning during the pandemic, edtech players are rolling out programmes for the pre-K years

LAVANYA MOHAN

Being a parent of a young child during the pandemic is part hilarious, part infuriating, part anxiety-inducing and totally overwhelming. As my partner and I synced our work calendars to take turns on our three-year-old's Zoom classes, we saw ourselves becoming the helicopter parents we swore we'd never be. The very idea of a normal school routine seems to be a distant prospect, and parents have had no choice but to impart early methods by themselves.

Enter ed-tech. Start-ups that deal with online education have raised \$998 million in funding just last year, with India having the second biggest chunk of the industry in the world. Apart from K-12, these companies have been setting their sights lower. Byju's, one of the largest players in the segment, launched a Disney-based education app for two- to four-year-olds. Indian

kids' platform, Playdate, offers online sign language and Spanish classes for ages zero to two.

### How early is too early?

The premise of Netflix's nappies-meets-neuroscience documentary, **Babies**, is about how newborns know and learn more than we ever thought possible. Husband and wife founders of Raising Superstars, an activity programme for 0- to 2-year-olds, Raghav and Shraddha Himatsingka believe in this infinite capability. Raghav, a Stanford graduate and serial entrepreneur, turned to child development when he became a father. "The human brain's ability to learn is at its maximum from the ages 0 to 2," he says.

As the mother of a three-year-old, the conviction that a child's infinite potential dries up at age two gives me some grief. Dr Kripa Sundar, a learning scientist and the

author of **How Do I Learn?**, says, however, that, "Learning is complex," pointing out that our biology, health, sleep and even food habits can affect the way we learn.

### Off the beaten path

Meanwhile, some parents of toddlers have been adopting a more open approach to learning. Sruti Hariharan Subramanian, an independent filmmaker and the founder of the Goli Soda Store, says, "I have open shelves so my daughter can choose the books she wants to read, the activity she wants to do, or the toys she wants to play with." While there is no denying the academic benefits of structured early learning, she shares that her focus is squarely on raising her child to be independent, empathetic and confident – without resorting to external programmes. After all, she points out, children are always learning, whether or not we teach them.



### Experts speak

- Keep the environment distraction free and set intentions ("we're going to learn numbers now!") so the child is ready for what's to come
- Try to understand why your kid is afraid of a subject. Is it difficult to understand or are they worried of failure? Identifying the 'why' will determine best course of action
- Learning after failing the first couple of times is even more powerful than learning successfully the first time



CM  
YK

A ND-NDE

SHUBHODEEP PAL

Ramin Bahrani has a thing for the underdog. An immersion into his filmography is to view the lives of the marginalised with an unusually keen eye.

His first film, *Man Push Cart* (2005), follows a former Pakistani rock star selling doughnuts and coffee on the streets of New York. In *Chop Shop* (2007), a Latino orphan scrounges for money to buy a food truck. The lives he limns are dark yet smattered with a curious yearning for hope, by dreams that appear distant but are not wholly unreasonable.

Given Bahrani's almost Ken Loach-like oeuvre, it is unsurprising that the Netflix adaptation of Aravind Adiga's Booker-prize winning novel, *The White Tiger* (2008), should have come to him. In a storyline reminiscent of an epic novel of destiny, Bahrani's name was, quite literally, written into *The White Tiger* – on its dedication page.

When we meet in December 2019, a few days of shoot remain. Bahrani looks tired but content, his spectacles and stubble lending a professorial air. Predictably, we begin by talking about Adiga and the book. "We went to college together [sometime in the 90s, at Columbia University in New York] and became friends," he says. "He is one of the smartest people I've ever met. He is wickedly funny, with a talent for seeing the world in ways others just don't. We talk a lot about novels and movies. In fact, he's always the first person to read all my scripts."

In a recent interview with *FT*, Adiga recounted his side of this tale. On the side of the economically-excluded, and united by the power of stories, each had planned to bring these two elements together. Bahrani got there first, releasing his first feature, said Adiga, adding that his friend's "entrepreneurial zeal" became his blueprint. "When Ramin made *Man Push Cart*, he launched two careers, his and mine," he shared.

**Exploring the dark**  
Years before *The White Tiger* found itself on bestseller lists across the world (it has sold over four million copies), Bahrani

## RAMIN BAHRANI: speaking for the underdog

Focussing yet again on minority struggles, the Iranian-American director talks about filming a friend's story and why *The White Tiger* resonates today

found himself reading its early drafts. By the time it was released, the only person who knew the characters and the story better was the author. In fact, Bahrani's grasp of the narrative found admirers in his two lead actors as well.

When I speak with Priyanka

Chopra and Rajkummar Rao, they concur that Bahrani was probably the best suited to tell the remarkable story of Balram Halwai (played by Adarsh Gourav), the droll, sarcastic, cynical narrator who rises from crippling poverty to become an entrepreneur. On his way up,

he becomes chauffeur to Ashok (Rao) and Pinky Madam (Chopra), a wealthy couple for whom corruption is a way of life.

Chopra says the book touched her the time she read it a decade ago. "When my agents told me it was being made, I actively pur-

sued it. I want to get behind stories that come out of India and have the ability to resonate with people across the world," says the actor, who auditioned remotely for the role, from her small home studio. "What excites me is that it is thought provoking, dark yet funny, and makes one sit back and say, 'Well, this does happen. What are we going to do about it?'"

Rao agrees. "That is how humans are; they are surprising and do things we don't expect them to do. As an actor, that was fascinating. Sometimes we get into these dark areas that make us bend our ways. It is the most exciting part, knowing there are multiple paths to our lives," he says.

**Research and ₹100**  
Both of them admire how Bahrani has chosen to tell the story. Chopra feels the director's heritage as well as his strong sense of justice informs his lens. "He has the dual perspective of having seen the developing world as well as America, and he's good friends with Aravind. He's as close to it as it can get. And his perspective is something I don't think we'd have seen elsewhere," she says.

However, despite Bahrani's closeness to the story, he didn't take it easy. Even before filming



(Clockwise from far left) Ramin Bahrani, actors Adarsh Gourav and Priyanka Chopra Jonas from the movie, the director with Gourav on set • NETFLIX

### A tale of the times?

While Bahrani added and deleted a few sequences and adapted the character for the screen, the story stays faithful to the novel. "The hardest part was cutting things out, since I love the book so much. But when I put all of it in the script, it came to 200 pages! Aravind gave me a wealth of gold and cutting it is just not easy," he says.

Initially, he considered updating the story (set in 2005) to a more recent setting, before abandoning the idea. "It is a period film. One of the biggest changes today is that thing in your hand, the supercomputer. In today's world, Balram wouldn't be writing emails, he'd probably be doing video or Instagram," he says, adding, "This is only the second time in my life that I've adapted a book and I wanted to stick to it."

In a curious paradox of circumstances, Bahrani's *The White Tiger* is releasing at a time of global distress and its story has taken on renewed significance. As Bahrani shared with *FT*, "With COVID, the inequality was right there. Visible. Inescapable. And Balram is inequality personified. He's the delivery person bringing your meal, your Uber driver, the healthcare worker who couldn't afford healthcare themselves." Chopra echoes this, stating that though India may have made unsteady progress in the years since 2005, there is a long way to go still. "The story of Balram will be relevant for a very long time, until we eradicate poverty, the vicious cycle of hunger, and the lack of education opportunities for the young men and women of this country," she concludes.

Streaming now on Netflix.

### FOOD SPOT

## Moth kachori plus

Memories of food conversations that turn into actual meals



RAHUL VERMA

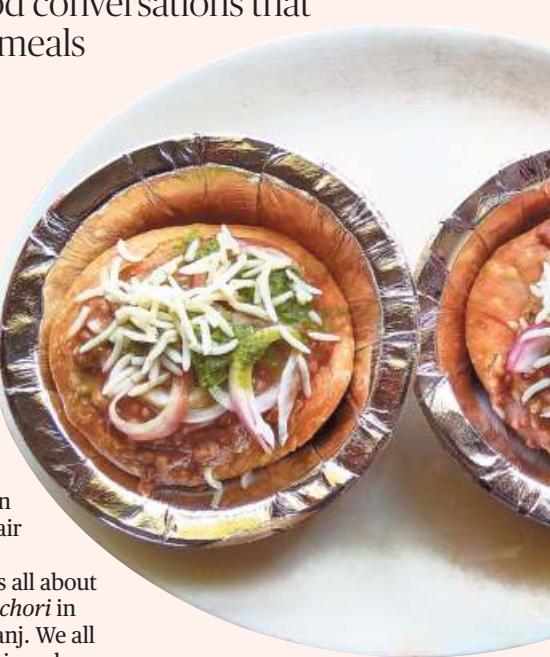
It was a conversation many years ago in a barber's shop that led me to one of the most sublime *kachori* outlets in Delhi. I was getting my hair trimmed when a fellow customer began telling us all about the (dal) moth-topped *kachori* in Multani Dhanda, Paharganj. We all drooled as the barbers snipped away. Soon after, I went looking for *moth kachori* – and ended up forging an everlasting relationship with it.

A few years ago, a foodie reader of this column told me about a place in East Delhi where this *moth kachori* was available, too. We went to Nagpal di Hatti (Phone: 9213741815 and 9213275645) in Gandhi Nagar, near Geeta Colony, and I recall we had a great time trying out the fare there.

In these isolated times, we look for happy memories. I suppose that's why I had a yearning for some *moth kachori* a few days ago, at lunchtime.

I found out that Nagpal was on Zomato, so I promptly placed an order for two plates (₹40 a piece; ₹75 for two), and since I was going down the greasy path, a plate of *chholey bhaturey* (₹90). Because one should have a balanced diet, I asked for a plate of *saag* (greens) and rice (₹80) as well. All this at ₹449 – street food rates.

First, let me tell you about the *kachori*. This Multani speciality (which was introduced to this city after Partition) consists of a crisp *kachori* filled with a paste of dried



Moth kachori from East Delhi's Nagpal di Hatti • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

dal, and topped with moth, with surprising specks of rice in it, onion strips and chutneys.

I broke a *kachori* into half, and found it deliciously crunchy, the softness of the dal complementing it. The moth dal on top, of course, set it apart from others, giving it a different taste and texture.

I had a small piece of the *bhatura*, and found that it was nicely stuffed with paneer. The *chholey* that came with it was rather good. Surprisingly not very oily, it was just rightly spiced. I loved the *palak* – the spinach was creamy and well cooked, and had little besan dumplings in the gravy that gave a delicious twist to what could have been a plain dish.

Though it came with a plate of *jeera* rice, I had mine with a roti, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

In these pandemic times, it was nice meeting my old friend, the *moth kachori*.

And I am happy to have struck a new friendship – with Nagpal's *palak* and *kofta*.

The writer is a seasoned food critic

The year's first auction from AstaGuru features furniture and décor with unusual stories and fine craftsmanship

AATISH NATH

In an era where functionality wins over embellishment, AstaGuru's Opulent Collectibles auction features the kind of craftsmanship that needs to be appreciated up close and in person. The sale, slated for January 27 and 28, features furniture, home décor and sculptures from India and around the world. "There are a few lots presented in this auction that have an established validation such as chandeliers from F&C Osler," says Siddanth Shetty, Vice President of Business Strategy and Operations. "The vases from Sévres and Satsuma vases are sought after internationally as well."

The lots are varied and have histories that go as far back as the Mysore Palace (for the F&C Osler chandelier) or, more recently, to the jeweller Fred Leighton, from whose residence a pair of Italian cut and beaded glass Campana urns are up for auction. Perhaps the most interesting is a silver candelabrum, which was originally gifted to George Carr Glyn, the chairman of the London and Birmingham Railway Cooperation, that is engraved as such and features an intricately detailed scene of children climbing a tree.

With pieces like the jewelled *prabhavali*, the collectibles auction also celebrates Indian craftsmanship which, given the pandemic, has become unsustainable for a lot of the country's under-appreciated artisans. Shetty points out that an investment made today in supporting craftsmen will mature. "Over time, these collectibles will become even more treasured and worthy of being part of an extraordinary private collection," he explains. "People always value products with impeccable craftsmanship that can stand the test of time."

This value is understood internationally and he says that India's market is responsive towards such categories and segments, as seen by encouraging customer interest. "The response received is more India-specific than international. There is a higher interest within the



country, which is important as that motivates us to work harder as a home-grown auction house," he adds.

In the year gone by, AstaGuru conducted nine auctions, when social distancing and lockdown orders were at their peak. Going forward, the company is hoping to give their clients "a better and more enjoyable bidding experience", while the team works remotely in a streamlined manner.

(Clockwise from left) Japanese Satsuma vases, the F&C Osler chandelier, a pair of Campana urns, Siddanth Shetty, the silver winged lion, and a jade Buddhist temple lion

## A chandelier from the Mysore Palace



### Four lots that stand out

• **Italian cut and beaded glass Campana urns:** They have been fitted as lamps and when lit, create a warm glow

• **The exquisite jewelled prabhavali:** This traditional

arch, used in temples and homes, features natural rubies, emeralds and white sapphires (gross weight of 2.4 kg)

• **A rare silver winged lion:** The silver piece shows its Colonial influence and was probably made in Calcutta or Pondicherry in the late 1800s. Its estimated price is ₹40-₹50 lakh

• **A hallmarked silver candelabrum:** This piece weighs over 10 kg and is expected to sell for ₹19-₹22 lakh



# Biden orders aid to combat hunger crisis

He will sign a decree aimed at reviving the economy, after COVID-19 caused layoffs and hardships

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is ordering an expansion of government benefits for hungry Americans, after the coronavirus pandemic ignited the worst hunger crisis the U.S. has seen in modern times.

The decree, one of two executive orders the White House said he will sign on Friday, is modest and far short of the actions the President has called for from Congress.

Nonetheless, it represents one of Mr. Biden's first actions since taking office on Wednesday, aimed at reviving the world's largest economy, after COVID-19 caused mass layoffs beginning last year that have left many people scrambling to pay the bills.

"The American people can't afford to wait. And so many are hanging by a thread, they need help, and we are committed to doing everything we can to provide that help as quickly as possible," said Brian Deese, director of the White House's National Economic Council Director.

Mr. Biden's main initiative



**Timely help:** Volunteers distributing packets provided by a Food Bank at a drive-through in Los Angeles. ■ AFP

to turn the economy around is a \$1.9 trillion "rescue" package that he outlined last week, followed by a promised proposal aimed at fuelling job creation and spurring hiring.

#### Federal stimulus

"Much, much more is needed. And so that's why, as we take these actions, we will continue to engage with Congress and with the American people around the need to move on the American rescue plan," Mr. Deese told reporters.

The orders also instruct

government agencies to help people more quickly access federal stimulus payments, allow workers to leave jobs that could jeopardise their health, and expand protections for federal workers, while laying the groundwork for a minimum wage increase for federal contractors.

Even after two massive government aid packages, the U.S. economy is reeling from the damage caused by the pandemic, which has seen the death toll soar to 40,000.

The Labour Department

reported more than 1.3 million new applications for unemployment were filed last week, and as of the first week of January nearly 16 million people were still receiving some form of government jobless benefits.

Amid the widespread joblessness, many families are struggling to pay for groceries. The Commerce Department reported in mid-December that 13.7% of adults lived in households where they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.

And millions of children rely on meals from schools, which have been forced to close or modify their schedules during the pandemic.

The government last year offered families food aid equivalent to what their children would be getting at school.

Mr. Biden's order expands that by 15%, which the White House said would give a family with three children more than \$100 extra every two months.

The President order also instructs the Agriculture Department to issue guidance that would allow states to expand food aid to an additional

12 million people, and re-evaluate its basis for determining benefits, according to the White House.

Congress last month gave every American stimulus checks totaling up to \$600, and Mr. Biden's order calls for the Treasury Department to find ways to get that money to people more quickly, and help those who never received the first round of payments last Spring.

It also asks the Labour Department to allow people who turn down jobs that could harm them, including potentially exposing them to COVID-19, to be allowed to claim unemployment benefits.

Mr. Biden's second order restores collective bargaining rights to federal government employees, and instructs agencies to do the preliminary work to allow him to issue a new order in coming weeks requiring federal contractors to pay their workers a minimum of \$15 an hour and provide them with paid emergency leave.

"These steps are designed to help ensure the federal government is a model employer," Mr. Deese said.

# Trump impeachment article to be sent to Senate on Monday

It will be a full and fair trial, says Senate Majority Leader

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump will go on trial in the U.S. Senate soon after a fresh impeachment case against the former President is transmitted on Monday by the House of Representatives, top lawmakers announced.

The House impeached the Republican leader for a historic second time on January 13, just one week before he left office.

After days of declining to say when she would send the article of impeachment to the Senate, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrat in Congress, made her announcement on Friday.

"The article of impeachment for incitement of insurrection by Donald Trump will be delivered to the Senate on Monday, January 25," she said in a statement.

Ms. Pelosi has appointed nine House members as impeachment managers, who she said "are ready to begin to make their case to 100 Senate jurors through the trial process."

The managers are to formally transmit the article, a step which according to Senate rules swiftly transforms the chamber into a court of impeachment.

Chuck Schumer, the new Democratic Senate Majority Leader, said on Friday in a floor speech that he had spoken with Ms. Pelosi who informed him of Monday's proceedings.

"A trial will be held in the United States Senate and there will be a vote whether to convict the President," Mr. Schumer said in a speech on the Senate floor.

"It will be a fair trial. But make no mistake, there will be a trial."

Mr. Schumer made no



Donald Trump

Trump needs time to hire lawyers and mount a defence.

On Friday, Mr. McConnell acknowledged the Democrats' timetable.

"As I understand, it must be headed our way on Monday. By Senate rules, if the article arrives, we have to start a trial right then," he said on the floor.

Mr. McConnell spoke of the "unprecedentedly fast" process in the House, where Mr. Trump was impeached in a single day.

"The sequel cannot be an insufficient Senate process that denies former President Trump his due process or damages the Senate or the presidency itself," he said.

He also said that delaying the trial would have provided time for the Senate to confirm members of new President Joe Biden's cabinet, and consider crucial legislation like a coronavirus pandemic rescue package.

#### Crucial numbers

Mr. Trump survived a first impeachment almost a year ago when the then Senate acquitted him of abusing his office to try to get dirt on Mr. Biden's family before the election.

With the Senate now comprised of 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, and a two-thirds majority needed to

convict Mr. Trump, at least 17 Republicans would have to vote against the former President to secure a conviction.

If that occurs, a subsequent vote would be held on whether to ban Mr. Trump from holding public office in the future.

A handful of Republicans have spoken out harshly against the President but it remained unclear if there would be enough GOP Senators to vote for conviction.

## Biden respects successful India-U.S. ties: WH

He looks forward to a continuation of bipartisan relationship: Press Secretary

SIRRAM LAKSHMAN

U.S. President Joe Biden respects and values the successful bipartisan relationship the country has with India, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki has said.

"President Biden, who, of course, has visited India many times, respects and values the long, bipartisan, successful relationship between leaders in India and the United States. He looks forward to a continuation of that," Ms. Psaki told reporters.



In 2013, Mr. Biden visited India again – this time as Vice-President. In 2014, he chaired a joint session of the

U.S. Congress that Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed.

Ms. Psaki's comments on Thursday also referred to the Indian origin of Kamala Harris, the country's new Vice-President. "Obviously, he selected – and yesterday she was sworn in – the first Indian-American to serve as Vice-President, a historic moment for all of us in this country, but a further... cementing of the importance of our relationship."

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"It will be a fair trial. But make no mistake, there will be a trial."

Mr. Schumer made no

#### Austin becomes first Black Pentagon chief

WASHINGTON

The U.S. Senate confirmed retired general Lloyd Austin as the Secretary of Defense on Friday, the second Cabinet nominee of President Joe Biden to gain approval and the first African-American to lead the Pentagon. Mr. Austin served in the military for four decades. AFP

#### Elsewhere



#### Austin becomes first Black Pentagon chief

WASHINGTON

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## Russia begins crackdown on Navalny allies ahead of protests

His spokeswoman was sentenced to nine days in prison

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

The Russian authorities on Friday cracked down on allies of jailed Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny and jailed his spokeswoman for nine days as the police vowed to suppress protests this weekend.

Allies of President Vladimir Putin's top critics are planning to hold demonstrations on Saturday in dozens of cities in support of the opposition politician, who was arrested and held behind bars on his return to Russia following a near-fatal poisoning with a nerve agent.

The last time major protests took place in Moscow was in the summer of 2019, and the Saturday rallies are



Alexei Navalny

tained on the eve of the rallies.

Mr. Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh, 31, who spent the night in detention, was sentenced to nine days in jail for violating legislation on public gatherings after a hearing that lasted less than five minutes, her lawyer Veronika Polyakova said.

Another activist, Georgy Alburov, said he expected to be jailed for 10 days.

Key Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol is accused of repeatedly violating legislation on public gatherings, which carries a maximum fine of up to 3,000,000 rubles (\$4,000), her lawyer Vladimir Voronin said. A number of Mr. Navalny's associates were detained in the province.

Police said unsanctioned public events will be "immediately suppressed," as key opposition activists were de-

## EU chief urges Putin to free Alexei Navalny

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BRUSSELS

European Council chief Charles Michel demanded the "immediate release" of Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny in a call with President Vladimir Putin on Friday.

"The President of the European Council informed President Putin of the grave concern in the European Union and its Member States over recent developments and called to fully and unconditionally respect Alexei Navalny's rights," Mr. Michel's office said.

And Mr. Michel told the Kremlin chief that he would launch a "strategic debate" on EU-Russia relations when he convenes a summit of all 27 EU leaders in March.

## Islamic State claims twin blasts in Baghdad

IS says it targeted 'apostate Shias'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
BAGHDAD

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for a rare suicide attack that rocked central Baghdad, killing 32 people and wounding dozens.

The bombing targeted "apostate Shias," the group said in a statement on an IS-affiliated website late on Thursday.

**U.S. troops withdrawal**  
At least 32 people were killed and over 100 people wounded in the blasts on Thursday. Some were in a serious condition. According to officials, the first suicide bomber cried out loudly that he was ill in the middle of the bustling market, prompting a crowd to gather around him – and that's when he detonated

his explosive belt. The second detonated shortly after.

The U.S.-led coalition recently ceased combat activities and is gradually drawing down its troop presence in Iraq, sparking fears of an IS resurgence. The group has rarely been able to penetrate the capital since being dislodged by Iraqi forces and the U.S.-led coalition in 2017.

The attack was the first in nearly three years to hit the capital. Elsewhere, in northern Iraq and the western desert, attacks continue and almost exclusively target Iraqi security forces. An increase in attacks was seen last summer as militants took advantage of the government's focus on tackling the pandemic.

degree of autonomy, as well as its basic rights and freedoms".

But Beijing struck back on Friday and urged EU lawmakers to "face up to the reality that Hong Kong has returned to China".

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the resolution showed that some MEPs had "confused right and wrong" and engaged in "gross interference in the affairs of China's Hong Kong".

The European Parliament should "stop any form of meddling", Ms. Hua said at a regular press briefing.

Following pro-democracy protests in 2019, Beijing imposed a draconian national security law that effectively criminalised much dissent in a city.

## China hits out at EU over 'gross interference'

EU slammed crackdown on HK activists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
BEIJING

China on Friday hit back at an EU resolution condemning its crackdown on Hong Kong democracy activists, accusing European lawmakers of "gross interference"

in its governance of the city.

Members of the European Parliament on Thursday passed the resolution calling for "targeted sanctions" against Chinese and Hong Kong officials held responsible for recent arrests of activists.

The lawmakers also said they "regret" the handling of a landmark investment deal with China pending ratification by MEPs, saying that talks over the deal should have been seized "as a leverage tool aimed at preserving Hong Kong's high

degree of autonomy, as well as its basic rights and freedoms".

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Government of India  
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre  
Mysuru

#### CORRIGENDUM-1

With reference to the below tender, please note that the extension of dates in tender sale period, submission etc.

Tender Reference No. BARC/SMF/CFMF/EPC/BL/2020/2

Expression of Interest Cum pre qualification for setting up of Heat treatment line of process facility at SMF project site, Chikkalur through Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode of works contract.

Tender Sale Period Tender sale period is extended up to 01.02.2021 (15:00 Hrs.) on [www.tenderwiz.com/DAE](http://www.tenderwiz.com/DAE).

For other changes in dates of pre bid clarifications, Last date and time of closing of online submission of tenders, Last date for submission of original documents towards Receipt of e-payment towards Tender Processing Fee and EMD, Date and time of online opening of EoI tender etc., please download the corrigendum documents in website [www.tenderwiz.com/DAE](http://www.tenderwiz.com/DAE) under this tender.

Chief Engineer

For & on behalf of President of India

Last date for receipt of application is 08.02.2021. The date and time of interview will be notified in CSIR-CECR website and also sent to candidates' Gmail id. Interview will be conducted through Google Meet only. For details, please visit <http://www.cecr.res.in>

#### KOLKATA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION e-TENDER

#### ABRIDGED NIT

## MARKET WATCH

|           | PRICE  | CHANGE |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| Sensex    | 48,879 | -1.50  |
| US Dollar | 72.97  | 0.03   |
| Gold      | 48,861 | -0.54  |
| Brent oil | 55.44  | -0.68  |

## NIFTY 50

|                   | PRICE    | CHANGE  |
|-------------------|----------|---------|
| Adani Ports       | 535.80   | -11.85  |
| Asian Paints      | 2596.65  | -119.70 |
| Axisc Bank        | 644.50   | -31.35  |
| Bajaj Auto        | 4089.50  | -386.20 |
| Bajaj Finserv     | 9071.00  | -18.20  |
| Bajaj Finance     | 4972.55  | -105.75 |
| Bharti Airtel     | 576.85   | -4.50   |
| BPCL              | 396.05   | -12.25  |
| Britannia Ind     | 3608.00  | -22.80  |
| Cipla             | 808.30   | -4.45   |
| Coal India        | 133.20   | -4.15   |
| Divis Lab         | 3544.70  | -59.90  |
| Dr Reddys Lab     | 5036.90  | -15.30  |
| Eicher Motors     | 2972.60  | -46.00  |
| GAIL (India)      | 134.05   | -0.30   |
| Grasim Ind        | 1004.00  | -13.10  |
| HCL Tech.         | 985.80   | -7.50   |
| HDPC              | 2589.45  | -73.55  |
| HDPC Bank         | 1443.55  | -31.25  |
| HDPC Life         | 687.40   | -13.10  |
| Hero MotoCorp     | 3374.90  | -127.60 |
| Hindalco          | 239.20   | -9.70   |
| Hind Unilever     | 2409.35  | -41.70  |
| ICICI Bank        | 533.80   | -18.90  |
| IndusInd Bank     | 893.30   | -32.55  |
| Infosys           | 1340.85  | -1.15   |
| Indian Oil Corp   | 95.70    | -1.00   |
| ITC               | 210.70   | -3.00   |
| JSW Steel         | 375.40   | -17.90  |
| Kotak Bank        | 1828.00  | -29.80  |
| L&T               | 1362.10  | -9.20   |
| M&M               | 798.40   | -9.85   |
| Maruti Suzuki     | 8048.85  | -27.90  |
| Nestle India Ltd. | 17589.60 | -126.70 |
| NTPC              | 94.05    | -2.05   |
| ONGC              | 92.75    | -1.95   |
| PowerGrid Corp    | 194.20   | -0.95   |
| Reliance Ind      | 2049.60  | -49.80  |
| SBI Life          | 862.55   | -15.75  |
| State Bank        | 283.70   | -11.15  |
| Shree Cement      | 23694.30 | -24.70  |
| Sun Pharma        | 575.20   | -7.70   |
| Tata Motors       | 289.35   | -1.25   |
| Tata Steel        | 647.00   | -19.70  |
| TCS               | 3303.10  | -29.25  |
| Tech Mahindra     | 980.85   | -23.85  |
| Titan             | 1491.20  | -26.10  |
| UltraTech Cement  | 5534.80  | -8.65   |
| UPL               | 566.95   | -17.60  |
| Wipro             | 444.75   | -1.05   |

## EXCHANGE RATES

| CURRENCY           | TT BUY | TT SELL |
|--------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar          | 72.78  | 73.10   |
| Euro               | 88.59  | 89.01   |
| British Pound      | 99.41  | 99.85   |
| Japanese Yen (100) | 70.18  | 70.50   |
| Chinese Yuan       | 11.23  | 11.29   |
| Swiss Franc        | 82.27  | 82.64   |
| Singapore Dollar   | 54.84  | 55.09   |
| Canadian Dollar    | 57.29  | 57.57   |
| Malaysian Ringgit  | 17.99  | 18.08   |

Source: Indian Bank

## IN BRIEF



## Daimler India to improve localisation of CVs

Daimler India Commercial Vehicles has drawn up a 3-year plan to increase the indigenisation percentage in Indian-made commercial vehicles (CVs), said MD and CEO Satyakam Arya. The company has set a target to reach 95% localisation in commercial vehicles over the next three years. Currently, this stands at 90%, Mr. Arya said during a phygital meet.

## Earth Energy to roll out six EVs this year

Automotive start-up Earth Energy EV has announced the introduction of 6 new commercial and non-commercial e-vehicles in the India market this year. The EVs would be rolled out with 96% localisation, the company said. "Earth Energy will be producing EV batteries in India, which is considered to be one of the major cost reflectors in an EV," it added.

## Wendt India Q3 net profit jumps to ₹3.37 cr.

Wendt India Ltd., a Murugappa group company, has posted a 48% increase in standalone net profit for the third quarter ended December 2020 to ₹3.37 crore compared with the year-earlier period. Domestic sales rose 11% to ₹30.37 crore on account of higher sales to all major user industries such as auto, auto ancillaries, cutting tools, steel, engineering and bearings, the company said in a regulatory filing.

## Grasim to foray into paints, invest ₹5,000 cr.

Grasim Ltd. said it will foray into paints business with an initial investment plan of ₹5,000 crore. "The foray into paints is a strategic portfolio choice for Grasim as it looks to identify new growth engines," said Kumar Mangalam Birla, chairman, Aditya Birla Group. "Grasim's strong balance sheet will facilitate this entry, which will add size and diversity to its existing businesses."

## RIL net rises 12.5%, revenue slides 21%

Refining-to-telecoms firm shrinks costs by 22% helping buoy profit, adds 50,000 jobs since March

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

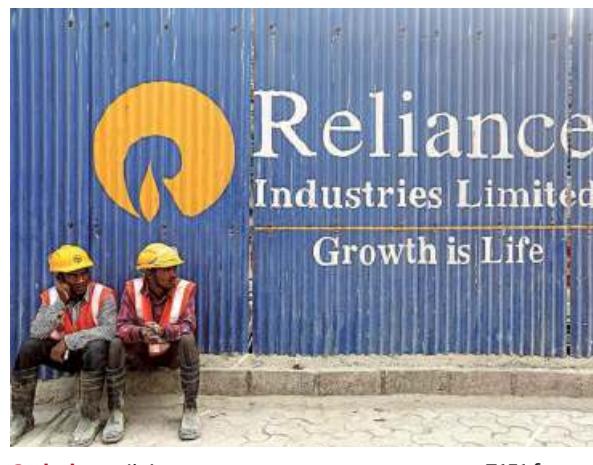
MUMBAI

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) on Friday reported third-quarter consolidated net profit rose 12.5% to ₹13,101 crore, from ₹1,640 crore in the year-earlier period, helped by a 22% decline in costs.

Revenue from operations, however, declined 21% to ₹1.24 lakh crore in three-month period ended December, from ₹1.57 lakh crore in the comparable quarter of the last financial year.

A reduction in expenses helped buoy profits, as costs shrank to ₹1.13 lakh crore in the quarter, from ₹1.45 lakh crore a year earlier.

"We have delivered strong operational results during the quarter with a robust revival in O2C [oil-to-chemicals]



Cash chest: Jio's average revenue per user rose to ₹151 from ₹145 in the preceding quarter. ■ REUTERS

and retail segments, and a steady growth in our digital services business," chairman and managing director Mukesh D. Ambani said in a statement to the

stock exchanges. "I am proud that Reliance has employed 50,000 more people since March 2020," Mr. Ambani added.

Both revenue and EBITDA

at the oil-to-chemicals business improved quarter-on-quarter by 10%, while EBITDA at the retail segment surged 54% from the preceding quarter.

Reliance Retail posted net profit of ₹1,830 crore on revenue of ₹37,845 crore.

He said the O2C platform

would increasingly move further downstream and become closer to customers. "It will create planet friendly and affordable energy and materials solutions to meet the growing needs of every sector of the Indian economy."

Jio Platforms reported consolidated net profit of ₹3,489 crore on revenue of ₹19,475 crore. The ARPUs rose to ₹151, from ₹145 in the preceding quarter. Total data traffic rose 4% sequentially to 1,586 crore GB.

## IL&amp;FS addressed debt of ₹2,500 crore in Q3

Firm has repaid ₹32,000 crore of debt

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

IL&FS Ltd. on Friday said it had addressed debt of about ₹2,500 crore in the last quarter ended December 31.

These include receipt of settlement amount by IL&FS Solar Power (ISPL) for approximately ₹780 crore; receipt of the tariff payments from the State distribution company by IL&FS Tamil Nadu Power (TTPCL) for approximately ₹1,190 crore; and ₹30,000 crore recoveries in IL&FS Financial Services Ltd. (IFIN) from borrowers outside the IL&FS group.

"The Group maintains its estimates of addressing aggregate debt of over ₹56,000 crore by FY22, out of an overall debt of over ₹99,000 crore (as of October 2018)," IL&FS said in a statement.

As part of its quarterly update on the progress of



## GM says State's move to hurt investments

REUTERS

DETROIT/NEW DELHI

An Indian State's move to block General Motors (GM) from shutting a plant and exiting the country defies the State's business-friendly image and sends a "concerning message" to potential future investors, the U.S. automaker said on Friday.

GM's comments came after authorities in Maharashtra earlier this week rejected the its application to cease operations at its plant in the State amid protests by workers who demanded GM continue production or keep them on the payroll indefinitely, according to local media.

## Sensex plunges 746 points as profit booking widens

Banking, metal stocks top losers

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI

A day after briefly touching the 50,000-mark, the S&P BSE Sensex declined for a second consecutive day on Friday as more investors sought to book profits.

Led by a fall in banking and metal stocks, the Sensex slumped 746 points, or 1.5%, to 48,879. The top losers included Axis Bank, Asian Paints, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank.

He said markets will first react to Reliance numbers in early trade on Monday.

"Mostly sectoral indices traded in tandem with the benchmark wherein bank-

ing and metal ended as the top losers," Ajit Mishra, VP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd., said.

He said markets will first react to Reliance numbers in early trade on Monday.

"The recent underperformance from the banking pack might derail the momentum if it continues next week as well," he added.

## Yes Bank Q3 net at ₹147 cr., NPAs rise

## PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHENNAI

Yes Bank on Friday reported consolidated net profit of ₹147 crore for the December quarter and a jump in asset quality stress due to COVID-19.

The bank had posted a loss of ₹18,564 crore a year earlier, when it recognised all the stress in the balance sheet. The lender had to be bailed out by a consortium led by SBI last March on troubles with the loan book. MD and CEO Prashant Kumar told reporters that this was the third straight quarter where the bank had shown a rise in profits. If the newly created stressed pool of restructuring and standstill NPAs were added to the reported gross NPAs of 15.36%, the stressed pool comes to 20%, which is higher than the year-earlier figures.

"The bank has continued its steady growth in both business and profit combined with good control over asset quality," said Padmaja Chunduru, MD and CEO, Indian Bank. Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) as a percentage of gross advances declined to 9.04% from 12.69% and net NPAs fell to 2.35% from 4.22%.



"We will try to keep GNPA below 10% and 3%, respectively," she said.

Net interest income rose 31% to ₹4,313 crore, while net interest margin increased 42 basis points to 3.13%.

The board approved a proposal to raise up to ₹4,000 crore from share

sale to enhance the capital base and an additional ₹3,000 crore via bonds.

## Indian Bank posts Q3 net profit of ₹514 crore

Board gives nod to raise ₹7,000 crore

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

Indian Bank reported a standalone net profit of ₹514 crore for the third quarter ended December 2020.

The lender compared the profit with net loss of ₹1,739 crore that included a loss at the erstwhile Allahabad Bank, which has since been merged. Indian Bank had reported standalone net profit of ₹247 crore a year earlier.

"The bank has continued its steady growth in both business and profit combined with good control over asset quality," said Padmaja Chunduru, MD and CEO, Indian Bank. Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) as a percentage of gross advances declined to 9.04% from 12.69% and net NPAs fell to 2.35% from 4.22%.

Revenue from operations rose 7.8% to ₹1,851 crore. Its generics business took a hit and there were headwinds across operational, regulatory and commercial functions.

"2020 has been one of the most challenging years for the world with an unprecedented pandemic impact on the global economy," said Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairperson.

"We still face headwinds across operational, regulatory and commercial functions. However, we expect normalcy by next fiscal."

The scrip slumped almost 11% to close at ₹393.80 on the BSE.

## SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

# Bharat Arun: the wizard guiding India's attack

Former paceman's role in assembling a tough, skilful crew of bowlers has been massive

## CRICKET

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

Bharat Arun is the miracle worker of Indian cricket. Injuries wipe out an entire attack and he still conjures a force that can win the high-stakes Test series decider Down Under.

With a flowing white mane these days, India's bowling coach has the looks of a wizard. Years and years of accumulating knowledge flows through Arun as he guides the side's bowlers.

No Jasprit Bumrah or Mohammed Shami or Umesh Yadav or Ishant Sharma or Bhuvneshwar Kumar, or R. Ashwin or Ravindra Jadeja.

Yet, with the India-A attack, some would call it India-B, Arun got the men he had to bowl as a unit, follow the process, and stick to the plan as India carved out an epic Test series victory in Australia breaching Fortress Gabba.

**Great pool of bowlers**  
"We have a great pool of bowlers now. Have wonderful bench strength," Arun said on Friday. The former India paceman's role in as-



**Historic:** The Indian players' joy well and truly reflects their achievement at the Gabba. Right: B. Arun, a key contributor. ■ PTI

sembling a tough and capable bunch of reserve bowlers has been massive.

He said, "Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur had done so well in First Class cricket. And T. Natarajan provided us the left-arm's angle."

And Arun offered a significant insight into India's winning strategy against Australia. He revealed, "It was

around July last year when coach Ravi Shastri called me and asked me to chalk out a plan where we would take the off-side out of the equation."

### Sticking to the task

Arun elaborated, "The Australians are strong on the off-side with cuts and drives, and we decided to bowl straighter lines, on middle



**Around July last year, Shastri called me and asked me to chalk out a plan where we would take the off-side out of the equation**

and leg, with a leg-side field. The bowlers stuck to their task and the plan worked."

This Indian team did not fear defeat. Dwelling on the side's fearlessness, Arun said, "On the last day of the Brisbane Test, you had two young batsmen, Rishabh Pant and Washington Sundar, going all out for a win, when they could have, so easily, played out a draw. Of

course, earlier, Cheteshwar Pujara played like a warrior, taking so many blows on the body."

And the strategy to play five bowlers at the Gabba was a brave ploy. "We have seen that it can be very hard to win a Test overseas with four bowlers. Playing an extra batsman would have been a defensive move and the captain, the coach and

the support staff were on the same page — play five bowlers."

Arun observed, "We had seen Washington bat at the nets and knew he could really play and he was a left-hander too. Although there was a net bowler, Washington batted half-an-hour at the nets in every session."

**Simple mantra**  
India's winning mantra was simple, he noted. "Follow the process. Execute the plans on the field with discipline."

Arun was optimistic looking ahead. "We have a top-class pace attack, have depth. And, in Ashwin and Jadeja, have the two best spinners in the world. Jadeja blossoming as an all-rounder is great for Indian cricket."

England would be a tough team to beat, he said. It will be another day and another challenge for Arun.

The first two Tests will be held in Chennai with the second match to end on February 17.

The player retention deadline ended on January 20 and the transfer deadline for player trades between the franchises ends on February 4.

## IPL auction likely in Chennai on Feb. 18

S. DIPAK RAGAV  
CHENNAI

The players' auction for the 2021 edition of the Indian Premier League is likely to take place in Chennai on February 18.

The auction is to be held between the second and third Tests between India and England.

The first two Tests will be held in Chennai with the second match to end on February 17.

The player retention deadline ended on January 20 and the transfer deadline for player trades between the franchises ends on February 4.

## No one learns algebra in Class I: Saha on Pant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA

Rishabh Pant, the batsman, redeemed himself spectacularly in Australia and his much-criticised wicketkeeping skills are also on the mend, feels senior India stumper Wriddhiman Saha who wants the youngster to be given some breathing space as "no one learns algebra in Class I".

"I don't see who is No. 1 or 2. The team will give a chance to those who do better. I will continue to do my job. Selection is not in my hands, it's up to the management."

Saha was all praise for the 23-year-old Pant, whose knock sealed the Test series triumph for India at the Gabba.

"No one learns algebra in class I. You always go step by step. He is giving his best and will definitely improve. He has matured and proved himself. In the long run, it augurs well for the Indian team," he said of Pant, who has often been found wanting behind the stumps.

"The way he has shown his intent after being sidelined from his favourite T20 and ODI formats was really exceptional."

## QUICK SINGLES



### Siraj the find of Australia tour: Shastri

NEW DELHI

India head coach Ravi Shastri on Friday described rookie pacer Mohammed Siraj as the find of the Australia tour, hailing him for the key role he played in the historic Test series win despite personal loss and racial abuse from spectators.

"Find of the tour for shoring up the bowling attack the way he did: Mohd. Siraj. He fought through personal loss, racial remarks and channelised them to find home in the team huddle," Shastri tweeted in appreciation of the 26-year-old pacer. PTI

### I can be called a bowling all-rounder, says Shardul Thakur

MUMBAI

+

Shardul Thakur says he took a quantum leap from being just a fast bowler to a bowling all-rounder during India's epoch-making Brisbane Test triumph over Australia. "Yes, I can be called a bowling all-rounder, I have the ability to bat and even in future, whenever I get my opportunity to bat, I am going to contribute useful runs to the team," said Shardul, who has seven First Class fifties to his credit. PTI

### India heroes Ashwin and Washington return to Chennai

CHENNAI

Senior off-spinner R. Ashwin and rookie all-rounder Washington Sundar, who were part of the triumphant Indian team in the Test series against Australia, returned home on Friday. The two will be in quarantine for six days as per the protocols put in place by the State government. PTI



### TNCA hints at 'closed door' India-England Tests in Chennai

CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA), in a circular to members of the association, said that the first two Tests involving India and England, to be played at MAC Stadium, will be held behind 'closed doors'. TNCA secretary R.S. Ramasamy, in his official note, wrote: "In view of the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, the BCCI has decided not to take any risk with the safety of the players during the forthcoming India-England Test series."



## Mathews' century drives Sri Lanka

### ENGLAND IN SL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GALLE

Angelo Mathews scored a stubborn century to take Sri Lanka to 229/4 on the first day of the second Test against England on Friday after early strikes by James Anderson made the home side look vulnerable.

Mathews was at the crease on 107 with Niroshan Dickwella at the close in Galle. Sri Lanka lost the first Test by seven wickets.

Anderson claimed three

wickets, including opener Lahiru Thirimanne for 43 soon after lunch, that took his Test tally to 603 in 157 matches. Mathews built crucial partnerships, including a 117-run stand for the fourth wicket with skipper Dinesh Chandimal who made 52.

Fast bowler Mark Wood trapped Chandimal lbw and the batsman went off after an unsuccessful review of the umpire's decision.

Mathews reached his 11th Test hundred, and third against England, with a single off Jack Leach.



Mathews. ■ SLC/TWITTER

He put on 36 runs with Dickwella, holding out after England took the new ball in the 81st over.

### SCOREBOARD

Sri Lanka – 1st innings

L. Thirimanne c Buttler b Anderson 43, K. Perera c Root b Anderson 6, O. Fernando c Anderson 6, A. Mathews (batting) 107, D. Chandimal lbw b Wood 52, N. Dickwella (batting) 19; Extras (lb-2); Total (for four wkt.s. in 87 overs): 229.

**Fall of wickets**  
1-7, 2-7, 3-76, 4-193.

**England bowling**

Anderson 19-10-24-3, Curran 11-2-36-0, Leach, 22-3-66-0, Wood 17-2-47-1, Bess 18-1-54-0.

**Toss:** Sri Lanka.

### Mushtaq Ali schedule

#### ■ Quarterfinals

**January 26:** Punjab vs. Karnataka, noon (QF 1); Tamil Nadu vs. Himachal, 7 p.m. (QF 2)

**January 27:** Haryana vs. Baroda, noon (QF 3); Rajasthan vs. Bihar, 7 p.m. (QF 4)

#### ■ Semifinals

**January 29:** Winner of QF 2 vs. Winner of QF 4, noon; Winner of QF 1 vs. Winner of QF 3, 7 p.m.

#### ■ Final

**January 31:** 7 p.m.

**All matches at Ahmedabad.**

## Bangladesh clinches series

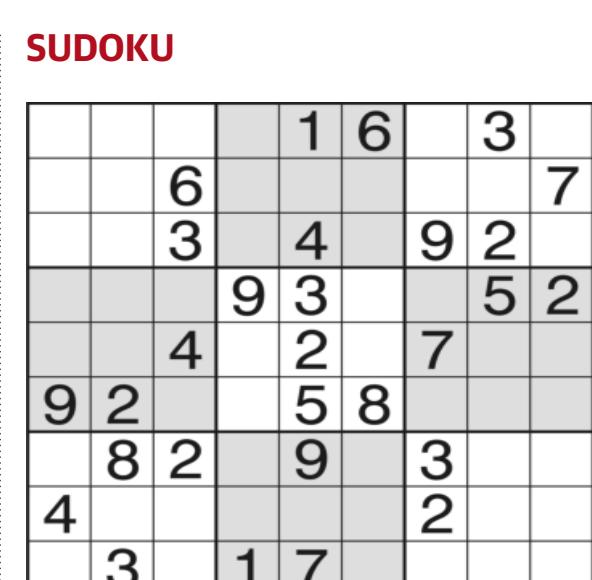
ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DHAKA

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan claimed a career-best four for 25 as Bangladesh clinched the three-match ODI series against the West Indies on Friday with a seven-wicket victory in the second game. Bangladesh had won the first match by six wickets.

Skipper Tamim Iqbal hit 50 to help the side chase the target in 33.2 overs after the West Indies was bowled out for 148 in 43.4 overs.

**The scores:** West Indies 148 in 43.4 overs (R. Powell 41, Mehidy 4/25) lost to Bangladesh 149/3 in 33.2 overs (Tamim 50, Shakib 43 n.o.).

## SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

### Solution to puzzle 13151

### Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

- Display keystrokes of genius.  
Solve crosswords and sudoku online  
at <https://rgo.page.link/jjpTn>
- ACROSS**
- Writer's following lecturers up-to-date (10)
  - Foreigner leaves woven container to lie in the sun (4)
  - Narrow-minded friend grabs choir in straits (9)
  - Millet from a junior in a college class (5)
  - Support talk even if it's rude response (8)
  - Counter a graduate's short, cross word (6)
  - Deeply involved with taking rook in opener (5)
- DOWN**
- Concerning open country like ours (8)
  - Cruel act makes a rot settle over town (8)
  - Concealed, I pay in bits for book of knowledge (13)
  - Lazily curl up with aim to reach a toy (10)
  - Said star is not working (4)
  - Body's face has changed; it's wretched (6)
  - Sikhs lash out within the limits of Kerala (6)
  - Biographer with b-i-l raps library staff, perhaps (13)
  - Critically it can cause a big bang (6,4)
  - Inhabitant of an emirate gets reluctant Rani into short dirty habit (8)
  - Blindfolded? On the contrary, quite watchful! (4-4)
  - Contract killing in India for leader of upstarts in riotous Paris (6)
  - Attack saint's stupid fear (6)
  - Brother in Tamil Nadu — one without currency any longer (4)

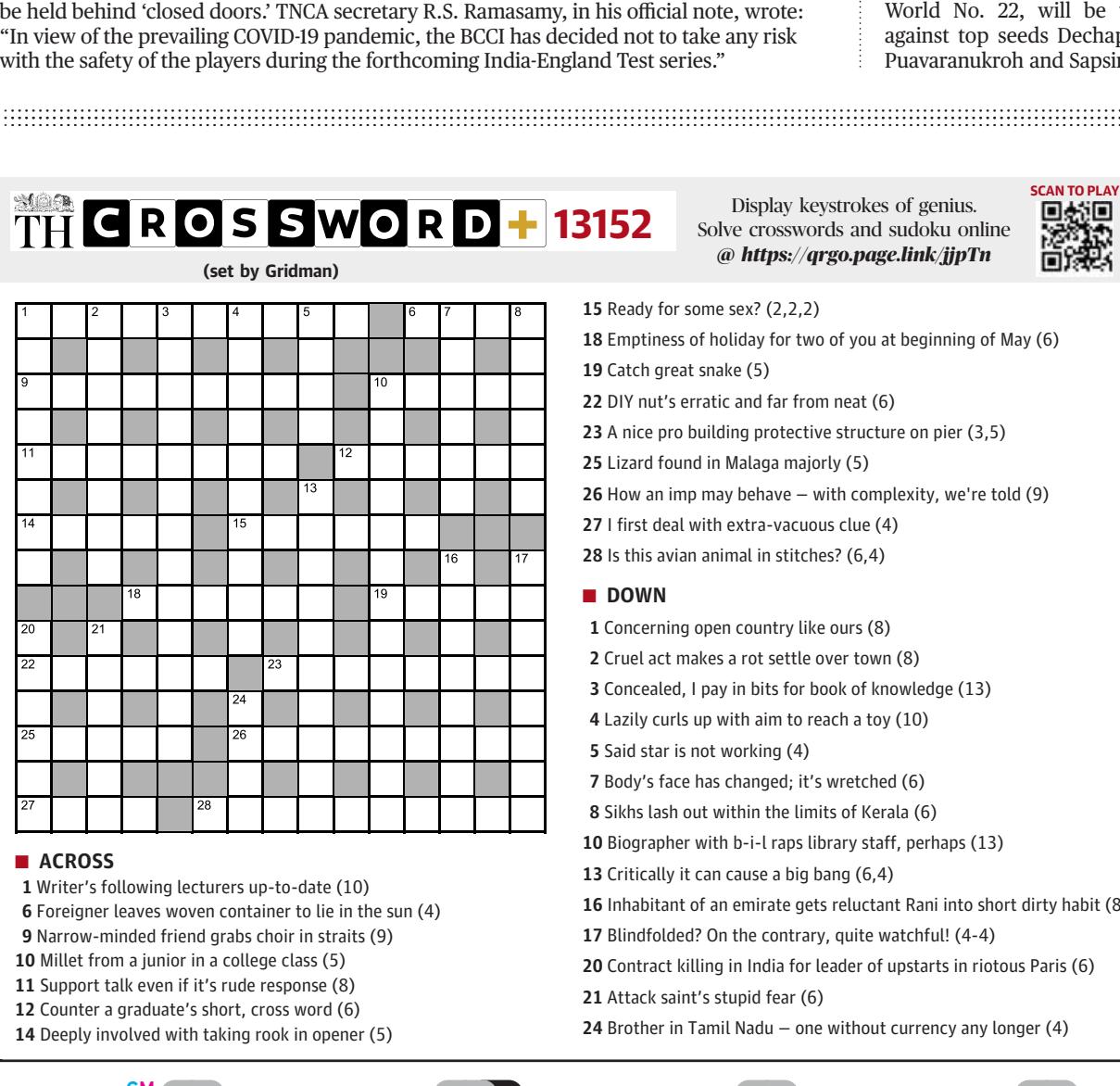
## FAITH

### The chosen friend of Siva

The Periyapuram throws light on the intense state of devotion of the Nayamars against the backdrop of the life and times in which they lived. Much depends on the mental attitude and faith of the reader when approaching these stories of devotion to imbibe and practise the compassion, love and humanitarian values embedded in them, pointed out Sri K. Kalaiavanam in a discourse.

For instance, in describing the life of Sundarar, it is first indicated that Sundarar, Paravaiyar and Sangiliyiar have come from Kailasa to live on earth for a brief period on the Lord's command. Though not aware of their past state, they feel the power and force of Siva's boundless grace that guides their life. The Lord intervenes to turn Sundarar into the path of devotion. He enacts an episode to draw him into His fold. Sundarar refuses and then finally accepts the Lord's claim to be His slave. Siva gives him the name Vanthondar because of his harsh reaction. Sundarar had even called Him 'Pitha,' meaning the mad one. Siva then confers on him the gift of poesy and inspires him to sing hymns in His praise. Seeing Sundarar hesitating, Siva suggests the very word Pitha to begin the hymn.

Of all the endless names of Siva, this name is unique as it indicates the way devotion to God can lead one to an ecstatic state. In the case of Sundarar, Siva chooses to give Himself as a friend to this devotee and makes known this fact when He speaks in His divine voice thus: "Sundara, I give myself to you as a friend. Henceforth you shall always appear in the bridegroom's attire that you were in when I enslaved you." Since then, Sundarar is known as Tambiran Thozhan, the chosen friend of Siva. As promised, Siva is always present to guide and help him cope with the ups and downs in his life.



## TV PICKS

**ISL:** Star Sports 2 & 3 (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m.  
**Thailand Open badminton:** Star Sports 2 HD & 3, 9.30 a.m.  
**Serie A:** Sony Ten 1 & Sony Six (SD & HD), 10.30 p.m.; Sony Six (SD & HD), 7.30 p.m., 1.15 a.m.  
**FA Cup:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 5.45 p.m., 8.30 p.m. & 11 p.m.  
**Sri Lanka vs England:** Sony Ten 2 (SD & HD), 10 a.m.

## IN BRIEF



Sepp Blatter battling health issues

GENEVA  
Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter spent a week in an induced coma after having heart surgery in December, his family said on Thursday. The 84-year-old, who also tested positive for COVID-19 late last year, was well enough only this week to be moved out of intensive care at a hospital in Switzerland. AP

## Harikrishna accepts Giri's draw offer

Wijk aan Zee  
P. Harikrishna accepted Anish Giri's draw offer in 26 moves in the fifth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament on Thursday. With one of the five overnight leaders, Sweden's Nils Grandelius (3.5 points), beating Maxime Vachier-Lagrange to re-emerge as the only leader, Harikrishna, Magnus Carlsen, Anish Giri and Fabiano Caruana (three each) shared the second spot.



Mumbai extends lead

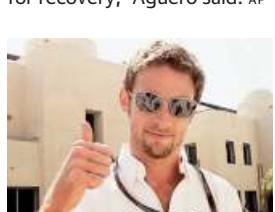
VASCO  
Mumbai City FC regained the five-point lead at the top of the Indian Super League standings after it defeated SC East Bengal by a solitary goal in the 12th round here on Friday. Mourtada Fall found the net for Mumbai City in the first half.  
**The result:** East Bengal 0 lost to Mumbai City FC 1 (Mourtada Fall 27).  
**Saturday's match:** Kerala Blasters v FC Goa, 7.30 p.m.

## Snehashis goes through angioplasty

KOLKATA  
The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) secretary, Snehashis Ganguly, went through an angioplasty surgery at a city hospital here on Friday. The surgery was successful and he is under observation, said a CAB statement. Snehashis' brother and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly had gone through the same procedure earlier this month.

## Man City striker Aguero is coronavirus positive

MANCHESTER  
Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero has tested positive for the coronavirus, saying he has experienced some symptoms. "I had some symptoms and I'm following doctor's orders for recovery," Aguero said. AP



Button back at Williams as senior advisor

LONDON  
Former World champion Jenson Button has joined Williams in the role of senior advisor as the flagging Formula One team looks to revive its fortunes. "Sir Frank Williams showed faith in me, which I will be eternally grateful for, and I am excited to have the chance to come back and help the team as it strives once more for success," said Button. AFP

## Double delight for Jagmeet Kaur

SONIPAT  
Jagmeet Kaur won both the singles and doubles titles in the ₹1,00,000 AITA-ranking tennis on Friday.  
**The results (finals):** Jagmeet Kaur bt Sarita Yadav 6-1, 6-2; **Doubles:** Jagmeet & Sarita bt S. Srinidhi & Adrija Biswas 6-1, 6-2.

## Burnley ends Reds' run

Suarez double takes Atletico seven clear in LaLiga

## EURO LEAGUES

REUTERS  
LIVERPOOL

Liverpool suffered a shock 1-0 defeat to lowly Burnley on Thursday, ending its 68 match unbeaten home record in the Premier League as its title defence continued to fade.

An 83rd minute penalty from Ashley Barnes, after he was brought down by goalkeeper Alisson Becker, decided the contest even as Jurgen Klopp's side failed to score for the fourth straight league match.

Liverpool has not won for five games in the league and trails leader Manchester United by six points, in fourth place. It was Burnley's first victory at Anfield since a 1-0 victory in September, 1974 and Sean Dyche's side was rewarded for a superb defensive display.

In LaLiga, Eibar goalkeeper Marko Dmitrovic defied convention by scoring a penalty but it was Luis Suarez's



Oh, no! Liverpool paid the penalty for Becker bringing down Barnes. ■ GETTY IMAGES

spot kick in the dying minutes that proved conclusive as Atletico Madrid secured a 2-1 away win on Thursday which lifted it seven points clear at the top.

Dmitrovic gave Eibar the lead in the 12th minute before Suarez levelled for Atletico five minutes before halftime.

Suarez had the final say,

drawing a foul from Anaizt Arilla to earn a penalty. He oozed calm and chipped the ball past Dmitrovic to give his side all three points.

**The results:** Premier League: Liverpool 0 lost to Burnley 1 (Barnes 83-pen); LaLiga: Valencia 1 (Garcia 69-og) drew with Osasuna 1 (Callejón 42); Eibar 1 (Dmitrovic 12-pen) lost to Atletico Madrid 2 (Suarez 40, 89-pen).

## Stage set for MRF Rally of Coimbatore

Spectator entry to be restricted to 100

## MOTORSPORTS

RAYAN ROZARIO  
COIMBATORE

After two exciting rounds in Puttur and Bengaluru, the riders are all set to attack the stages in the third round of the MRF MoGRIP FMSCI Indian National Rally Championship (INRC) for two-wheelers at the Kethanur windmill farms in Palladam on Sunday.

Organised by the Coimbatore Auto Sports Club, the Rally of Coimbatore, that brings in a large crowd, will witness a mix of dirt and special stages. However, this time around, spectator entry is restricted to 100.

The total route distance is approximately 80.22km and those of the special stages is 67km. There will be two special stages, the Black Thunder (19.25km) and Thunder World (14.25km), run twice in the same direction.

The stages are set inside the private wind farms near Kethanur (Palladam) area, and it promises to be a treat to watch.

"Our Club is pleased to host this rally yet again,"

said J. Prithviraj, CASC's honorary secretary.

The ceremonial flag-off will be on January 23 at 5 p.m. from the Suguna Kalyana Mandapam on the Avinashi Road followed by Sunday's action from the Kethanur Service Park at 9 a.m.

Favourite: Samuel Jacob, the joint leader, who surprised many with his skilful riding in the earlier rounds, is expected to dominate. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Seventy-three riders have confirmed participation across nine classes that form the National championship. There will also be a 'Star of Tamil Nadu' category and that has attracted 11 contestants.

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