



CM TIRATH RAWAT TO
FACE FIRST TEST AFTER
ASSUMING CHARGE

P3



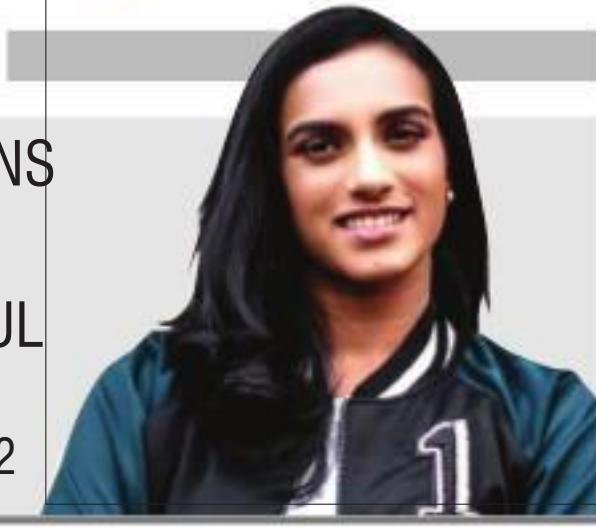
PC SLAMS GOVT'S
PROPOSED CHANGES
TO GNCTD ACT

P5



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION
NK WARNS USA NOT TO
'CAUSE A STINK' BEFORE
SEOUL MEET

P9



WHY INDIANS
HOPE FOR
A RICH HAUL

P12

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 33 and 16 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 88% Min: 42%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 32.1°C (+1) Min: 17.2°C (+2)

SUN RISES

06:27 hrs

MOON RISES

09:16 hrs

SUN SETS

18:31 hrs

MOON SETS

22:01 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Women smear dry colours (abir) on each other during Holi celebrations in Nadia district in West Bengal on Tuesday. ■ AGENCIES

PM Modi's principal advisor P K Sinha resigns: P K Sinha, the principal advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has resigned, sources said on Tuesday. Sinha, a retired IAS officer of 1977 batch, was appointed as principal advisor to the Prime Minister in September 2019, after a brief stint as an officer on special duty (OSD). Sinha was made OSD to the Prime Minister in August 2019, after he had served four years as Cabinet Secretary.

Bill to set up DFI: The Union Cabinet on Tuesday approved a Bill to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) to generate funds for investment in the infrastructure sector. The proposed legislation will give effect to the Budget announcement made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 1 February. The government has proposed Rs 20,000 crore to capitalise the institution.

P8

Rajnath campaigns in Bengal: Defence minister Rajnath Singh slammed the Mamata Banerjee-led Bengal government for alleged worsening law and order and said 'Khela' after BJP victory in the election, will be that of development and peace. Singh asserted that the BJP will win 200 seats and transform West Bengal from a "police state to public state".

Centre warns Maha of second wave, asks it to step up efforts

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

The Centre warned Maharashtra on Tuesday that the state is witnessing a beginning of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and asked the state government to focus on containment strategies and scale up the pace of vaccination campaign, especially in districts witnessing a sharp increase in infections.

Issuing a letter to Maharashtra's chief secretary Sitaram Kunte, based on the assessment of the Central govt team, the Union health ministry has urged the state to bring down its positivity rate and step up contact-tracing.

The letter enclosed the analysis of the pandemic situation in Maharashtra by a Cen-

tral team which was deputed there to assess the ground situation.

The team noted the lack of Covid-19-appropriate behaviour and tracking and testing of cases as the prime reason behind the surge in infections, apart from the apathy of the district administration to implement already prescribed measures for transmission control.

Meanwhile, India recorded 24,492 new Covid-19 cases, registering more than 20,000 cases for the sixth day in a row, taking the infection tally past 1.14 crore, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday. The total cases in the country rose to 1,14,09,831, while the death toll increased to 1,58,856, with 131 fresh fatalities.

The active caseload has

increased to 2,23,432. The recovery rate has further dropped to 96.65 per cent, it said.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 22,82,80,763 samples have been tested till March 15, with 8,73,350 samples tested on Monday.

Out of the 131 new fatalities, 48 deaths were reported from Maharashtra, 27 from Punjab and 11 from Kerala.

Delhi sees a surge of 425 cases: The national capital today recorded 425 coronavirus infections detected out of 70,049 tests, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. The positivity rate stood at 0.61 per cent.

Delhi's Covid-19 toll climbed to 10,945 with one more fatality, the bulletin stated. (SEE P2)



Over 30 lakh vaccinated on Monday

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

More than 30 lakh people were inoculated against Covid-19 on March 15, the highest in a day so far, taking the total number of vaccine doses administered in the country to 3,29,47,432, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

The vaccination of beneficiaries aged over 60 has touched 1 crore within 15 days, the ministry said.

Boris Johnson to visit India in April-end

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will visit India on April-end on his first major overseas trip since his country's exit from the European Union, his office has announced.

Johnson was earlier scheduled to visit New Delhi in January to attend India's Republic Day as the chief guest but the trip had to be postponed due to a sudden spurt in Covid-19 cases in the UK.

During his visit, Johnson will personally extend to Prime Minister Narendra Modi an invitation to attend the G-7 summit to be hosted by the UK in June.

Swapan Dasgupta quits as RS member to 'fight for Bengal'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Nominated Rajya Sabha member Swapan Dasgupta on Tuesday tendered his resignation from the upper house of Parliament after being named as a BJP candidate in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

Dasgupta, who became a Rajya Sabha member on April 25, 2016, has been named by the saffron party as its candidate from Tarakeshwar constituency in the poll-bound state.

"I have resigned from the Rajya Sabha today to commit myself totally to the fight for a better Bengal. I hope to file my nomination as BJP candidate for the Tarakeshwar Assembly seat in the next few days," Dasgupta said on Twitter. Sources said he has urged the Chairman of Rajya Sabha to accept his resignation with effect from Wednesday.

Asked about his resignation, Dasgupta said, "I have always said whatever necessary steps will have to be taken will be done by me before I submit my nomination papers (for West Bengal polls)." His term as Rajya Sabha member was till April 24, 2022.

His resignation came after Trinamool Congress MP Mohua Moitra raised objections to Dasgupta being named as a BJP candidate for the upcoming assembly polls in West Bengal.

RS passes Bill to raise upper limit for abortions

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a Bill to raise the upper limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 weeks for "special categories of women" including rape survivors, victims of incest, minors and the differently-abled.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 was passed by voice vote. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha about a year ago.

A demand to send the Bill to a select committee of Rajya Sabha was defeated by voice vote, along with some other amendments proposed by members.



(Amendment) Bill, 2020 sent to a select committee of the Rajya Sabha.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said the amendments in the Bill have been made after studying global practices and wide

consultation within the country. He told the House that extensive consultations were done before the Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha last year and it was also approved by the Ethics Committee and a Group of Ministers headed by Nitin Gadkari.

"Under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we will not frame any law which harms women. This is to preserve and protect dignity of women," he said.

The minister said the suggestions and objections made to the Bill by some members were symbolic in nature and aligned with their party ideology.

PM Modi to visit B'desh next week

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bangladesh from 26-27 March at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina, according to official announcement.

"This visit is in connection with the commemoration of three epochal events - Mujib Borsho, the birth centenary of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman; 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Bangladesh; and 50 years of Bangladesh's war of liberation," the External Affairs

Ministry said. Modi had last visited Bangladesh in 2015.

Modi's visit to Bangladesh will be his first overseas trip since the outbreak of Covid, reflecting the priority India attaches to ties with Dhaka.

During the visit, the Prime Minister will attend the National Day programme of Bangladesh on 26 March as the guest of honour. Besides holding talks with Sheikh Hasina, Modi will call on Bangladesh President Md. Abdul Hamid. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen will call on the Indian leader.

"Swapan Dasgupta is BJP candidate for WB polls. 10th Schedule of Constitution says nominated RS member to be disqualified if he joins any political party AFTER expiry of 6 months from oath. He was sworn in April 2016, remains unaliwed. Must be disqualified NOW for joining BJP," Moitra tweeted last night.

"Following up on my previous tweet - Rajya Sabha website as of today says Swapan Dasgupta is nominated & not formally BJP. If he files nomination as @BJP candidate he should be disqualified according to the Constitution's 10th Schedule (Para 2 (3)," she also tweeted.

She also claimed that Dasgupta should "either resign RS now or be disqualified" and said he has "no safety net".

According to the Tenth schedule of the Constitution, a nominated member of a house can join a political party before the expiry of six months from the date on which he takes his seat after complying with requirements of Article 99 or, as the case may be, Article 188.





When she points fingers at Amit Shah ji, she doesn't realize three are pointing back at her

RAJU BISTA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, DARJEELING

ON MAMATA BANERJEE'S ALLEGATION THAT THE HOME MINISTER HAD BEEN INTERFERING IN EC WORK

Kejriwal to protest Centre's Bill at Jantar Mantar today

Delhi ministers and AAP MPs, MLAs & councillors will participate in the protest to be led by the CM against the Modi govt's 'unconstitutional and undemocratic' bid to strip an elected govt of its powers

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

To voice his government's dissent against the Narendra Modi-led Centre's amendment Bill that seeks to give sweeping powers to the Delhi Lieutenant Governor vis-a-vis the elected government, Delhi chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal is going to lead a protest at Jantar Mantar here tomorrow, which will involve his AAP ministers, MPs, MLAs, and councilors among others.

"All Delhi Cabinet ministers, MLAs, Aam Aadmi Party MPs and councilors will participate in the protest," Delhi development minister Gopal Rai said, adding that the protest will be led by Kejriwal.

Later, addressing a press conference, Rai said the "unconstitutional way" in



which the BJP-led central government is attempting to strip the Delhi government's powers is "condemnable".

Rai charged that the Modi government was attempting to restrict the powers of an elected government in Delhi, rendering it virtually powerless.

"The Delhi government's growing popularity across the country appears to have become a thorn in the central government's eye," Rai said.

He charged that the BJP-

ruled Centre has conspired to limit an elected government's powers, and is attempting to overturn the judgement of the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in order to restrict the powers of the Delhi government and to stifle its growth.

"Now every decision will be implemented at the mercy of the LG. Thus, the party has decided to protest against the central government's decision to introduce a bill that renders an elected government powerless. All MLAs of the Aam Aadmi Party, all ministers, along with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will be present at Jantar Mantar on 17 March from 2 PM onwards to register their protest against an undemocratic decision being taken by the BJP-led Central government," said Rai.

Kejriwal had yesterday slammed the BJP dispensation for seeking to drastically curtail the powers of his elected government in Delhi through an amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

Kejriwal asserted that the proposed amendment Bill seeking to give overarching powers to the Delhi LG vis-a-vis the elected government was an "unconstitutional and anti-democracy move". He said the Bill was contrary to the Supreme Court's Constitution Bench judgement.

Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia had then also said that the Modi government's Bill that seeks to define certain role and powers of the Delhi LG was democratically and constitutionally "dangerous". Sisodia had also accused the BJP-led Centre of trying to rule Delhi from "backdoor".

"It's a very dangerous amendment democratically and constitutionally. It will render the elections and electing government in Delhi meaningless," Sisodia had yesterday told a press conference, adding that the AAP-led Delhi government will look into the matter and explore options after consulting legal experts.

The Modi government had yesterday introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in the Lok Sabha.

According to this Bill, the "government" in Delhi would mean the "Lieutenant Governor" in context of any law to be made by the legislative assembly.

The Bill that was introduced by Union minister of state for home G Kishan Reddy in the Lok Sabha makes it mandatory for the Delhi government to take the opinion of the LG before any executive action in the national capital.

Kejriwal had yesterday

slammed the BJP dispensation

for seeking to drastically curtail the powers of his elected government in Delhi through an amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labourer at a dairy in the same area. One of the culprits, Pardeep Kohli (19), a resident of Jawalapuri, a labourer at a scrap shop in Bahadurgarh has been arrested and the juvenile apprehended in the case, they said.

After their vehicles brushed past each other, both the parties engaged into an argument which soon turned into a scuffle. The incident took place on Monday night when Aggarwal and Ghanshyam were returning home after attending a wedding at a com-

munity centre near Jawalapuri, the police said.

According to the police, the victims were riding a two-wheeler when it collided with the accused's motorcycle.

An argument broke out between the two sides following which the accused chased the victims for about half a kilometre.

The motorcycle-borne men later stabbed Aggarwal and Ghanshyam near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station, and fled from the spot.

"We received a call about

two injured men lying near the Udyog Vihar Metro Station. The injured were taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where they were declared brought dead," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said.

With the help of technical surveillance, both the culprits were apprehended and during interrogation, it surfaced that road rage led to the double murder, he said. The knife and motorcycle used in the commission of crime have been recovered from the accused, the officer added.

work as a labour



The party is growing in size as more and more people join... There are bound to be some problems

BJP'S STATE GENERAL SECRETARY SAYANTAN BASU
ON BJP SUPPORTERS PROTESTING PARTY'S CANDIDATE SELECTION

No property tax in Haryana on agri land in urban areas

To ensure this, the Manohar Lal Khattar-led Haryana govt passes a Bill in the Assembly

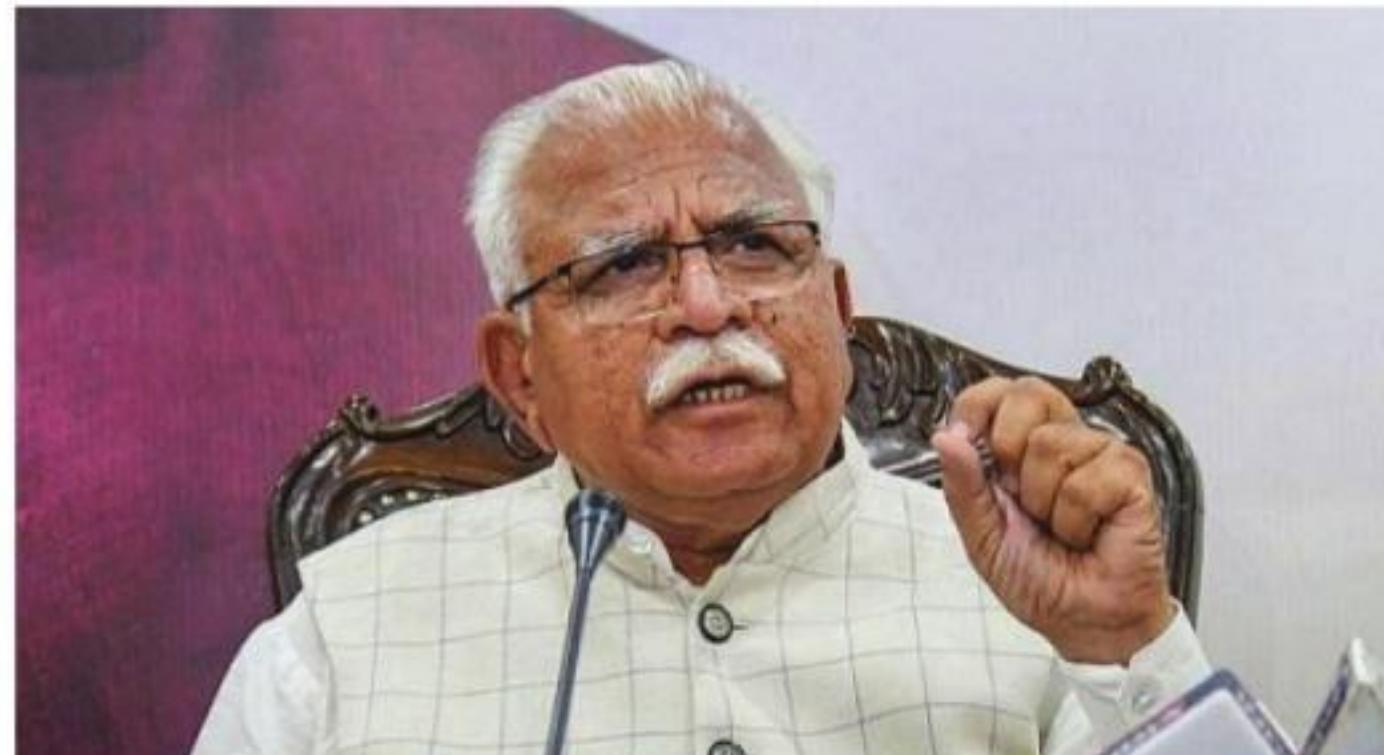
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 16 MARCH

The Manohar Lal Khattar-led Haryana government has decided not to levy any property tax on the land used for agriculture in urban areas.

For this, the Haryana government on Monday passed a Bill in the Assembly during the ongoing budget session. With this, Haryana has become the first state in the country to exclude land used for agriculture only from the purview of tax by making amendments in the section of the property tax itself, an official spokesperson said.

Giving details in this regard, the spokesperson said that according to the provisions mentioned in serial number 49 of List-II (State List) of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution of India, state governments have the right to levy property tax on lands and buildings.

On the basis of this, property tax is levied on lands and buildings by all the states and



accordingly in Haryana property tax is also levied on both buildings and lands.

With the latest amendment made by the Haryana government, a provision has been made to levy property tax on the basis of the value of the property and to set a minimum rate for property tax.

The municipalities will also have the right to levy

property tax at higher rates than these minimum rates. This prefase is as per the recommendation of the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs. These recommendations include notifying the floor rate of property tax as per the prevailing circle rates and putting in place a system of periodic increase in property tax in line with price increase.

As a result of implementing these reforms in property tax, the state will get an additional 0.25 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) as a loan. So far, five states namely Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Manipur by making such amendments have been recommended to give 0.25 per cent as additional loan

by the Union ministry of finance.

Meanwhile, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said the Full and Final Settlement Scheme, started from 3 March, 2021, for the enhancement in the sectors of the Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran will continue till 30 April 2021.

So far, a benefit of Rs 31.10 crore has been given to 762 plot holders under the Scheme, while till now Rs 19.74 crore has been deposited by the plot holders. The CM gave this information in the Assembly on Tuesday.

The CM said under this Scheme 15,430 plot holders will be given an enhancement settlement of Rs 823 crore, under which people will get benefits upto 20 to 80 per cent.

Khattar said this problem has been going on ever since the Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran came into existence and this issue came to the notice of the present state government in 2017, after it came to power in 2014.

Satyendra Prakash assumes charge of BOC's PDG

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH



Press Information Bureau.

Satyendra Prakash is a Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in the field of Humanities & Social Sciences.

The Bureau of Outreach and Communication (BOC), earlier known as Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), is the nodal organisation of the Government for advertising and communication. It uses various media platforms like newspapers, television, radio, digital and Out of Home media to advertise and disseminate information on major policy initiatives of the government.

Pb Police files FIR for 'conspiracy' to tarnish CM's reputation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 16 MARCH

The Punjab Police on Tuesday registered a case under various sections against unknown miscreants for allegedly spreading "false and patently defamatory" WhatsApp and other social media messages aimed at tarnishing the reputation of Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, using a young lady's photograph picked up from her social media accounts without her permission.

The case, under Section 509 IPC, Section 4 and 6 of The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986 and Sections 66 and 67 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, has been registered at the Cyber Crime, Mohali, on a written complaint by Sandeep Sandhu, general secretary-in-charge Punjab Congress, to director, Bureau of Investigation, according to DGP Dinkar Gupta.

A police spokesman said that distribution of such malicious and salacious content on social media, including news websites and TV channels, is against the law, and he advised people to refrain from spreading these lies.

Sandeep Sandhu had, in his complaint, sought a thorough investigation into the "criminal and political conspiracy unleashed by certain unscrupulous and disgruntled elements to tarnish the reputation of the Chief Minister through defamatory messages forwarded on WhatsApp and shared on other platforms".

The mode and manner in which the girl's photograph has been used falls foul of provisions of various provisions of the law, he said.

Seeking registration of FIR in the matter at the earliest "to track the source and origin of these patently false messages at the earliest," Sandhu said "the role of certain political opponents of the CM in spreading this derogatory message, ahead of the 2022 assembly elections, cannot be ruled out and needs to be investigated."

Sandhu termed the contents of the messages, containing defamatory and derogatory insinuations against the Chief Minister and a lady from Malerkotla, who happens to be an acquaintance of a relative of the CM, as "offensive, salacious and repulsive" and clearly circulated for character assassination of the CM.

The message are being made viral on Facebook etc with the sole intent to defame the CM, he said.

In the process, these persons have also knowingly tarnished the image of the young girl, who is just starting out in life, he pointed out, underlining the need for a detailed probe into the "political conspiracy behind this defamatory campaign".

Pointing out that the use of the lady's photograph was "tantamount to invasion of privacy which is a fundamental right", Sandhu urged the Director, Bureau of Investigation, to get the matter investigated from the Cyber Cell to trace the source and origin of these false and lascivious messages, and ensure appropriate action, under the law, against the miscreants.

Tirath Rawat faces 1st test: Salt assembly bypoll announced

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DEHRADUN, 16 MARCH



The new Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat will face his first leadership test after assuming charge in the coming weeks when the bye-election for the Salt assembly constituency will take place.

The Election Commission of India announced the poll schedule for the bypolls on Tuesday. The Salt assembly seat in Almora district had fallen vacant after the sitting legislator Surinder Singh Jeena died of Coronavirus in November last year.

According to the ECI notification, the nomination for Salt bypoll will end on March 30, the voting will take place on April 17 and the result will be announced on 2 May. The bye-election to Salt assembly seat will decide how smooth or bumpy the ride of Tirath Rawat is going to be as Uttarakhand CM. Right from selecting the winning candidate

for the BJP, to ensuring comfortable victory for the party candidate—the entire responsibility lies on Tirath and his team.

The death of young and dynamic Uttarakhand political leader Surinder Singh Jeena created shockwaves in Uttarakhand as he was among the most active legislators in the hill state. Jeena used to constantly raise issues related to his area in the state assembly. Tirath is playing safe and not taking any risk. The new

CM distributed portfolios to his team in Dehradun on Tuesday. All the ministers and state ministers (independent in-charge) of the previous Trivendra Rawat government managed to retain their old portfolios. So, leaving Tirath Rawat and four new faces, the team consists of old and familiar faces. Satpal Mararaj, Harak Singh Rawat, Subodh Uniyal, Yashpal Arya, Rekha Arya and Dhan Singh Rawat—all have retained their old portfolios.

SEEKING EMPLOYMENT



The members of 'Berojgar Kala Adhyapak Sangh' hold a protest demonstration outside the Himachal Pradesh Assembly to highlight their demands. In Shimla on Tuesday.

LALIT KUMAR

Cong alleges scam in fund allocation under HP Jal Jeevan Mission, BJP rejects charge

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 16 MARCH

Alleging irregularities in allotment of funds and schemes under Jal Jeevan Mission in Himachal Pradesh, the Congress party on Tuesday said a huge chunk of funds have been allocated for two constituencies of Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur and Jal Shakti Minister Mahender Singh Thakur.

Starting the debate on budget cuts in Jal Shakti department, Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri said the state government had made huge tenders without any funds and he was amazed at the audacity of officials in doing so.

"This will prove a big scam

if a probe is ordered into these irregularities as there is no balance or sufficient budgetary provisions," he added.

He alleged that most of the funds under Jal Jeevan Mission had been allocated in the constituencies of CM and Jal Shakti Minister.

The charge, however, was rejected by the Chief Minister, who said funds and schemes were being allocated as per the requirements of a constituency.

"Our government has sanctioned development works worth Rs 3,000 crore for 42 constituencies of the state during the Covid pandemic," he said, while inviting Agnihotri to his (Seraj) constituency to have a look at the ground realities.



Agnihotri also raised the issue of recruitments on out-source basis in the department and said minimum wages were not being given to these employees.

He also demanded that the Minister should reveal the status of various foreign funded schemes and said these were advertised by the government but no progress

had been made on these till date.

Dalhousie MLA Asha Kumari also raised the issue of allocating most funds to two constituencies under Jal Jeevan Mission and said the state government seemed to be following the example of 'Hum Do, Hamare Do'.

Replying to the opposition members' charges, Jal Shakti Minister Mahender Singh Thakur said the state government did not differentiate between any constituency or area in the state.

The funds under Jal Jeevan Scheme were allocated as per the requirements and coverage of tap water in an area.

Seraj constituency had geographically tough terrain where settlements were located

far away from each other, hence, more funds were required to provide coverage of tap water to the local population.

He raised questions on the functioning of the department during the previous Congress regime and said he used to sanction water connection to people but the department wasn't able to provide the same due to lack of water pipes stock.

"However, it is due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's humble background and knowledge of the difficulties faced by the common man, he announced Jal Jeevan Mission on 15 August 2019 with a budget outlay of Rs 3.60 lakh crore," he said.

Thakur further stated that

there were many inconsistencies in the list of coverage of households with tap water facilities and now the government aims to provide tap water coverage to all by August 2022.

He raised concern over shortage of potable water in the state and said the state might face drought like situation in many areas due to less rains during monsoon and winter season in Himachal Pradesh.

"The climate change situation has become alarming as Rohtang Pass which usually receives 30-40 feet snow every year, has only received 3-4 feet snow this year which will result in water scarcity not only in the state but in neighbouring states too," he added.

'No prior health assessment before Covid vaccination in HP'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 16 MARCH

Asserting that the Covid vaccination is purely voluntary, Himachal Pradesh Health and Family Welfare Minister Rajiv Saizal on Tuesday said no prior health assessment of a person is being carried out before vaccination in the state.

Replying to a query of Barsar MLA Dutt Lakhpal, Saizal said there were no guidelines on health assessment prior to vaccination as taking the jab was purely voluntary and a person can refuse to take the vaccine even after registering for it.

Responding to another query of Theog MLA Rakesh Singh on the death of Anganwari helper in Hamirpur district and efficacy of Covishield vaccine, Saizal said the woman identified as Promila died 23 days after receiving Covid jab.

However, there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that the woman died due to side effects of the vaccine and her postmortem was still awaited.

"The woman reported symptoms of weakness in legs 3-4 days after she received Covishield vaccine and she was referred to Dr Rajendra Prasad Government Medical College



Tanda in Kangra district for further treatment.

She died in India Gandhi Medical College in Shimla 23 days after she fell ill," he added.

Saizal further stated that there was a set protocol of the Centre government in case of adverse event after a person receives vaccine and district and state level committees had been formed to evaluate the death as per the set norms.

Her viscera sample had been sent for forensic examination and the forensic report and postmortem report was still awaited. Without these reports, the government can't comment on the exact reasons of the death, he said.

Replying to question on the efficacy of the vaccine being administered in the state, the State Health and Family Welfare Minister said lengthy trials for a medicine were conducted as per the guidelines of World Health Organisation.

"As per the reports, the efficacy of Covishield vaccine is around 70 per cent.

While the efficacy against new strains and virus mutations can only be ascertained after trials and it is still a topic of research upon which the state government can not comment at this point of time," he added.

The chief secretary said that engineering techniques should also be improved to eliminate any possibility of black spots

Himachal CS asks various agencies to remove accident black spots on roads

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 16 MARCH

Himachal Pradesh Chief Secretary Anil Khachi on Tuesday directed all the agencies related to road construction to remove accident black spots on roads in the state on priority so as to avoid any possibility of accidents.

He presided over the meeting of senior officers of National Highways Authority of India, Himachal Pradesh Public Works Department, Border Roads Organization and Transport Department.

The chief secretary said that engineering techniques should also be improved to eliminate any possibility of black spots

during road construction.

He said the efforts should also be made to sensitize all field agencies regarding black spots. He said that the executing agencies should ensure proper inspection of the works during the construction of the roads.

Khachi said that road safety has also been included in the theme for Swarnim



Himachal programmes being organised on the occasion of completion of 50 years of statehood of HP. He directed the officers to prepare an action plan related to it.

Principal Secretary Transport K.K. Pant, Director Transport Anupam Kashyap and senior officers of other departments were present at the meeting.



Govt privatising profit & nationalising loss...I stand in solidarity with the striking bank employees...

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

TAKING A DIG AT THE GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORTING BANK STRIKE

The Statesman

05

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH 2021

THUMBNAILS



Traffic jam at Ghazipur in New Delhi on Tuesday.

■ AGENCIES

Bypolls to 2 LS, 14 Assembly seats on 17 April: By-polls to two Lok Sabha seats — one each in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh — and 14 Assembly constituencies across 11 states will be held on 17 April, the Election Commission announced on Tuesday. The votes will be counted on 2 May, the same day as the results for elections in four states — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and West Bengal, and the Union Territory of Puducherry. PTI

Jal Jeevan Mission: Work is underway in projects worth Rs 1.91 lakh crore under the flagship 'Jal Jeevan Mission', which seeks to provide drinking water to every rural household in the country, Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhwat told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. PTI

'Simultaneous polls will reduce voters apathy'

Panel says this will reduce burden on exchequer, wasteful expenditure

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH



Battling for holding of simultaneous elections in the country, a parliamentary committee on Tuesday said this will reduce the burden on the exchequer, expenditure of political parties and also ensure that human resources are optimally utilised.

"The committee also believes that simultaneous elections will reduce voters apathy of frequent elections and will enthuse general population and voters in particular which will ultimately enhance voters participation in the electoral process," the department-related standing committee on law and justice, and personnel ministries said in its report on demands for grants for the law ministry. The report was tabled in both Houses on Tuesday.

The committee said it is of the view that the idea of 'One Nation, One Election' or simultaneous elections is not new to the country as the first three Lok Sabha elections in 1952, 1957 and 1962 were held simultaneously and it can be brought into the mainstream with suitable amendments to the Constitution.

In view of this, certain provisions of the Constitution may be amended to have fixed terms for local bodies, legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha for holding simultaneous elections. The terms of legislative assemblies and Lok Sabha are also required to be synchronised with one another and the mechanism in this regard requires to be evolved with political consensus as the term of the respective state assemblies need to be reduced or increased," the report said.

It said having continuous elections around the year whether it is for local bodies, state assemblies or Lok Sabha, put a big strain on the state machinery which further causes hurdles in governance. "Our country remains in election mode throughout the year," the report observed.

The first, second and third elections after promulgation of the Constitution were held simultaneously. However, premature dissolution of some legislative assemblies in 1968 and 1969 caused discontinuation of holding simultaneous elections, it noted.

The renewed emphasis on the concept of simultaneous elections was made in 1983 when the Election Commission brought out its first annual report and recommended for holding simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies as it will reduce expenditure and ensure effective use of manpower and human resources," the report noted.

The then Law Commission headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddi in its 170th Report in 1999 on Reform of Electoral Laws also favoured holding of simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies as it will ensure stability in governance, the panel said.

A couple of years ago, the

Law Commission, this time under Justice B S Chauhan (retd), had recommended holding simultaneous elections to Lok Sabha and state assemblies to save public money.

The draft submitted to the law ministry had, however, cautioned that holding simultaneous elections is not possible within the existing framework of the Constitution.

It had recommended amendment to the Constitution and electoral laws.

The Centre has been toying with the idea for quite some time now. The government think-tank, NITI Aayog, had suggested synchronised two-phase Lok Sabha and assembly polls from 2024 to ensure minimum campaign-mode disruption to governance.

Need to bring new law to vest power to CBI:

A parliamentary committee on Tuesday asked the government to assess the need for amending existing laws or bring out a new legislation to clearly define the mandate of the CBI and vest more power in it. The recommendation came after the CBI apprised the panel that its investigations are impeded by the withdrawal of general consent by states, mainly those ruled by the Opposition parties.

'Funds to Bengal, Raj, Ch'garh & Punjab for water projects remain unspent'

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhwat today rejected the charge of non-utilisation of allocated funds by his Ministry and said it were states like West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and Chhattisgarh which left substantial Central funds for water projects unspent.

The draft submitted to the law ministry had, however, cautioned that holding simultaneous elections is not possible within the existing framework of the Constitution.

It had recommended amendment to the Constitution and electoral laws.

The Centre has been toying with the idea for quite some time now. The government think-tank, NITI Aayog, had suggested synchronised two-phase Lok Sabha and assembly polls from 2024 to ensure minimum campaign-mode disruption to governance.

Need to bring new law to vest power to CBI:

A parliamentary committee on Tuesday asked the government to assess the need for amending existing laws or bring out a new legislation to clearly define the mandate of the CBI and vest more power in it. The recommendation came after the CBI apprised the panel that its investigations are impeded by the withdrawal of general consent by states, mainly those ruled by the Opposition parties.

voices to be heard.

"Balochistan has now come to be known as the land of the disappeared," he said, adding that the risk of enforced disappearances has also increased in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after the promulgation of a new ordinance, which gives security agencies vast abusive powers. Badhe also noted that there has been an alarming increase in blasphemy accusations under Pakistan's draconian blasphemy laws and that around 200 such cases were reported last year. Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws and their punishments were considered extremely severe.

Exercising its 'Right of Reply' on Pakistan's representative statement at the 46th session of the HRC in Geneva, Indian representative Pavan Badhe said Islamabad must stop preaching and focus on its responsibility towards the millions suffering in the country. "This Council must pay urgent attention to Pakistan's deplorable human rights records and discriminatory treatment of ethnic and religious minorities," he said. Badhe said, "It is high time that Pakistan, which continues to export terrorism, is held accountable for its state-sponsored and supported grave violation of human rights of its people."

Citing victim groups, the Indian diplomat said millions of people from Balochistan have disappeared since the year 2000 and their families continue to struggle for their atmosphere.

India calls Pakistan a 'failed state' at UNHRC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Describing Pakistan as a 'failed state' that should be held accountable for state-sponsored terrorism, India has asked the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to pay urgent attention to Islamabad's deplorable human rights records and its discriminatory treatment of ethnic and religious minorities.

The draft submitted to the law ministry had, however, cautioned that holding simultaneous elections is not possible within the existing framework of the Constitution.

It had recommended amendment to the Constitution and electoral laws.

The Centre has been toying with the idea for quite some time now. The government think-tank, NITI Aayog, had suggested synchronised two-phase Lok Sabha and assembly polls from 2024 to ensure minimum campaign-mode disruption to governance.

Need to bring new law to vest power to CBI:

A parliamentary committee on Tuesday asked the government to assess the need for amending existing laws or bring out a new legislation to clearly define the mandate of the CBI and vest more power in it. The recommendation came after the CBI apprised the panel that its investigations are impeded by the withdrawal of general consent by states, mainly those ruled by the Opposition parties.

'22 of world's 30 most-polluted cities are in India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Twenty-two of the world's 30 most polluted cities are in India, with Delhi being ranked as the most polluted capital city globally, a new report said on Tuesday.

The report is prepared by Swiss organisation, IQAir, in the form of the 'World Air Quality Report, 2020', which has released globally.

The report, however, shows that Delhi's air quality improved by approximately 15 per cent from 2019 to 2020.

It said that despite the improvement, Delhi ranked as the 10th most polluted city and the top polluted capital city in the world.

"India continues to feature prominently at the top of the most polluted cities ranking, with 22 of the top 30 most polluted cities globally," the report said.

Besides Delhi, the 21 other Indian cities among the 30 most polluted cities in the world are Ghaziabad, Bulandshah, Bisrakh Jalalpur, Noida, Greater Noida, Kanpur, Lucknow and Bhiwari.

The report also reveals the impact of Covid-19 lockdown and behavioural changes on global particulate pollution (PM2.5) levels.

Major sources of India's air pollution include transportation, biomass burning for cooking, electricity generation, industry, construction, waste burning and episodic agricultural burning.

Contextualising the global IQAir report in the Indian

context, Avinash Chanchal, Climate Campaigner at Greenpeace India said while many cities, including Delhi, have recorded marginal improvements in air quality due to lockdowns, the health and economic cost of air pollution remains severe.

He said it is pertinent that governments prioritise sustainable and clean energy sources, as well as the cities, need to encourage low cost, active and carbon-neutral mobility choices such as walking, cycling, and accessible public transport.

"Speeding up the transition to clean energy and clean transport not only saves lives but also dramatically reduces healthcare-related costs, Chanchal said.

The year 2020 brought an unexpected dip in air pollution. In 2021, we will likely see an increase in air pollution due to human activity, again. We hope this report will highlight that urgent action is both possible and necessary to combat air pollution, which remains the world's greatest environmental health threat," said CEO of IQAir Frank Hammes.

PC slams govt's proposed amendments to GNCTD Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Describing as "retrograde" and "anti-democratic" the proposed amendments to the GNCTD Act, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Tuesday said the changes will make the Delhi government less than a municipality and 'rob' the people of any kind of representative government.

Chidambaram's attack on the government came a day after Union minister of state for home G Kishan Reddy introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in Lok Sabha.

According to proposed amendments, Section 21 of the Act -- dealing with restrictions on laws passed by legislative assembly with respect to certain matters -- is sought to be revised to clarify that the expression 'government' referred to in any law to be made by the legislative assembly shall mean the 'Lieutenant Governor'.

Slamming the government



for proposing the amendments to the Act, Chidambaram said the proposed amendments are "retrograde, anti-democratic and an insult to the people of Delhi".

"The demand is for enlarged legislative powers to Delhi and the will of the people. On the contrary, the proposed amendments will make the Delhi government less than a municipality and rob the people of any kind of representative government," the former home minister said in a series of tweets. Under the proposed amendments, the LG appointed by the central government will become a "viceroy" exercising all powers according to the wishes of his master, he alleged.

Night curfew in Bhopal, Indore from 17 March

BHOPAL, 16 MARCH

Night curfew has been imposed in Bhopal and Indore from 17 March in view of the continuous rise in cases of Covid-19 in both the cities.

A decision was taken at a review meeting chaired by MP chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan here today.

The state government also decided that no mass functions or programmes would be held during Holi, Rangpanchami and other festivals. Chouhan directed officials to strictly impose fines and operate open jails for people not wearing masks in public places.

The screening of people coming to MP from Maharashtra would be made more stringent. DGP Vivek Johri, chief secretary Iqbal Singh Bains were present at the meeting.

STREET ART

That my client Debraj Shikder, son of Dilip Kumar Shikder, residing at Nababganj, 6 No. Rail Gate, Bisharpur, North Dum Dum Municipality, North 24 Parganas, Birati one of the member of Jan Parishad, filed a suit for loss of Original Deed of Conveyance, registered in the office of A.D.S.R. Cosipore, Dum Dum as being no. 9182 for the year 2008. Original Deed of Conveyance, registered in the office of A.D.S.R. Cosipore, Dum Dum as being no. 2657 for the year 1994. Deed of Conveyance, registered in the office of D.S.R. Barasat as being No. 04119 for the year 2011. Deed of Conveyance, registered in the office of A.D.S.R. Cosipore, Dum Dum as being No. 1014 for the year 2001 and also lodged a General Diary in the Nimita Police Station dated on 13.03.2021 vide G.D. No. 01/2021. Plaintiff is having any claim, share, right, title, interest, concerning the matter or any objection whatsoever must notify the same to the undersigned with supporting documents even before 07 days from this date where after the same if any shall be deemed to be waived and no further claim shall be entertained.

Sonal Chakrabarty Advocate.
Ph.no.7278473989

DELHI TRANSPORT CORPORATION (GOVT. OF N.C.T. OF DELHI) I.P. ESTATE, NEW DELHI

Vacancy Notice for Sr. Medical Officer & Medical Officer (Allopathic) on contract basis

DTC invites applications for filling up 02 vacant posts of Sr. Medical Officer & 03 Medical Officer on contract basis initially for a period of 01 year and further extendable based on the performance of the Contractual Medical Officers and requirement of DTC:-

Educational Qualification:

1. Sr. Medical Officer (2 posts)

Essential

- (i) MBBS or equivalent degree of a recognized Indian University or equivalent foreign qualifications.
- (ii) 10 years working experience.

Desirable

- (i) Post Graduate degree or Diploma in Medicine or Surgery.
- (ii) Working experience of a recognized Government Hospital.

Maximum age Limit: 45 years. (Age relaxation in case of SC/ST/OBC candidate as per DoPT's Guidelines)

Consolidated monthly remuneration Rs. 79,209/- + 12% P.F. i.e. 9505/- to be remitted by DTC as employer share.

2. Medical Officer (3 posts)

Essential:

- (i) MBBS or equivalent degree of a recognized Indian university or equivalent foreign qualifications.
- (ii) 2 years working experience including experience of house job.

Desirable:

- (i) Post Graduate degree or Diploma in Medicine or Surgery.
- (ii) Working experience of a recognized Government Hospital.

Maximum age Limit: 35 years. (Age relaxation in case of SC/ST/OBC candidate as per DoPT's Guidelines)

Consolidated monthly remuneration Rs. 65,637/- + 12% P.F. i.e. 7876/- to be remitted by DTC as employer share.

Duty Time:- Eight and half hours daily except Sunday and GH. The application along-with photocopies of supporting documents to be sent to Manager (Personnel-I), Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) Headquarter, I.P. Estate, New Delhi-110002. **Last date for receipt of application:** 03.04.2021. The application format alongwith other details are available on DTC website (www.dtc.nic.in).

Dy. CGM (Personnel)

EPFO DELHI WEST

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

PUBLIC NOTICE

A Quasi-Judicial Inquiry under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 is in progress for assessment of PROVIDENT FUND dues in respect of M/s TOPS SECURITY Ltd. (DSNHP/2020) 276, Sultan Sadan, Westend Marg, Saidulajab, New Delhi 110030.

Through this public notice, opportunity of being heard is offered to any Employee/Union Representative/Agrieved/Person to assist through recording

Quo Vadis, Quad?

An examination of the direction in which the strategic quadrilateral grouping of USA, India, Japan and Australia – or the Quad – is headed after its first ever summit-level meeting over the weekend is not without its pitfalls. The focus of the Quad's joint communiqué was on a unified fight against the Covid-19 pandemic including ramping up the vaccination programme and closer coordination on securing a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. But that doesn't really tell us much about what the grouping's approach towards the elephant in the room, China, will be. To make such an assessment, it may be useful to borrow stock market terminology to outline the contours of three broad scenarios which may unfold – the bull, base, and bear case scenarios. The bull case scenario would be to read the summit as marking a seminal shift in US policy which presupposes Washington prioritising working with India, Japan, and Australia rather than NATO on the world stage. That's a massive call. Yet, there are many who believe the Quad summit leaves no doubt on the strategic choice the Joe Biden Administration has made – China not Russia has been flagged as the USA's principal adversary. As a corollary, it is indicative of Washington's thinking that the contest for global power has shifted quite definitively from Europe to Asia.

The base case scenario is that America looks at China as a rival and not an adversary and underlines the relative advantages the USA already possesses. The argument is that while competition will remain the defining trait of the relationship, both countries will have to continue to engage on common challenges that neither can solve on its own such as health pandemics, global economic recession, climate change, and nuclear non-proliferation. The USA, hold those who subscribe to this school of thought, will have greater success in outpacing China economically and outshining it on governance parameters if it focuses more on improving its own condition domestically and less on trying to impede Chinese initiatives. It is in the US' interest not to stand in Beijing's way and turn a rising power into an enemy in the process, but to renew America's advantages in its competition with China. The Quad serves a purpose in this regard, but a limited and not dominant one.

As for the bear case scenario, it assumes a utilitarian approach by Washington towards the Quad – something the Chinese have been emphasising to spook India in particular but Australia and Japan too. This worst-case prediction envisages the US cutting a deal with Beijing in the future leaving other members of the nascent Indo-Pacific alliance high and dry. Such a scenario coming to fruition would have a debilitating impact, for example, on India's strategic aims given its border dispute with China taken in conjunction with the latter's growing influence in South Asia and heft in blocs of which both countries are members such as BRICS and the SCO. This would mean Beijing could make life very difficult indeed for New Delhi.

Nepal's Communists

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-Maoist Centre) may arguably have denuded its ideological moorings with Monday's decision by Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda to drop the tag of Maoist Centre (MC). There are not many Left radical entities that have abjured the extremist label. Towards that end, the Prachanda faction of the CPN, as opposed to that helmed by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, is quite obviously attempting to play to the gallery of those opposed to the appellation and perhaps expand its support base in the midst of the constitutional crisis. The party may even be trying to make this faction of the CPN agreeable to the conventional supporters of Communist forces. Prachanda, it bears recall, was always in favour of Communist unity and has been opposed to the emergence of splinter groups, fuelled by extremism in the Himalayan country. The proposal to change the name of the party follows the Supreme Court declaring its merger with CPN-UML, led by Oli, as null and void. Unwittingly or otherwise, the judicial order has strengthened the Prime Minister's position in the party, primarily because he has a clear majority both in the Central Committee and parliamentary party. The CPN (UML) and the CPN (MC) had merged in May 2018 to form a unified Nepal Communist Party following the victory of their alliance in the 2017 general elections.

The raging crisis in Nepal has deepened since Sunday when Prachanda asked ministers representing his faction to resign en masse for violating party discipline. These ministers are generally loath to quit the Cabinet. It has now been claimed by this faction that there are Communist forces around the world who believe that the political philosophy propounded by Marx and Lenin was the "true theory" of Communism. They believe that the tag of "Maoist Centre" could be a distraction for those who are eager to "unify" their parties with the Prachanda faction. The standing committee of the faction has decided to "call back" all its ministers in the federal government. Should the directive attain fruition, the Oli ministry will be much too truncated for effective governance. The government per se will be shaken to its foundations. There has not been a single resignation in the 72 hours between last Saturday and Tuesday morning. The stalemate persists over the leadership's *futava*, and the uncertainty deepens with the exclusion of the critical words, "Maoist Centre". Last Sunday, the Supreme Court had quashed the 2018 unification and granted what it called "authenticity" of the Nepal Communist Party to Rishiram Kattel, who had registered the party in his name at the Election Commission, prior to the formation of the Nepal Community Party, helmed by Prachanda and Oli. The plot thickens over parties and politics in the Kathmandu court.

Rule of Law

Some recent amendments have introduced provisions for plea bargaining, compromise and summary procedures for trials, so that disputes could be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of both parties. Yet, many judges revel in continuing with legalese and archaic procedures that make lawyers indispensable even for petty cases and result in disputes dragging on for years



Despite differences in perception, constitutional experts agree that rule of law is the cornerstone of the legal system of all democratic countries. Rule of law means that every person is subject to the law, and that the law is the same for everyone. The real meaning of rule of law is summed up in Lord Denning's famous observation: "Be you ever so high, the law is above you."

Rule of law is the subject of myriad scholarly treatises, but for the common man, rule of law only means that the judiciary provides him adequate protection from arbitrary actions of the Government and he faces no difficulty in exercising his legal rights. The common man also hopes that the high and mighty receive their comeuppance for their many scams and scandals.

Sadly, rule of law has proved to be a mirage, especially for the common man. Recently, the Law Minister informed the Lok Sabha that almost 4 crore cases were pending in various courts. Out of these, 3.45 crore were pending in subordinate courts and 51.53 lakh cases were pending in various High Courts. Many of these cases had been pending for donkey's years. "Justice delayed is justice denied" is an age old proverb; the huge backlog of cases in courts ensures that few, if any, get justice. Sample the following news items in last week's papers: "The court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat acquitted 122 persons arrested in December 2001, for being members of the banned outfit SIMI for lack of " cogent, reliable and satisfactory" evidence. One can well imagine the agony of innocent people facing trial for nineteen years, the fees paid to lawyers over the years, or the valuable time of the court wasted on the trial.

In another shocking instance, a man was acquitted of false rape charges by the Allahabad High Court after spending 20 years in jail. At the time of release, this unfortunate man was aged 43 years; because of judicial delays his entire youth had been wasted in jail. Justice Ranjan Gogoi, a former Chief Justice of India, called the Indian judiciary "ramshackle" and stated in an interview: "If you have to go to court, you will only be washing dirty linen in court and you will not get a verdict. I have no hesitation to say so. You regret it if you

go to court."

The most important duty of the judiciary is to ensure that the Government respects the freedom of the individual. The Supreme Court has often said that the role of the Court is that of a sentinel perpetually on the que vive (alert). As far back as 1977 the Supreme Court had laid down the maxim: "Bail is the rule, jail is an exception." Recently, looking to the increasing incidence of cases where at the instance of the executive the lower courts had denied bail to individuals, the Supreme Court sternly observed that the High Courts and District Courts had all but forgotten this dictum and all Courts "must enforce this principle in practice, and not forego that duty, leaving this court to intervene at all times."

Statistics paint a depressing story of the criminal justice system. A PRS Research Paper reveals that of the 4 lakh persons lodged in jail, two-thirds were undertrials. The Paper also found that 3,599 undertrials had been detained in jail for more than five years. On the other hand, the rich and famous operate in a totally different dimension. Tracing the progress of various scams through the years, we find that none of the perpetrators had been punished and not a red penny of the scammed amounts had been recovered.

The Delhi High Court quashed all charges against the accused in the Bofors Scandal, in which kickbacks of Rs.64 crore were alleged, observing that fruitless investigations had already cost the exchequer Rs 250 crore. The Commonwealth Games Scam, 2G Scam and the Coal Scam had the same denouement. The lakhs of crores of rupees involved in these scams have vanished in thin air. It is impossible to pin the blame on any particular individual(s) or institution for this sad state of affairs, but the law apparently makes a distinction for the well connected.

Shocked by the presence of a large number of persons with criminal antecedents in legislatures, the Supreme Court, had mandated in January 2018, that Special Courts be constituted to

fast-track the long-pending trials of lawmakers. In September 2020, the amicus curiae assisting the Supreme Court reported that a total of 4,442 cases were still pending against MPs/MLAs in different courts, including Special Courts. The amicus curiae further reported that the number of legislators involved was more than the total number of cases, since there were more than one accused in some cases. The progress in most cases was minimal, the oldest case in the Special Courts dated back to 1983, and three cases registered in 1991, 1993 and 1994 had not even reached the trial stage.

Almost no one had been convicted by the Special Courts and most cases were still pending; for example, of the 245 cases in Telangana, 73 had been disposed off with no conviction and the rest were still pending. The UP Government did even better, by withdrawing serious cases against political personalities. The Model

Code of Conduct is honoured more in breach than in observance because most election related FIRs are withdrawn the day the elections conclude.

There are many reasons for the unsatisfactory functioning of the judiciary. Despite an oft repeated commitment to improve judicial functioning by the Government, the First National Judicial Pay Commission found that the expenditure on judiciary in India was hardly 0.2 per cent of the GDP as against 1.2 per cent in Singapore, 1.4 per cent in USA and 4.3 per cent in UK. All States except Delhi provided less than 1 per cent of their Budget for subordinate judiciary. Lack of staff and deficient physical infrastructure is a direct result of such miserliness.

Another reason for the huge pendency of cases is the shortage of judges; the Supreme Court had 23 per cent vacancies, High Courts had 38 per cent vacancies while the subordinate courts had 26 per cent vacancies. In numerical terms, High Courts had a shortage of 406 judges and subordinate courts had a shortage of 5,746 judges. Fully 48 per cent of subordinate judges' posts were

vacant in Bihar, followed closely by UP with 46 per cent vacancies. Alarmingly, judicial vacancies have increased over the years. No wonder, most cases crawl through the courts.

However, statistics do not tell the whole story of judicial decline which is the result of a perceptible decline in the confidence, character and capabilities of judges of lower courts. In the not too distant past, despite pitiful emoluments, most judges were guided by their conscience and not by convenience or peripheral considerations. This strength of character has almost vanished; most judges would rather not decide contentious cases and willingly bend when pressure is exerted on them. The superior courts owe a duty to restore the pride and confidence of judges of subordinate courts.

Many a times, superior courts deal with the issues before them tangentially, reducing public confidence in the judiciary. For example, Madras High Court, while deciding an issue about marks awarded in the Teacher Eligibility Test laid down that Vande Mataram be sung in all schools. Also, the new-found tendency of Courts to curb criticism by taking recourse to contempt powers, at the slightest pretext, has dented their credibility even further. Some recent amendments have introduced provisions for plea bargaining, compromise and summary procedures for trials, so that disputes could be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of both parties. Yet, many judges revel in continuing with legalese and archaic procedures that make lawyers indispensable even for petty cases and result in disputes dragging on for years. Taking this trend further, specialist tribunals often clothe themselves with the procedures and trappings of courts, defeating the very purpose for their creation. A conscious decision of the Government and superior courts to make laws easily comprehensible to the public and encouraging public participation in judicial processes would go a long way in reducing pendency of cases and delivering substantive justice. To conclude, Jonathan Swift's words, written more than four centuries ago, still ring true: "Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through." (A Critical Essay Upon the Faculties of the Mind, 1707).



Blue economy in ASEAN & India

Blue economy is a transboundary issue that should be addressed collectively at regional and sub-regional levels to better manage ocean resources and ensure benefits for all in the region. ASEAN countries and India shall aim to transform traditional ocean economy to a sustainable, innovative and inclusive blue economy. The use of the oceans has diversified from their classic role as a medium of transport to being a wellspring for economic resources. The economic wealth of the oceans is represented by the staggering variety of living resources (fish and marine vegetation that provide human protein, feed for other species), marine biotechnology (including marine pharmaceuticals, food additives, marine cosmetics, etc., and biofuels), material goods (minerals, placer sand and gravel), goods and services (shipping, inland water transportation, ports, shipbuilding and ship repair, marine information and communication technology, fishing, tourism, other marine manufacturing and trade in services), nonrenewable energy (hydrocarbons, hydrides, gases, etc.) and renewable energy (wind, wave, tidal, thermal, ocean thermal energy conversion and biomass).

The oceans have also been a catalyst for the development of a number of industries, both on land and at sea. The contribution of ocean services has been enormous for the region. The value of key ocean assets is conservatively estimated to reach at least \$24 trillion with an annual value of goods

The Jakarta Post

and services of \$2.5 trillion. Further, the oceans are pegged in seventh position among the world's top 10 economies. Healthy seas are important for lives and livelihoods. However, the unbridled economic exploitation of the oceans over the past centuries can no longer continue. Indeed, it has been increasingly recognised that the wealth of resources that the oceans represent is not endless and all further economic exploitation of the oceans needs to conform to a sustainable model of development that recognises the centrality of the oceans as the font of all life on Earth. Accordingly, in 2015, the global community announced its commitment to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals 2030, within which Goal 14 relates to sustainable development of the ocean resources: "Life below Water – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development." Fulfilment of targets of SDG14 would lay the foundation of the blue economy but there could be still several unsettled tasks to be fulfilled to accomplish the key objectives of the regional comprehensive blue economy strategy. In the post-Covid-19 period, regional cooperation will pay an immense catalytic role in framing an integrated blue economy framework to promote ocean research and development and climate resilient measures. Protecting local marine resources is one of the most urgent needs in promoting sustainable tourism. Regional comprehensive mapping of marine projects in ASEAN-India region would facilitate the effective implementation of sustainable coastal and marine tourism. At the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit on Jan. 25, 2018, leaders of ASEAN countries and India outlined their vision for the future of the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership, wherein they designated ASEAN-India cooperation in the maritime domain as one of the key areas of this partnership.

HISTORIC TEST

SIR, March 15 marks the 20th anniversary of India's historic Test win against Australia at Eden Gardens, Kolkata. The artistic WVS Laxman orchestrated a symphony in the company of the graceful Rahul Dravid, as the two were involved in a record partnership of 376 runs for the fifth-wicket that eventually shut the door on Australia. The wide range of shots that Laxman essayed in his incredible knock of 281 against a top quality Australian bowling attack, are still fresh in memory. In fact a panel of game's experts had voted Laxman's knock as the 'best of the century'. With the passage of time, the famous number 281 became a shadow bigger than Laxman's tall frame. Somewhat lost in the shadows of Laxman's epic tale, though just as crucial a performance, was Dravid's own hundred. The Test was brought back from dead by a heavenly collaboration of these two legendary Indian batsmen. Times fly, but vignettes remain.

Yours, etc., Sivakumar Kumar, 14 March.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

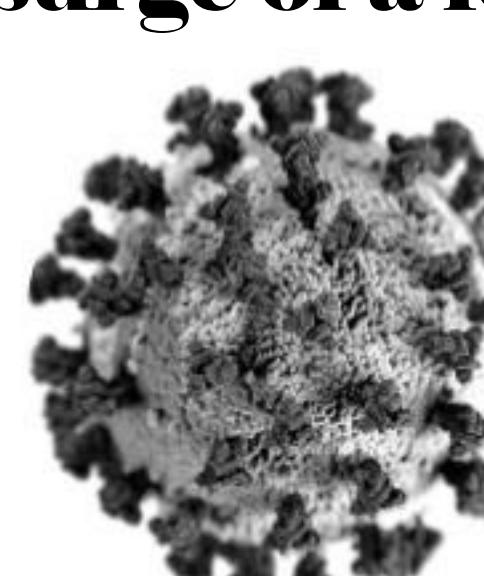
Relentless surge of a ferocious virus

SIR, The continuous rise in cases of Covid-19 in several parts of our country are a grave cause of concern for all of us. For the last week, there has been a significant surge in Covid cases amounting to more than 20,000 infections daily on an average. The worst-hit states are Maharashtra, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.

But what is more annoying is the fact that people in general have now dropped their guard and stopped following Covid-19 protocols, which is quite discouraging for those who are still adhering to the Covid-19 norms.

The Maharashtra government has in fact enforced fresh lockdowns in several parts of the state. If the cases surge like this in our state, then the state government will be left with no option but to follow the same method of containment by enforcing a lockdown here as, and this will add to our daily troubles.

People who think they are



secure once they have got a jab are committing a flagrant error as none of the vaccines are guaranteed to mitigate the effects of the virus completely. Rather people have been told not to drop their guard even after vaccination, implying the need for continued caution.

Ferocious virus, the intention of everyone of us must be unambiguous. Half-hearted measures

will yield no positive results. Every citizen of our country has a significant role to play.

Yours, etc., Iftekhar Ahmed, Kolkata, 14 March.

PROMOTE VACCINE

SIR, Apropos Basudeb Dutta's letter 'Wrong signal on vaccination' (March 13), I would like inform your readers about my recent conversation with a doctor about vaccination.

In reply to my specific question whether he himself wanted to be vaccinated, he replied in the negative. In order to justify his decision, he reasoned, "I have been mingling with Covid patients for the last one year and I have not contracted Covid-9 as yet. Why should I therefore, take the vaccine?" Besides, he added, the vaccine has come in haste and the side effects may be fatal.

While I do not personally endorse his views, the role of the Government is very important,

which I think, is lacking in respect of sustained campaigning.

Yours, etc., Arun Gupta, Kolkata, 14 March.

ATTACK ON CM

SIR, This refers to the report, 'State govt report on Mamata attack sketchy: ECI' (14 March). Spectacles and theatrics are essential ingredients of Indian elections and our leaders never fail to deliver them. The reports emanated from West Bengal of late have not been confidence-inspiring ones. Instead, they do the opposite.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday alleged that four to five men attacked her in Nandigram. She suffered injuries to her leg and neck. The picture of the woman chief minister with bandage and visuals of her describing the body pain went viral instantly, igniting passions all over the state. Her allegation that there was no security detail to protect her accentuated the situation.

Yours, etc., SS Paul, Nadia, 14 March.

Leveraging the world's equity

ANDREW SHENG

Can Joe Biden clean up the mess with more debt? The pandemic has left us a terrible mess to clear up. What policies will get us out of the huge debt that we have incurred to pay for the health, wealth and job crises?

2020 was a year of terrible devastation, cushioned only by massive government spending. Aside from the favourite sport of blaming China for everything, each country will have to concentrate on the tough business of getting its economy back to a more even keel.

The latest OECD Economic Outlook published this week showed how bad the situation has become. World output was down 3.4 per cent last year, but OECD sees growth of 5.5 per cent in 2021 and 4 per cent in 2022. However, poorly performing countries will continue to suffer low growth rates. China was the only major country that had positive growth in 2020 (2.3 per cent), whereas the Eurozone was down 6.8 per cent, with severe declines for France (-8.2 per cent), Spain (-11), and UK (-9.9). Amongst the emerging markets, India was down 7.4 per cent, Mexico (-8.5 per cent), South Africa (-7.2) and Argentina (-10.5).

The only bright hope for US growing better in the next two years is due to significant fiscal stimulus, plus faster vaccination. But is this sustainable?

The latest IMF Fiscal Monitor showed that overall fiscal deficits are projected at -13.3 per cent of GDP for advanced economies, -10.3 per cent for emerging markets and middle-income economies, and -5.7 per cent for low-income developing countries. Essentially \$14 trillion fiscal support was given in 2020, with global public debt rising to 98 per cent of GDP, compared with 84 per cent in 2019.

In short, almost every country threw money at the pandemic, with very little appreciation whether we are getting value for money. In a panic, doing that is understandable. After the panic, the pain and reckoning must begin in all seriousness.

Note that the US fiscal deficit rose from 6.4 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 17.5 per cent in 2020, an increase of 11.1 per cent of GDP fiscal support to defend a decline of 5.6 per cent percentage points in GDP growth (from +2.1 per cent to -3.5 per cent in 2020). In essence, US fiscal policy pumped 2 per cent of GDP spending to defend 1 per cent of GDP growth.

The IMF estimated that the cost to the US is a rise in gross debt to 128.7 per cent of GDP, far higher than

the world average of 97.8 per cent. The comparable Chinese gross fiscal debt was 65.2 per cent of GDP in 2020, just over half of US gross debt.

Is Biden's \$1.9 trillion stimulus package this year too much for comfort? The Republicans certainly are alarmed at the sharp rise in welfare spending and debt, so they voted against the package. The nonpartisan Committee on Responsible Fiscal Budget estimates that the total cost including interest and extensions would amount to \$4.1 trillion by 2031. In other words, all stimulus spending cost more than what is shown. From a political point of view, Biden had no choice. If he does not revive the economy and protect his support base, he will lose the mid-term elections in 2022, which would make his second half term a complete lame-duck.

So, from a global strategic perspective, the real issue is not further quarrels between US and China. The key is whether Biden can turn around US long-term competitiveness damaged by four years of Trumpian fumbling on top of Congressional focus on short-term issues, rather than long-term infrastructure and structural weaknesses.

Take fiscal and monetary policies. Former US President Ronald Reagan famously said in 1981 that "government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem". Instead, US general government expenditure rose by 78 per cent in constant 2010 dollars from 1981 to 2019, whereas total public debt has increased dramatically from \$1 trillion or 31 per cent of GDP when Reagan was President to \$27 trillion or 136 per cent of GDP by the end of September 2020.

The Fed's stated monetary policy goals are to promote maximum employment, stable prices and moderate long-term interest rates. Whilst inflation has been kept low at below 2 per cent per annum and unemployment remains low, long-term interest rates are at record low levels, whilst US inequality numbers have worsened since Reagan from a Gini coefficient of 0.38 in 1981 to 0.48 in 2015. In the meantime, the Fed's balance sheet, which was \$865 billion or 6 per cent of GDP in 2007 rose over eight times to \$7.6 trillion or 36 per cent of GDP by March 2021.

That's not long-term strategy, but fiscal and monetary overdose.

Biden's Build Back Better programme will spend another \$2 trillion during the next four years on building green infrastructure and creating jobs. By comparison, the US spent \$686 billion in 2019 on defense alone,



and the cost of war since 9/11 for America was \$6.4 trillion and 801,000 deaths since 2001. All these are funded by more government debt, which the Congressional Budget Office projects will amount to 202 per cent of GDP by 2051.

Any emerging market with these debt numbers would be called a banana republic.

The Biden Administration is betting that the largest US stimulus package since World War II would restore American competitiveness and heal the nation. But much of this is not

funded by domestic savings, such as taxing the rich, but by borrowing on the US dollar. The rest of the world will not fund the dollar forever, certainly not at near zero interest rates. And if interest rates rise, the fiscal costs would be substantially higher. So bet on the Fed pumping more to keep rates low.

Winston Churchill said once, "never waste a good crisis". But in today's complex affairs, even experienced journalists have difficulty figuring whether Americans are getting value for such massive government

spending. So far, the United States has not spent enough good money on her own people, and more on the war machine. If this opportunity is wasted, then America will be lurching from crisis to crisis.

The truth of US debt is that it is not debt, but the rest of the world's equity. America is the world's too-big-to-fail borrower. If Biden fails, we lose. Which is why the dollar note says In God We Trust.

The writer is a former central banker and financial regulator. The views are entirely his own. Special to ANN

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Though Colonel Wedgwood continues to change his mind, his capacities for mischief at Home appear still to be incalculable. In an article in Reynolds on "What Lord Reading can do" Colonel Wedgwood inveighs with a reckless untruthfulness against Englishmen in this country. There are, he says, three classes of Englishmen to be considered over and above the members of the Civil Service, to whom he patronisingly attributes good intentions. Of these the first two are "Army officers and commercial men." Regarding these he gravely informs Home readers that, except in trains, "they rarely meet Indians who are not their servants." In Calcutta Colonel Wedgwood had the privilege of meeting a number of "burra sahibs" of British firms, one of which possesses Indian "servants" of all classes from confidential banias downwards totalling approximately 300,000. If he never entered the offices of these great firms and failed totally to appreciate the intimacy of their constant dealings with zemindars, Marwaris, shroffs, and Indian dealers and agents of a thousand descriptions. Every European member of the new Council is making every conceivable effort to meet and know his colleagues. In Calcutta the question was actually put to Colonel Wedgwood: "What more can we do? Tell us and we will do it." His statements regarding both Indian officers and English commercial men are ridiculously and cruelly untrue, and it is to be hoped that leading Anglo-Indians at Home will expose their absurdity.

NEWS ITEMS

SUSPECTED GANG OF Dacoits

During last three months dacoities have been committed in Bombay in which the culprits used firearms in their attempts to escape wherever any alarm was raised. The Bombay C.I.D. with the help of the Poona C.I.D., have now rounded up a gang of Makarani Pathans believed to be responsible for recent dacoities. A man who was wanted by the C.I.D. was traced to a chawl in the city, when he gave information that the gang had come from Baroda. C.I.D. officers proceeded to Baroda and returned after ascertaining that the gang was in Bombay with a man who could identify them. The C.I.D. raided a stable and thirty-five men were arrested. The men were placed before the Fourth Presidency Magistrate and were formally remanded.

FALSE STATEMENTS CONTRADICTED

A deputation of leading representatives of the Shia community waited on His Excellency the Governor yesterday. They represented the consternation in which the community had been thrown by the rumoured reports that Mujahids had been poisoned in Mesopotamia and that the British had bombed the sacred place of Najaf. His Excellency, in categorically denying these rumours, said: I am glad to be able to inform you, after reference to the Government of India that there is no foundation for the rumours that Mujahids have been poisoned and that the sacred place of Najaf has been bombarded by the British. Both these statements are false. There has been no suspicion of poisoning, and Najaf has not been bombarded by British troops or any troops under British officers.

CENTRAL PROVINCES COUNCIL

The Central Provinces Legislative Council met again today, and after questions a great deal of time was devoted to the discussion of a resolution moved by a Hindi member that all discussions and speeches in the Council should be in Hindi. It was pointed out that it was not in the power of the local Legislature to change the statutory ruling under the Government of India Act that the proceedings should be in English. Part of the resolution which recommended that speeches made in English should be rendered into Hindi for the benefit of members who knew only Hindi was put to the vote and carried. In reply to Mr. Jaswal's resolution urging the establishment of an Ayurvedic school, it was stated that the Government's attitude was sympathetic and they would favourably consider any well considered schemes submitted.

INFRINGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

At the High Court today in a suit brought by Messrs. Macmillan and Co., publishers against Messrs. K. and J. Cooper and Co., for an injunction against the defendants from printing, distributing or disposing of or by sale any copies of the defendants' book "Plutarch's Life of Alexander" and that the defendants may be ordered to deliver all copies of the book and pay plaintiffs as damages all sums secured by the sale of the book on the ground that defendants infringed the copyright of the plaintiffs. His lordship Justice Fawcett held there was an infringement of the copyright, and the plaintiffs were entitled to an injunction. They were also entitled to have an account taken and therefore referred the matter to the Commissioner.

Quenching India's thirst for water

EESHAN CHATURVEDI,
ARMIN ROSENCRANZ AND
KRISHNA PRIYA

India has about 18 per cent of the world's population, but has only 4 per cent of the world's fresh water. As metros such as Chennai and Bangalore run amok to account for the last drop of water, one needs to reflect upon the governance policy within the water domain to see what could quench this thirst.

It is well documented that in the domestic water sector, the loss of water from leakages in mains, communication and service pipes and valves is 30 to 40 per cent of the total distribution system. This means that the country loses almost 1/3rd of its total available water. By contrast, Singapore, Denmark and Netherlands lose less than 10 per cent of their fresh water. Over the past decade, a lot of effort has been put into revamping the distribution infrastructure to reduce leakages from old piping. This effort, while laudable, only addresses one piece of India's water puzzle.

The irrigation sector consumes roughly 80 per cent of the total fresh water, followed by domestic use 6 per cent, industries 5 per cent, and power development 3 per cent. Approximately 60 per cent of the Indian pop-



ulation works in the agricultural/farming industry. They contribute about 18 per cent to India's GDP while enabling the consumption of 80 per cent of India's water.

The water consumption pattern

opposed to consumption by the agriculture and irrigation sector.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with one sector consuming 4/5th of the country's water supply – as long as the sector is properly governed, accounted and paid for. This is not the case in India. The country needs to rethink its water strategy. Irrigation now leaves scant fresh water for humanitarian and industrial purposes.

The water ministry comes out with guidelines from time to time, but any suggestions regarding the irrigation sector seem not to be considered seriously. Among other reasons, water management is the primary responsibility of individual states under India's constitution. We must start looking at water as a common resource and realign our policy decisions in a proportionate and equitable manner.

In fact, the domestic water demand is on the rise and major cities in India are scrambling to satisfy this demand. No water use management policy will be successful without a parallel change in agricultural policies.

To achieve lasting impact on groundwater conservation, India must shift from cultivating water-intensive crops such as paddy to less water intensive crops. Robust water

audit mechanisms that examine the use of water by individual farmers for the irrigation sector and a revamping of the existing subsidy regime are critical to solving the water crisis in India. State governments must consider subsidizing water to individual small-holding farmers to ensure that small and marginal farmer incomes are not adversely impacted.

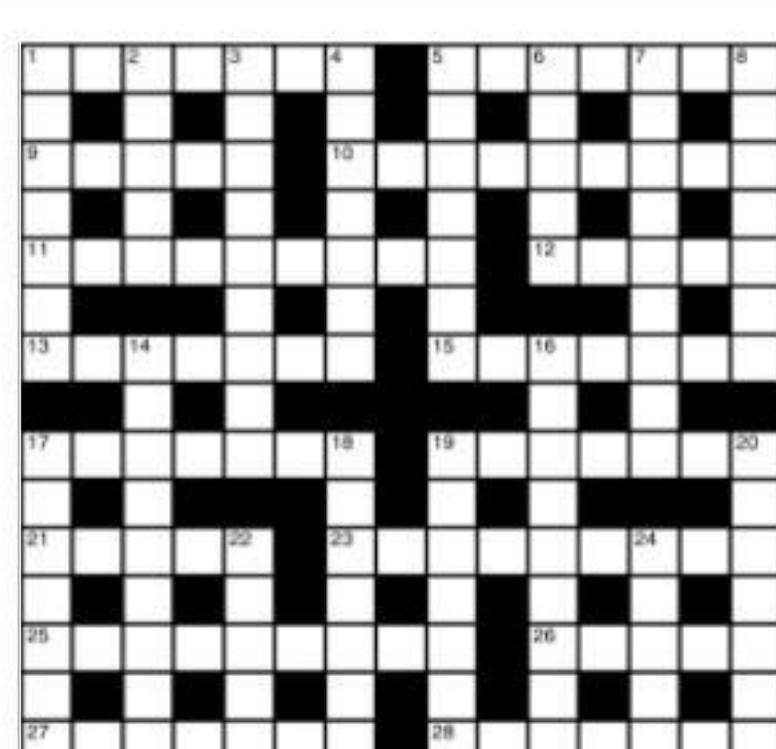
Deploying agri-tech solutions such as precision farming and SRI-system of rice intensification; addressing infrastructure issues with respect to embankments and canals; creating awareness at the grassroots level and formulating policies and legislations to bolster efficient and equitable water use in the irrigation sector is an absolute need of the hour.

The government must look into conservation measures in the largest of water intensive sectors and must do so with extreme urgency. It is in the interest of all stakeholders to understand and commit to efficient water use in today's world. Efforts to mitigate water wastage and loss must not be limited to one consumer sector but must be spread across irrigation, industrial, power and domestic sectors proportionately.

The writers are, respectively, an environmental and energy lawyer and Assistant Dean at Jindal School for Environment and Sustainability (JSES); the Founding dean of JSES and a lawyer based in Hyderabad.

NO 28856

CROSSWORD



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

- 1 1000 smack dealers with time off for good behaviour (7)
5 Tumbler drunk actor filled with Bass and drop of Armagnac (7)
9 Who cares if princess punches drunk? (3,2)
10 One closely involved with Labour Lord (9)
11 An insubstantial axe? (3,6)
12 6-1 ... right, Hearts must be in the lead! (5)
13 Will group of lawyers bow to DA? (3,4)
15 Academic rejected passes for dunces (7)
17 Predict death will come after strong wine (7)
19 Get stuck in toilet with individual snorting bit of Dexedrine (3,4)
21 Pale ale finally necked by a

- 23 Scottish woman (5)
25 All by myself and, oh, need to get jiggy! (3,6)
26 Really bad seeds spoilt red olives (9)
27 A couple of feet? Hoskins is bloody sizable primarily! (5)
28 Cads pinching nurse and daughter's butts (3-4)
DOWN
1 In haze, bag up, but put in the wrong hams? (7)
2 A bottom one couldn't possibly get beneath? (5)
3 Topless chap having 45 mins with mature escort (9)
4 Dope mostly found in Stone shot full of barbiturates (7)
5 Trouble at work with Her Maj in a

- flap (7)
Waterway in Phoenix? (5)
Red robin lad released close to gazebo (9)
Old jailers ignoring last of warden's failures? (7)
Worldly-wise Hoskins is one hot to open shaken-up lager tin (9)
Unfortunately, ginger dad can be humiliating (9)
Place to secure almost all hash and E, then start using gradually (5,2)
Couple upset a Scottish hooligan? That takes guts! (7)
In God's favour or damned? (7)
We don't like dressing fruits around plate endlessly (7)
Revolutionary network of computers downs commercial server (5)
Hill, perhaps, rambler goes up (5)

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



Permission to new private banks for conducting government-related business will be given under the RBI guidelines

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
UNION FINANCE MINISTER

THUMBNAILS

BSE SENSEX ▼ Mar 16, 2021	
Top Losers	Change:
Open: 50,608.42	-31.12 (-0.06%)
Close: 50,363.96	(-0.06%)
Previous close: 50,395.08	Closing Price in ₹ Change
Tata Steel	724 -1.63
L&T	1,461 -1.56
ICICI Bank	595 -1.38
SBI	378 -1.37
HDFC Bank	1,513 -1.07
HDFC	2,511 -0.96
Axis Bank	738 -0.95
Kotak Bank	1,904 -0.78
Bajaj Finserv	9,609 -0.77
NTPC	110 -0.72
KBK Infographics	

Cabinet clears Bill to set up DFI for funding infra projects

Government has proposed ₹20,000 crore to capitalise Development Finance Institution

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

The Union Cabinet today approved a Bill to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) to raise long-term capital to fund infrastructure development, as the government has envisaged an investment of Rs 111 lakh crore by 2025.

The proposed legislation will give effect to the Budget announcement made by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on 1 February. The government has proposed Rs 20,000 crore to capitalise the institution.

"I am happy today the Cabinet has cleared this Bill through which we will have an institution and institutional arrangement that will help in raising long-term finance. The Budget provides for the initial amount. I had announced it in the Budget, saying capital infusion from our side would be about Rs 20,000 crore," Sitharaman told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

Replying to a query, Sitharaman further said she expects the proposed institution to raise up to Rs 3 lakh crore in the next few years because it will have access to the market funds, which are otherwise not available. The DFI will also get tax benefits for 10 years.

"We expect even big pension funds, sovereign funds would all come... as we are able to attract them in the national infrastructure investment fund," she said.

Replies to a query, Sitharaman said the DFI will be managed by a professional board, comprising at least 50 per cent non-official directors.

The minister further said she expects the proposed institution to raise up to Rs 3 lakh crore in the next few years because it will have access to the market funds, which are otherwise not available. The DFI will also get tax benefits for 10 years.

"Persons of eminence are also envisaged to be on the board. And I would think the chairpersonship also will be some eminent person," she said, adding emoluments would be market-driven to attract the best talent.

The minister recalled that in the past also attempts were made to set up DFI, and referring to IDBI, she said those institutions changed the nature of their businesses for different reasons and "we ended up with no bank which could take the long-term risk and fund development".

In her Budget 2019-20 speech, Sitharaman had proposed a study for setting up DFIs for promoting infrastructure funding. About 7,000 projects have been identified under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) with a projected investment of Rs 111 lakh crore during 2020-25.

NIP, a first-of-its-kind initiative to provide world-class infrastructure across the country and improve the quality of life for all citizens, will be crucial for attaining the target of becoming a \$5-trillion economy by financial year 2024-25.

During the pre-liberalised era, India had DFIs which were primarily engaged in the development of industry in the country. ICICI and IDBI, in their previous avatars, were development finance institutions. Even the country's oldest financial institution IFCI Ltd acted as a development finance institution.

In India, the first DFI was operationalised in 1948 with the setting up of the Industrial Finance Corporation (IFCI). Subsequently, the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) was set up with the backing of the World Bank in 1955.

The Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) came into existence in 1964 to promote long-term financing for infrastructure projects and industry.

IOC to sell hydrogen plants to monetise non-core assets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

These (hydrogen generating units) are already operating units. Now we are trying to leverage the efficiency of operations by handing it over to the licensor of the unit... These units are located within the refinery complex and I will be the only buyer, consumer (of hydrogen)

SHRIKANT MADHAV VAIDYA
CHAIRMAN, IOC

transition strategy, which would involve producing hydrogen in a cost-effective way as well as developing technology to combine compressed natural gas with hydrogen.

India is joining nations like China, South Korea and Japan in speeding up research on how to embrace hydrogen in its energy mix and cut dependence on fossil fuels.

Oil secretary Farun Kapoor said IOC plans to set up several hydrogen production units on a pilot basis, testing out different pathways of producing the gas.

Last year, it experimented with doping compressed natural gas (CNG) with hydrogen. As many as 50 buses in Delhi are being fuelled by the "H-CNG", which has 18 per cent hydrogen content.

To give a further boost to plans on hydrogen-based mobility solutions, IOC has invited bids to procure 15 PEM fuel cell buses, an effort to address all aspects of the hydrogen value chain.

The idea was to reduce tailpipe emissions of the buses, but it also resulted in higher fuel efficiency.

India has unveiled a national hydrogen mission to accelerate plans to generate the carbon-free fuel from renewables.

Hydrogen is produced predominantly through steam methane reforming or SMR, which utilises fossil fuels such as natural gas or coal, and through Proton Exchange Membrane Electrolysis.

Sebi streamlines IPO process

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

Markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India today put in place a uniform policy to streamline the reconciliation process among intermediaries with regard to initial public offers as well as a new mechanism to compensate investors.

The new framework would address issues related to delay in receipt of mandate by investors for blocking of funds due to systemic issues at intermediaries and failure to unblock the funds in cases of partial allotment by the next working day from the finalisation of basis of allotment (BOA), Sebi said in a circular.

Among other issues that would be addressed are self

certified syndicate bank (SCSB) blocking multiple amounts for the same unified payment interface (UPI) application and SCSB blocking more amount in the investors account than the application amount.

In order to ensure timely response with regard to IPO (initial public offer) process, SCSBs would identify the nodal officer for IPO applications processed through UPI as a payment mechanism and submit the details to the Securities and Exchange Board of India within seven working days.

For ease of reference, the details of nodal officers of SCSBs will be hosted on the Sebi website. To ensure timely information to investors, SCSBs would send SMS alerts for mandate block and unblock.

Dipam is presently processing the monetisation of identified non-core surplus assets of BEML Ltd and Bridge & Roof Ltd earmarked for strategic disinvestment," Thakur said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

'Dipam processing non-core asset sale of BEML and Bridge & Roof'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 16 MARCH

The department of investment and public asset management is processing sale of non-core assets of two strategic scale-bound PSUs - BEML and Bridge & Roof Ltd, minister of state for finance Anurag Singh Thakur said today.

The Cabinet had in February 2019 approved the procedure and mechanism for asset monetisation of Central public sector enterprises (CPSEs)/public sector undertakings (PSUs).

For CPSEs under disinvestment, the non-core assets are to be identified before disinvestment and monetised through the framework.

Dipam is presently processing the monetisation of identified non-core surplus assets of BEML Ltd and Bridge & Roof Ltd earmarked for strategic disinvestment," Thakur said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

"Dipam is presently processing the monetisation of identified non-core surplus assets of BEML Ltd and Bridge & Roof Ltd earmarked for strategic disinvestment," Thakur said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

The government has so far given in-principle approval for strategic disinvestment of 35 CPSEs and subsidiaries/units/joint ventures of CPSEs out of which eight have been completed," he added.

Of the remaining 27, transactions with regard to 21 are ongoing, which include NMDC's Nagarnar Steel Plant, SAIL's Alloy Steel Plant, Durgapur; Salem Steel Plant; Bhadravati Steel Plant, Pawan Hans, Air India, RINL, BPCL, Shipping Corp and Container Corp.

The two transactions - Hindustan Newsprint Ltd and Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd - are held up due to litigation.

received by the government from these transactions. All of these CPSEs are profit-making.

"The government has so far given in-principle approval for strategic disinvestment of 35 CPSEs and subsidiaries/units/joint ventures of CPSEs out of which eight have been completed," he added.

Of the remaining 27, transactions with regard to 21 are ongoing, which include NMDC's Nagarnar Steel Plant, SAIL's Alloy Steel Plant, Durgapur; Salem Steel Plant; Bhadravati Steel Plant, Pawan Hans, Air India, RINL, BPCL, Shipping Corp and Container Corp.

The two transactions - Hindustan Newsprint Ltd and Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd - are held up due to litigation.

Nokia plans to cut up to 10,000 jobs to reduce costs

HELSINKI (FINLAND), 16 MARCH

Wireless network maker Nokia says it is planning to cut up to 10,000 jobs, or over 10 per cent of its staff, to reduce costs as it invests in research and development and tries to cement its role as a key supplier of 5G technology.

The restructuring means the number of staff is expected to fall to 80,000-85,000 employees over a period of up to two years, Nokia said today. It should reduce costs by 600 million (\$715 million) by 2023.

The Finnish company didn't specify countries or geographical areas affected by the measure, but said the cuts would be carried out across its four main business units.

Decisions that may have a potential impact on our employees are never taken lightly, Nokia CEO Pekka Lundmark said in a statement. Ensuring we have the right setup and capabilities is a necessary step to deliver sustainable long-term performance.

The company based in Espoo, Finland, said the expected savings would offset increased investments in R&D, future capabilities and costs related to salary inflation.

Apart from increasing investments in 5G - the new generation of broadband technology where Nokia competes with China's Huawei and Sweden's Ericsson and lately also with South Korea's Samsung - Nokia said it would also invest in cloud and digital infrastructure.

Lundmark, a former executive with the company in the 1990s, took over Nokia's top spot in August, and has said he aims to make Nokia the leader in 5G, even at the expense of the company's profitability in the short-term.

Top steelmakers may cut debt by 15%: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 16 MARCH

Five primary steel producers, which account for 55 per cent of domestic production, Crisil said.

Domestic demand recovered strongly in the second half of FY21, clipping at 10 per cent between October 2020 and January 2021 as against a steep 30 per cent year-on-year fall in the first half due to the pandemic. This will have demand contraction improving to under 10 per cent for the whole of this fiscal.

Rising demand and higher prices will boost their operating margins by 23 per cent next fiscal, though down from 25 per cent this fiscal, leading to improved credit metrics for steelmakers, Crisil said in its report.

Debt cutting will also come from the savings they made in FY21 by partially deferring capex, which has further strengthened the balance sheets and credit metrics of

five primary steel producers, which account for 55 per cent of domestic production, Crisil said.

Domestic demand recovered strongly in the second half of FY21, clipping at 10 per cent between October 2020 and January 2021 as against a steep 30 per cent year-on-year fall in the first half due to the pandemic. This will have demand contraction improving to under 10 per cent for the whole of this fiscal.

Rising demand and higher prices will boost their operating margins by 23 per cent next fiscal, though down from 25 per cent this fiscal, leading to improved credit metrics for steelmakers, Crisil said in its report.

Debt cutting will also come from the savings they made in FY21 by partially deferring capex, which has further strengthened the balance sheets and credit metrics of

CRISIL FORECAST

► The report is based on Tata Steel (including Bhushan Steel), JSW Steel, Steel Authority of India, Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India (erstwhile Essar Steel) and Jindal Steel & Power.

► The five steel makers could cut Rs 25,000 crore of debt this fiscal, despite capex rising by 15 per cent, they can slice debt by another Rs 10,000 crore.

lied to a multi-year high of Rs 56,000 per ton in February from Rs 39,200 per ton in March 2020 as demand improved amid iron ore supply constraints and high global prices.

Since last month, however, prices have moderated

with iron ore supplies improving, and also because of the reduction in customs duty announced in the Budget.

The five steelmakers could cut Rs 25,000 crore of debt this fiscal. Next fiscal, despite capex rising by 15 per cent, they

can slice debt by another Rs 10,000 crore.

That would drive a sharp improvement in credit metrics with financial leverage declining below 2.5 times next fiscal compared to above 4 times in fiscal 2020, said Naveen Vaidyanathan, an associate director at the agency.

The report is based on Tata Steel (including Bhushan Steel), JSW Steel, Steel Authority of India, Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India (erstwhile Essar Steel) and Jindal Steel & Power.

While the tailwinds to realisations from higher input costs and global prices may abate going forward, domestic demand growth would provide an offset, said the report.

Consequently, realisation next fiscal may still be 15 per cent higher than the average of the past five years. That, along with rising volumes and moderate coking coal prices will mean operating

margins jumping to 23 per cent next fiscal, but lower than the 25 per cent seen this fiscal.

The report is based on Tata Steel (including Bhushan Steel), JSW Steel, Steel Authority of India, Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India (erstwhile Essar Steel) and Jindal Steel & Power.

All these will have their cash accruals surge over 40 per cent year-on-year to Rs 40,000 crore this fiscal, and rise another 10 per cent next fiscal. That, and a reduction in capex this fiscal will fortify financials amid the pandemic uncertainties, he said.

Lundmark, a former executive with the company in the 1990s, took over Nokia's top spot in August, and has said he aims to make Nokia the leader in 5G, even at the expense of the company's profitability in the short-term.



Sri Lankan govt will not rush through process to ban burqas.
It will be done in consultation and after reaching a consensus

SRI LANKAN MINISTER KEHELIYA RAMBUKWELLA
AFTER MOUNTING INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM ON BURQA BAN ISSUE

North warns US not to 'cause a stink' before Seoul meeting

Kim Yo Jong's statement was issued as US Secy of State & Defense Secy arrived in Asia to talk with Japan & SKorea

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

In North Korea's first comments directed at the Biden administration, Kim Jong Un's powerful sister on Tuesday warned the United States to "refrain from causing a stink" if it wants to "sleep in peace" for the next four years.

Kim Yo Jong's statement was issued as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived in Asia to talk with U.S. allies Japan and South Korea about North Korea and other regional issues. They have meetings in Tokyo on Tuesday before speaking to officials in Seoul on Wednesday.

"We take this opportunity to warn the new U.S. administration trying hard to give off (gun) powder smell in our land," she said. "If it wants to sleep in peace for coming four years, it had better refrain from causing a stink at its first step."

Kim Yo Jong, a senior official who handles inter-Korean affairs, also criticized the U.S. and South Korea for holding

Japan, US to share China worry as ministers meet in Tokyo

ASSOCIATED PRESS
TOKYO, 16 MARCH



U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, elbow bumps with Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, center, at a joint news conference after their two plus two security talks at Iikura Guest House in Tokyo. ■ AP

Japan and the US joined forces Tuesday to criticise China's coercion and aggression in Asia as senior ministers from both countries held their first in-person talks since President Joe Biden took office in January.

Aside from the sharp rhetoric aimed at Beijing, the meeting in Tokyo and a planned stop next in Seoul are as much an effort by the Biden administration to reassure worried allies in Asia after four years of occasionally confrontational dealings with the Trump administration.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, after holding the so-called two-plus-two

security talks with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and their Japanese counterparts Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi said democracy and human rights in the region are being challenged and the US will push

with its partners for a free and open Indo-Pacific. Blinken said the US is committed to work with allies and those in the region as they face challenges from China and its ally North Korea, which is pursuing an illicit nuke weapons program.

party unit tasked to handle inter-Korean relations if it no longer had to cooperate with

the South. She said the North would also consider scrapping an office that handled South Korean tours to the North's scenic Diamond Mountain, which Seoul suspended in 2008 after a North Korean guard fatally shot a South Korean tourist. The North "will watch the future attitude and actions of the (South Korean) authorities," before determining whether to take exceptional measures against its rival, she said in her statement published in Pyongyang's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper.

Challenges posed by North's nuclear arsenal and China's growing influence loom large in the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, part of a larger effort to bolster U.S. influence and calm concerns about the U.S. role in Asia following four years of President Donald Trump's "America first" approach. A senior official from the Biden administration said Saturday that U.S. officials have tried to reach out to North through multiple channels since last month, but had yet to receive a response.

Nepal Prez calls all-party dialogue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KATHMANDU, 16 MARCH

Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari has called an all-party meeting on Tuesday to discuss contemporary issues amid the political crisis that has gripped the country with the ruling CPN-UML factions, including the one led by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, making last-ditch efforts to strike a deal to sustain the government, according to media reports.

Tika Dhakal, a senior communication expert at the Office of the President, said that President Bhandari has called a meeting of leaders of all political parties represented in Parliament as well as former prime ministers to discuss contemporary politics, the Kathmandu Post reported.

The parties represented in the Nepal Parliament that will attend the meeting are Prime Minister Oli's CPN-UML, Nepali Congress led by Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhalanath Khanal, CPN-Maoist Centre led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda", Janata Samajbadi Party, Rashtriya Prajatantra Party, Rashtriya Janamorcha and Nepal Majdoor Lisa Party.

Encrypted messaging app Signal blocked in China

HONG KONG, 16 MARCH

Encrypted messaging app Signal appears to have been blocked in mainland China, the latest foreign social media service to cease working in a country where the government tightly controls the flow of information.

As of Tuesday, users of the app within China had to connect to a virtual private network (VPN) that allows them to circumvent China's so-called Great Firewall, a censorship system which blocks websites, services and apps deemed inappropriate by the Chinese government.

The move to silence Signal, comes as China expands controls to shape public opinion and at times limit private discourse. Users in China said that they could not get the app to connect without a VPN service. Messages failed to send and calls did not go through.

Most recently, popular social-audio platform Clubhouse was also shut down, shortly after Chinese users on the app started taking part in real-time audio discussions deemed sensitive by authorities, such as China's mass detentions of Uighurs. ■ AP

UK peers debate freedoms in India, minister points to close India-UK ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 16 MARCH

Peers in Britain's House of Lords held a debate on the issue of "freedoms of non-governmental organisations, academics and other groups in India" and called on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to take up the issues directly with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi during his visit to New Delhi next month.

The "India: Restrictions on Freedom" debate in the Upper House of the Parliament was called by crossbench peer Lord Richard Harries on Monday and, as is customary, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) minister Lord Zac Goldsmith responded on behalf of the government to highlight the close ties between the UK and India which allow Britain to raise all issues as part of an ongoing dialogue. He pointed to a "very deep and broad relationship" with the world's largest democracy, with which the UK's trade and investment partnership is "thriving" and collaboration on defence and security mean the two countries a "force for good in the world".

"Our approach has always

been to raise any concerns directly with the Indian government. We will continue to engage India on the full range of human rights matters and raise our concerns where we have them as we do including at ministerial level," said Lord Goldsmith.

The Prime Minister will visit India shortly. That will be an opportunity to discuss a very wide range of bilateral and multilateral issues directly with the Indian government. Of course, where we have specific concerns, the Prime Minister will raise them directly with the government of India, as you would expect of a close friend and partner," he said.

The Lords debate comes a week after a debate in a House of Commons committee room on the issue of farmers' protests in India over agricultural reforms.

India has firmly told Britain that the country's MPs should refrain from practising "vote bank politics" by misrepresenting events, especially in relation to another fellow democracy.

Lord Goldsmith responded to all the issues raised by pointing to regular exchanges with the Indian High Commission in London and the Indian government.

tations to the Indian government over issues such as "the closure of Amnesty International India and the freezing of its accounts", the situation in Kashmir and the "imprisonment of journalists and the fear of persecution felt by non-Hindu minorities, Dalit activists, NGOs and all those campaigning against human rights violations".

"The strong relationship with India, built on trust and mutual respect, should give us the confidence to play the role of a critical friend. That means stressing the importance of a free civil society in a democracy," said Lord Roy Collins, an Opposition Labour Party peer.

"Until recently India has broadly upheld the democratic principles and traditions she inherited from the UK. It is now observable that the Indian government has restructured some hitherto democratic freedoms in a number of areas," noted Lord Howard Flight, a Conservative Party peer.

Lord Goldsmith responded

to the issue of Kashmir, he reiterated the UK government's stance of being "concerned by the lack of communication between India and Pakistan and its impact on tensions" but that it is not for the UK to "prescribe a solution or act as a mediator".

The UK government had sought to reiterate that the issue is "absolutely and totally" an internal matter for India and highlighted that the scheduling of debates in Parliament are just part of the nature of its parliamentary democracy.

The Indian government took strong exception over the Commons debate as "gross interference in the politics of another democratic country." Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla summoned the British High Commissioner in New Delhi on March 9 and conveyed India's strong opposition to the "unwarranted and tendentious" discussion on India's agri reforms in the UK Parliament, describing it a "gross interference" in politics of another country.

Shringla advised the envoy that British MPs should refrain from practising "vote bank politics" by misrepresenting events, especially in relation to another fellow democracy.

Britain will remain unwaveringly committed to NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation] and preserving peace and security in

UK to shift foreign policy focus to Indo-Pacific in post-Brexit review

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 16 MARCH

The UK must do more to adapt to major changes in the world and therefore shift its foreign policy focus to the Indo-Pacific region, with countries such as India, Japan and Australia, a year-long of the country's post-Brexit Global Britain vision concluded on Tuesday.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who formally launched the Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy document in the House of Commons, underlined this so-called Indo-Pacific tilt by confirming his visit to India next month, an application for partner status of the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN) economic union and the Royal Navy warship Queen Elizabeth Carrier deployment to the region.

I am delighted to announce that I will visit India next month to strengthen our friendship with the world's biggest democracy, he said in his Commons statement.

Britain will remain unwaveringly committed to

Europe, and from this secure basis, we will seek out friends and partners wherever they can be found, building a coalition for openness and innovation, and engaging more deeply in the Indo-Pacific, he said, highlighting an invitation to India, Australia and South Korea to attend the UK-hosted G7 Summit as part of deeper engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Besides being at the "front line of new security challenges", the region's shipping lanes are also seen as vital to maintain UK trade with Asia.

The year-long review had been commissioned as a future policy framework for the UK as a non-member of the European Union (EU).

The 100-page document also confirms the launch of two new cross-government hubs

a Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre, aimed at significantly improving the UK's ability to "thwart terrorists", and a White House style Situation Centre based in the Cabinet Office to improve the "use of data" to anticipate and respond to future crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

India is categorised as an international actor of growing importance in the review, which commits to achieving an Enhanced Trade Partner-

ship this year as a roadmap to a potential comprehensive trade deal.

The UK-India relationship is already strong, but over the next 10 years we seek transformation in our cooperation across the full range of our shared interests, the review concludes.

Our vision is for re-energised trade and investment, rooted in S&T [science and tech] and supporting levelling up in the UK and India alike;

enhanced defence cooperation that brings a more secure Indian Ocean Region, building on the existing biannual Ministerial Defence Dialogues; and UK-India leadership to tackle global challenges like climate change, clean energy and global health, it adds.

It also takes note of China's growing international stature as being by far the most significant geopolitical factor in the world today, with major implications for British values and interests and for the structure and shape of the international order.

Categorising it as a "challenge", the review declares a plan to pursue a positive economic relationship within a robust diplomatic framework.

We will not hesitate to stand up for our values and our interests where they are threatened, or when China acts in

breach of existing agreements, it notes.

Russia is another challenge country, which the review finds will remain the most acute direct threat to the UK.

"In all our endeavours, the United States will be our greatest ally and a uniquely close partner in defence, intelligence and security," declared Johnson.

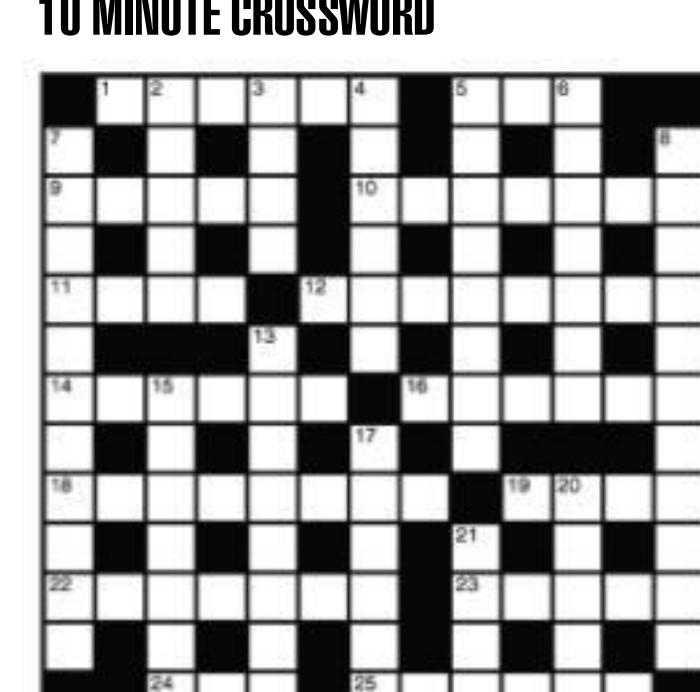
The review he had commissioned also highlights how the world's soft power landscape is changing and therefore Britain's own soft power can no longer be taken for granted.

Those who challenge the values of open and democratic societies increasingly do so through culture: systemic competitors like Russia and China invest heavily in global cultural power projection and information operations. Our perception of other countries and therefore their soft power is also increasingly shaped in the digital space, driven by individuals and non-state actors, including through disinformation, it warns.

The Integrated Review establishes tackling climate change and preserving biodiversity as the UK's number one international priority in the decade ahead.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Battled (6)
5 Old measure of length (3)
9 Make void (5)
10 Cane syrup (7)
11 At the home of (French) (4)

12 Purity (8)

14 Dais (6)

16 Mystery (6)

18 Funds (8)

19 Sound of contempt (4)

22 Tool (7)

23 Musical drama (5)

24 Arid (3)

25 Split in a group (6)

DOWN

2 Unit of weight (5)
3 Strong wind (4)
4 Irritable (6)
5 Church service (8)

6 Deficient (7)

7 Repeated set of words (11)

8 January 1 (3,5,3)

13 Money of a country (8)

15 Throw away (7)

17 Card suit (6)

20 Notions (5)

21 Bludgeon (4)

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

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidysagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry: 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800112511
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways: 23861262, 09910383338, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186, Call Centre 09910383338, 180018



The US is continuing to expel most single adults and families either to Mexico or to their countries of origin.

US HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS
DEFENDING US HANDLING OF BORDER SURGE

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C
HONG KONG	20°C	17°C
TOKYO	18°C	12°C
LONDON	14°C	9°C
DUBAI	30°C	25°C
SAN FRANCISCO	08°C	04°C
NEW YORK	01°C	07°C
MOSCOW	02°C	01°C

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

THUMBNAILS



Residents line up against Hong Kong's business district to get tested for the Covid at a temporary testing center in Hong Kong on Tuesday. AP

Germany car mishap: A car drove into a group of people in the eastern German city of Leipzig on Tuesday, killing two and leaving another two injured, police said. Authorities believe it was an accident. The 50-year-old man who drove the car was in the care of police, news agency dpa reported. AP

Netherlands polls: The lead of Dutch PM Mark Rutte's conservative party in polls continued to shrink Tuesday, according to a new survey published ahead of the second day of voting. People's Party for Freedom and Democracy still retains a lead of some 10 percentage points over its nearest rival, the anti-immigration Party for Freedom led by Geert Wilders. AP

UK women safety row: The British government plans to increase funding for street lighting and closed-circuit TV as part of a package of measures to help protect women and girls following the murder of a young woman who was abducted on the streets of London. AP

Prince Philip leaves hospital after heart procedure

LONDON, 16 MARCH

Britain Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, on Tuesday left King Edward VII's Hospital in central London after a month since he had been admitted there and went on to have a "successful heart procedure".

The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II was pictured being driven out in the back of a black BMW after a 28-night stay, his longest spell in hospital.

He was first admitted to the King Edward VII Hospital on February 16 before moving to a National Health Service (NHS) specialist St Bartholomew's Hospital two weeks later, where he underwent a procedure for a pre-existing heart condition.

He was moved back to the private King Edward VII's Hospital earlier this month, where he has been recuperating. The exact reason for his initial admission was not disclosed, but Buckingham Palace had confirmed it was not related to coronavirus. Prince Philip and the Queen, 94, have spent most of the lockdown at Windsor Castle in England with a small group of household staff, nicknamed HMS Bubble. The couple, who have been married for 73 years, received their first COVID-19 jabs in January.

During his stay at the hospital, the Duke of Edinburgh was visited by his eldest son, Prince Charles.

King Edward VII's Hospital is a private clinic in central London which has treated the Queen on several occasions, as well as the duke and other senior royals. The Duke of Edinburgh, who turns 100 in June, is the UK's longest-serving monarch's consort. PTI

Sweden latest to stop using AstraZeneca

Swedish Public Health Agency says it will suspend use of vaccine pending the results of the European Medicines Agency meeting



In this photo released by Government Spokesman Office, Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, front left, receives a shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine at government house in Bangkok, on Tuesday. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, 16 MARCH

Sweden on Tuesday became the latest country to pause use of the AstraZeneca vaccine on Monday, though the company and international regulators say there is no evidence the shot is to blame. The German government and the coun-

Germany postpones vaccination summit over AstraZeneca furore

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, 16 MARCH

The German government said Tuesday it will postpone a virtual summit on the country's slow vaccination campaign and on ways to speed it up. But in a statement Tuesday morning, the government said the summit would be postponed until after the EMA's meeting, which is scheduled for Thursday. AstraZeneca's formula is one of three vaccines in use on the European continent.

A growing number of European countries including Germany, France, Italy and Spain suspended use of the AstraZeneca vaccine on Monday, though the company and international regulators review safety data following reports of dangerous blood clots in some recipients.

The company and international regulators continue to say the vaccine is safe, however, and many countries elsewhere in the world are forging ahead with their vaccination campaigns.

The European Medicines Agency plans to meet Thursday to review experts' findings on the vaccine and decide whether action needs to be taken. The agency has so far said that the benefits of receiving the shot outweigh the risk of side effects.

The Swedish Public Health Agency said Tuesday that it would suspend use of the AstraZeneca vaccine pending the results of the EMA meeting. Germany, France, Italy and Spain were among countries

that suspended use of the vaccine on Monday. "The decision is a precautionary measure," Sweden's chief epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, said in a statement.

Also Tuesday, the German government said it would postpone until after the EMA meeting a virtual summit of state governors called to review the country's vaccination efforts. The summit had been scheduled for Wednesday.

AstraZeneca's vaccine is one of three authorized for use on the European continent. But escalating concern about the shot has created another setback for the European Union's vaccination drive, which has been plagued by

shortages and other hurdles and is lagging far behind in the efforts in Britain and the U.S. AstraZeneca said there is no evidence the vaccine carries an increased risk of blood clots.

There have been 37 reports of blood clots among the more than 17 million people who have received the vaccine across the EU and Britain, the company said.

"This is much lower than

would be expected to occur naturally in a general population of this size and is similar across other licensed vaccines," AstraZeneca said.

Much of Asia has shrugged off concerns about the AstraZeneca jab, with Thailand's prime minister receiv-

ing a shot Tuesday as the country started rolling out the vaccine. "There are people who have concerns," Prayuth Chan-ocha said after his vaccination. "But we must believe doctors, believe in our medical professionals."

Thailand was the first country outside Europe to temporarily suspend use of the AstraZeneca vaccine. But health authorities later decided to go ahead with it, with Prayuth and members of his Cabinet receiving the first shots.

Indonesia suspended use of the vaccine on Monday, saying it was waiting for a full report from the World Health Organization regarding possible side effects.

This does not necessarily mean these events are linked to vaccination," WHO Director-General Tedros

agency will review experts' findings on the AstraZeneca shot and decide whether action needs to be taken.

EU drug agency: No indication AstraZeneca shot caused clots

The head of the European Medicines Agency says there is no indication that AstraZeneca vaccines are the cause of blood clots reported in some shot recipients. Those reports led several European countries to suspend use of the vaccine.

Emer Cooke said Tuesday that the agency is firmly convinced that the benefits of the AstraZeneca shot outweigh the risks, but an evaluation is ongoing.

Vaccine rollout unaffected by concerns over AstraZeneca

ASSOCIATED PRESS
GENEVA, 16 MARCH

The UN health agency said its global rollout of coronavirus vaccines remains unaffected even as a growing number of countries, especially in Europe, suspended use of AstraZeneca's vaccine on Monday amid concerns about blood clots in some people who received it.

The World Health Organization says the AstraZeneca vaccines for its COVAX programme, which is shipping vaccines mostly to low- and middle-income countries, are being produced in India and South Korea and the suspensions have been ordered over batches made in

several vaccines being deployed in Europe, the vaccine has a huge role so far in COVAX.

We understand these are precautionary measures," WHO assistant director-general Mariangela Simao said.

I would like to say this to countries from other regions that are not Europe: That the vaccines (at issue) so far are from European manufacturers not vaccines that are provided through the COVAX facility.

Germany and Britain to do more to offset crippling sanctions reimposed under Trump.

Although Iran, with a population of more than 80 million, has so far imported foreign vaccines from Russia, China, India and Cuba to cover over 1.2 million people, concerns over its lagging pace of vaccinations have animated Iran's drive to develop locally produced vaccines as wealthier nations snap up the lion's share of vaccine doses worldwide. AP

Pfizer deal will dispatch 10M doses: EU group

BRUSSELS, 16 MARCH

The European Commission says it has sealed a deal with Pfizer to speed up the dispatching of 10 million doses of its coronavirus vaccine over the next three months.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen says speeding up the pace of deliveries across the 27-nation bloc would bring the total number of Pfizer doses in the second quarter to over 200 million.

This is very good news, Von der Leyen says. It gives member states room to maneuver and possibly fill gaps in deliveries.

Iran starts trial of new home-grown vaccine as campaign lags: Iran's campaign to inoculate its population against the coronavirus and promote itself as an emerging vaccine manufacturer inched on as health authorities announced Tuesday that the country's third homegrown vaccine has reached the phase of clinical trials. Details about its production, however, remained slim.

The programme began shipments in late Feb and has plans to ship more than 200 million doses by the end of May nearly all of them versions of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

Total of 92 countries are to receive vaccines for free through COVAX, which is led by the WHO; Gavi, a vaccine group; and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. Another 90 countries and eight territories have agreed to pay for doses through the programme.

Dr Soumya Swaminathan,

WHO's chief scientist, noted that 300 million doses of coronavirus vaccines have been injected around the world, and there is no documented death linked to any one of them.

Biden to join road show promoting relief plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
LAS VEGAS, 16 MARCH

President Joe Biden is joining top messengers already crisscrossing the country to highlight the benefits of his massive Covid rescue plan, in his case by promoting aid for small businesses.

Biden is set to visit a small business in suburban Philadelphia on Tuesday, his initial trip outside Washington for the "Help is here" tour that got underway Monday. Vice President Kamala Harris dropped in on a vaccination site and a culinary academy in Las Vegas. "We want to avoid a situation where people are

unaware of what they're entitled to," Harris said at the culinary academy. "It's not selling it; it's literally letting people know their rights. Think of it more as a public education campaign."

The White House is wasting no time promoting the \$1.9 trillion relief plan, looking to build momentum for the rest of his agenda and anxious to avoid the mistakes of 2009 in boosting that year's recovery effort. Even veterans of Barack Obama's administration acknowledge they did not do enough then to showcase their massive economic stimulus package. "Hope is here in real and tangible ways," Biden

said. He said the new government spending will bankroll efforts that could allow the nation to emerge from the pandemic's twin crises, health and economic.

"Shots in arms and money in pockets," he said. "That's important. The American Rescue Plan is already doing what it was designed to do: make a difference in people's everyday lives. We're just getting started." Biden said that within the next 10 days, his administration will clear two important benchmarks: distributing 100 million stimulus payments and administering 100 million vaccine doses since he took office. To

commemorate those milestones, Biden and his top representatives are embarking on their most ambitious travel schedule of his young presidency, visiting a series of potential election battleground states this week.

The sales pitch was leaving Republicans cold.

Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell dismissed the target of doses that Biden set when he took office as "not some audacious goal" but just the pace that he inherited.

And he mocked Biden's talk of Americans working toward merely being able to gather in small groups by July 4th as "bizarre."

'Return to Iran N-deal possible'

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN, 16 MARCH

An American return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran remains possible, but both sides need to be prepared to negotiate, the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog suggested to European Parliamentarians on Tuesday.

The US pulled out of the deal unilaterally in 2018 under former President Donald Trump, but President Joe Biden has indicated that the US would be willing to rejoin. Complicating the matter, however, Iran has been steadily violating the restrictions of the deal, like the amount of enriched uranium it can stockpile and the purity to which it can enrich it.

Its moves have been calculated to put pressure on the other nations in the deal: Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain to do more to offset crippling sanctions reimposed under Trump.

Iran has said that before it resumes compliance with the deal, the US needs to return to its own obligations under the deal by dropping the sanctions.

Asked about Iran's insistence that the US take the first step, International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi said in a video appearance before three Euro-

pean Parliament committees that it takes two to tango. He noted that over the past two years Iran has accumulated a lot of nuclear material and new capacities, and used the time for honing their skills in these areas.

Even if you had a magic wand or the hand of God and said we go back tomorrow, there will be a lot of housekeeping, he said. Grossi said he had been talking to both sides in his agency's impartial neutral role and did think that a US return to the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was possible.

Diverse jury so far for ex-cop's trial in Floyd's death

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS, 16 MARCH

The jurors seated so far in the trial of a former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's death are a diverse group, an element being closely scrutinised in a case where race plays such a central role. Nine jurors have been seated through Monday, including five who are white; one who is multiracial; two who are Black and one who is Hispanic. Some news organizations reported the racial makeup of the jury mainly by appearances last week before Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill, mindful of strong public interest in the case, began releasing each juror's race after they were selected.

Floyd, a Black man, was declared dead on May 25 after Chauvin, who is white, pressed his knee against his neck for about nine minutes. Floyd's death sparked sometimes violent protests in Minneapolis and beyond and led to a national reckoning on racial justice. Chauvin is charged with murder and manslaughter.

The jurors include six men and three women and range in age from their 20s to their 50s. The selection process resumes Tuesday and continues until 14 people are seated. Opening statements are March 29 unless the process isn't complete by then. On Monday, Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson asked

the court to postpone the trial, arguing that the jury pool was likely tainted by Friday's announcement that the city of Minneapolis would pay \$27 million to Floyd's family to settle their civil lawsuit.

It is profoundly disturbing to the defense, Nelson said of the settlement in the midst of jury selection. This is not fair.

Cahill didn't immediately grant the delay, but he acknowledged that the timing was unfortunate and said he would consider it. He said he likely would recall the seven jurors who were seated last week for further questioning, though he already instructed members of the jury pool to avoid all news coverage of the case.

The first potential juror questioned Monday was quickly dismissed after volunteering that she'd heard about the settlement and presumed it meant the city didn't feel it would win the civil case. When I heard that, I almost gasped at the amount, she said, adding that she couldn't promise she could disregard it. Potential jurors questioned later didn't mention hearing of the settlement, and neither attorneys nor the judge directly asked if they were aware of it.



Commuters walk along a sidewalk amid a sandstorm during the morning rush hour in the central business district in Beijing. AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CANBERRA, 16 MARCH

Gay marriage was endorsed by 62 per cent of voters who responded to an Australian postal ballot in 2017.

from blessing same-sex civil unions.

I join many gay Catholics who are disheartened by this announcement and I hope their church leaders continue to advocate for these blessings, the lawmaker said. The Catholic Church could remodel an ability to evolve with their membership.

Rodney Croome, a leading advocate for marriage equality when same-sex marriage became legal in Australia, accused the Vatican of being

out of

Gravity & lesser beings

A method devised by scientist Henry Cavendish in the 18th century was recently adapted by a group of researchers

STANANTHANARAYANAN

The force of gravity, which we feel and take for granted from the moment we are born, is apparent to us thanks to large masses, like the Earth, Sun and heavenly bodies. Between ordinary objects, however, gravity is imperceptible. Ordinary things, even atoms, are held together by electrical forces. While there is another set of forces within the atomic nucleus, the masses at that scale are so small that the effects of gravity would vanish.

Tobias Westphal, Hans Hepach, Jeremias Pfaff and Markus Aspelmeier, from the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna and the University of Vienna, describe in the journal, *Nature*, their sally into measuring the faintest effects of gravity between objects down to milligrams. Measuring gravitational forces between smaller masses could elucidate the role of gravity at the sub-nuclear distance scale, the authors say.

Our understanding of gravity, thanks to Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, is sophisticated, and seemingly exact. At the subatomic scale too, we have unparalleled precision. A bridge between the theory behind gravity and the understanding of other forces, however, has been elusive.

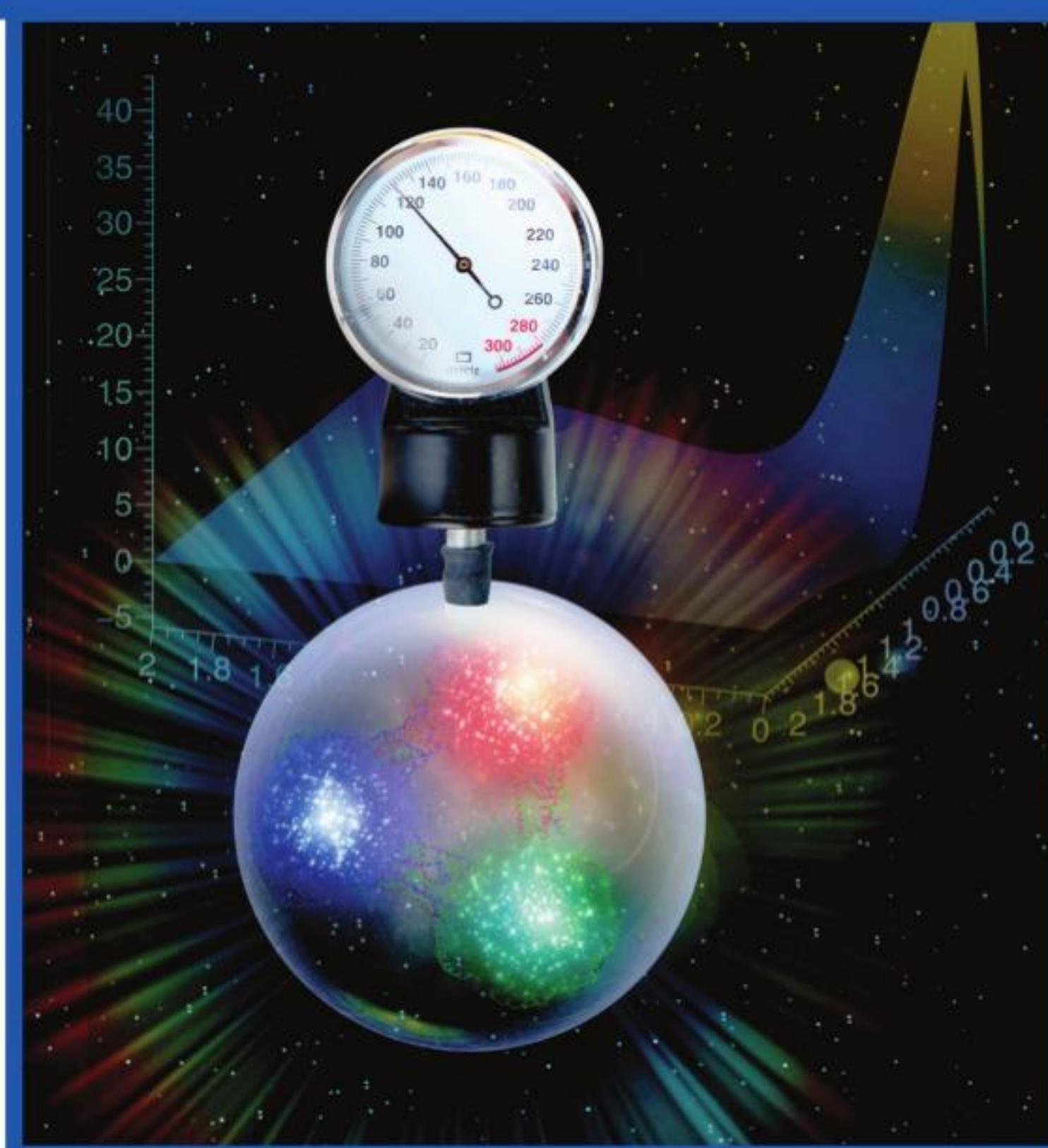
We are aware of the force of gravity because of our weight, which keeps us rooted to the ground, and because we see that things tend to fall earthward. It took the genius of Isaac Newton to connect gravity as the force, which kept heavenly bodies in their courses and to formalise a mathematical framework. The other force that the ancients knew, and we now understand, is the electrical force. The huge difference in the magnitude of the two forces, however, keeps them separate – gravity acts at the scale of the cosmos and it is irrelevant in the domains where electrical forces dominate.

When the structure of the atom was discovered, a question to answer was how positively charged protons could be packed within the atomic nucleus, as electrical forces should drive them apart. It led to the discovery of a new kind of a very strong, attractive force, that acted only when distances were very small, which is the case within the atomic nucleus. Once outside the nucleus, those forces fall to zero, and only electrical forces stay relevant.

Electrical and gravitational forces do not abruptly disappear, in this way. When the distance increases, they get weaker, but do not fall to zero. The electrical force is pretty strong too, but electric charges, the source of the electrical force, cannot accumulate. That is because electrical charges mutually repel. And then, they get neutralised by equal positive charges, which cannot be kept away for long.

Electrical effects are hence strong, but measurable only over distances of millimetres.

The case of gravitational forces is the opposite. The force is feeble and can hardly be made out between ordinary objects. But the cosmos does consist of very huge objects, like planets, suns and galaxies, and, despite the long dis-



tances, gravitational forces are powerful.

The comparison of how the mass of objects and the force of gravity varies over dimensions is instructive. As we know, the volume, and hence mass, of an object, say a sphere, increases according to the cube of its dimensions. This is to say that a sphere that is twice the size of another would weigh eight times as much. And one that is twice the size of the second sphere would weigh 64 times as much as the first sphere. The force of gravity, however, falls only according to the square of the distance. Thus, the force between objects would fall just to a fourth, if they are drawn twice as far apart, and by a factor of only 16 if the distance is doubled.

Over larger differences of size, say a million, the mass changes by a factor of 10^6 . But going the same million times further apart reduces the force of gravity only by a factor of 10^{12} . The force of gravity is still a million times stronger! The same thing applies the other way around. If the distance was reduced by a factor of a million, the force of gravity would get 10^{12} times stronger. But if the dimensions of the object were a million

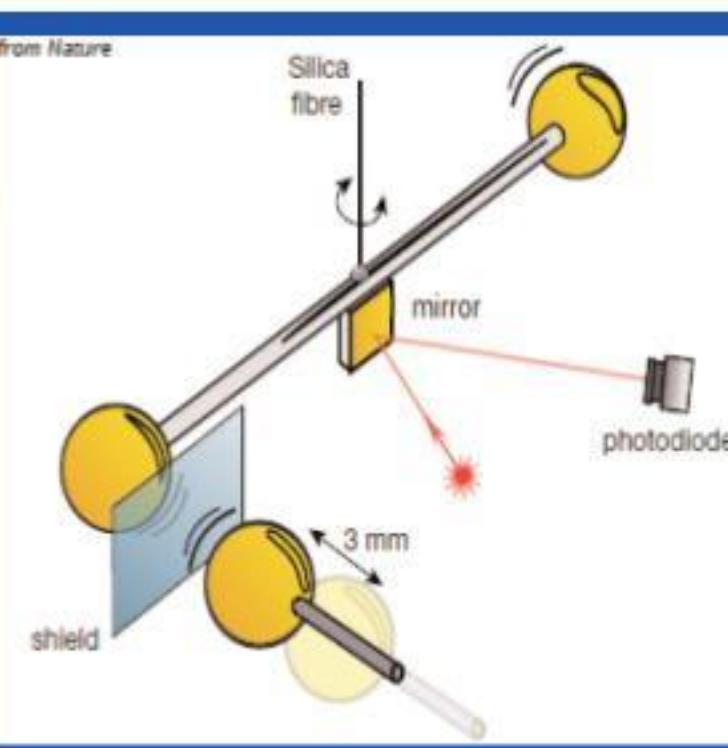
times less, the mass falls by a factor of 10^{18} . The net force is hence a million times weaker!

The force of gravity has hence been challenging to measure while using objects that it would be practical to handle. Following suggestions by scientists who had developed a sensitive method to measure weak electrical forces, Henry Cavendish, in 1798, set up an arrangement to detect the weak gravitational force that acts between objects at the everyday scale of masses.

Cavendish

The arrangement was of a pair of heavy balls of lead at the ends of a long baton, which was suspended from its middle by a thin fibre, like a silk thread. Next to the two balls, at the ends of the baton, were placed a pair of much larger lead balls, to attract the smaller balls by gravity. The force is feeble indeed, but the arrangement is so sensitive that the force causes a deflection – just a tiny deflection, balanced by the torsion of the silk thread.

The torsion balance can be calibrated using known forces, so that the angle through which



the balance deflects measures the force applied, and hence gravitational attraction that causes the deflection. Cavendish compared the force by which the balls were attracted with their weight, which is the force of attraction by the Earth. As the mass of the larger balls was known, Cavendish could get the mass of the Earth, and a mean density, or the mass per cm³, of 5.48 gm, which is close to the modern figure – 5.5153 gm.

Coming back to how gravity and the other forces known to us could be explained by a unified theory, the authors of the paper in *Nature* say that measuring how gravity behaves when dimensions get really small could help find answers. As a first step towards lesser dimensions, the group has adapted the Cavendish method with gold particles just one millimetre across, in place of the lead balls.

The particles are at the ends of a thin, 40 mm-long, glass capillary, suspended at its middle by a 35 mm-long, four micron-diameter silica thread. A similar particle of gold is placed next to one of the particles, and is moved back and forth, to provide a rhythmic acceleration to the test ball. That affects the pattern of oscillation of the arrangement, from which the feeble gravitational effect can be worked out.

An important requirement of the method, as of the Cavendish method, is to eliminate external disturbances. The arrangement was hence elaborately insulated from vibrations, seismic and acoustic, and conducted inside a vacuum chamber, to eliminate effects of molecules of air. The result of the trials was a value of the gravitational constant, the factor that connects the masses and the gravitational force, which was nine per cent off the best-known value. Given the uncertainties that are intrinsic, the paper says, this is a demonstration that we can measure gravitational effects of small objects to within 10 per cent.

As the sources of error are known, improvements could make it possible to study gravity at the sub-atomic scale, the paper says. If we understand how gravity behaves at this scale, it would set the course for explaining puzzling aspects of the cosmos, and gravity, the nature of dark matter, being one.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in



The antenna being set up

Tiny transmitters are attached to the birds

JULIAN GARCIA WALTHER

One morning in January, I found myself 30 feet up a tall metal pole, carrying 35 kilograms of aluminium antennas and thick weatherproofed cabling. From that vantage point, I could clearly see the entire Punta Banda Estuary in North-western Mexico. As I looked through my binoculars, I observed the estuary's sandy bar and extensive mudflats packed with thousands of migratory shorebirds frenetically pecking the mud for food.

In winter, more than one million shorebirds that breed in the Arctic will visit and move throughout the coastline of North-west Mexico. It's possible they are tracking rare superabundant seasonal resources like fish spawning events. Or maybe they are scouting for sites with better habitat to spend their non-breeding season. The truth is, researchers don't actually know. It has been incredibly hard to elucidate how birds use the region and what drives their movements in this vast network of coastal wetlands spanning 5,000 kilometres of coastline.

Tracking birds has always been a challenge. To make it easier, scientists have built a massive network of radio antenna devices called Motus stations across the US and Canada that can automatically track the movements of tagged birds. However, Motus stations – Motus means movement in Latin – are still missing in much of Latin America. It has resulted in large gaps in biologists' understanding of where migratory shorebirds go during their non-breeding season.

A biology doctoral student studying bird migration, I am collaborating with the non-profit Pronatura Noroeste. We have one goal – to expand the Motus network in North-west Mexico and unravel the mystery of where shorebirds are going during the winter.

How to track a bird

Much of my work is focused on red knots – stubby sandpipers that feed on muddy flats that are uncovered during low tide in many estuaries.

In the past, to learn how red knots move among wetlands meant walking through knee-deep mud with a scope, trying to find birds with colour-coded flags on their legs. I would then have to

get close enough to read the writing on the flags to determine who had attached the flag and where in the continent the bird had been seen before. That is not easy work. It requires large numbers of flagged birds and many skilled ecologists trying to find them, so you get very limited data in return for a lot of time and effort.

Motus stations make this job much easier, and with a Motus network in Mexico, ecologists like me will get much more data on the movements of these animals. The project involves two parts – attaching tiny radio transmitters to birds and building a network of stations to track them.

Motus stations work similarly to a cell phone tower. Researchers attach tiny transmitters weighing just 0.45 grams to animals and these transmitters emit a radio pulse every five seconds. Each station has multiple antennas pointing toward a site used by birds – like the mudflats at Punta Banda -- and is always listening for these radio signals.

Motus stations can pick up signals from tagged birds in a 20-km radius, 24/7. A small computer built into the Motus station can then record and send information to

BEFORE THEY TAKE FLIGHT

Here's an account of how the epic journeys of migratory birds are being tracked by a scientist in North-west Mexico

researchers about when animals arrive to the site, how long they stay and in which direction they are headed when they leave.

Building a network

The station at Punta Banda is the first and, so far, the only tower my team and I have erected. But the ultimate goal of our project is to deploy two dozen Motus stations in 15 coastal wetlands spanning the whole North-west coast of Mexico. When we are done, we will use these stations to track the movements of birds among these sites, as well as the more than 1,000 other sites with active stations across the world.

The Punta Banda Estuary is one of the key stopovers for red knots. To maximise our chances of detecting birds, we chose to build the station on top of an old 30-foot metal pole overlooking the whole estuary. After getting approval from the pole owner, my colleagues and I assembled the station components. Then I climbed the pole, hoisting multiple antennas with me, and pointed them in all directions over the estuary.

By the time red knots start arriving in the fall, after breeding in the Arctic, our team hopes to have built many more stations like this one across North-west Mexico, ready to detect passing birds.

Tagging birds

The stations alone can't detect these animals. The final step, which will happen in the coming months, is to catch birds and tag them. To do this, our team will set up a soft, spring-loaded net, called a whoosh net, in sandy areas where the red knots rest above the high-tide line. When birds walk past the net, the

crew leader will release the trigger, safely trapping the birds with the net.

Once we've successfully caught a bird, we will attach a transmitter to its back. Transmitters are solar-powered and very light -- less than one per cent of the bird's weight -- and they can thus provide many years of data without harming the birds.

Because younger birds may move differently than adults across the region, our team hopes to tag 130 red knots of different ages at other estuaries in North-west Mexico. The larger Motus project has already tagged more than 25,000 animals, so any other birds that come to northwest Mexico will also get picked up by our stations.

Filling important gaps in knowledge

Migratory shorebirds are among the most threatened bird groups. Their populations have plummeted by 37 per cent since 1970 owing to habitat loss, human disturbance and climate change. Without robust information on how birds use important sites like the ones we are working on in Mexico, it is hard to focus conservation actions when and where they are most needed. As our network of stations grows, the data they collect will help fill critical knowledge gaps.

For researchers like me, this data will allow us to understand how the movement of shorebirds might be disrupted as global threats such as sea level rise continue to affect the coastal wetlands they depend on. In turn, conservationists will be able to implement better and more effective on-the-ground actions to conserve species like red knots.

The writer is a PhD student in ornithology, University of South Carolina, US. This article first appeared on www.theconversation.com

PLUS POINTS

Think before discarding



The huge demand for face masks in the year since the coronavirus pandemic has swept the globe has resulted in enormous production of disposable masks, but it is now feared that not disposed properly, they pose a major threat to the natural world.

Recent studies estimate around the world, humans are now using a mind-boggling 129 billion face masks every month. Taking 31 days in a month that is an average usage of 2.8 million masks a minute, being used across the planet.

Researchers now warn the huge volume of masks, with their plastic composition, pose a growing environmental threat and are urging action to prevent it from becoming the next plastic problem.

Environmental toxicologist Elvis Genbo Xu from the University of Southern Denmark and professor Zhiyong Jason Ren, an expert in civil and environmental engineering at Princeton University, said, "Disposable masks are plastic products, that cannot be readily biodegraded but may fragment into smaller plastic particles, namely micro- and nanoplastics that spread widely in ecosystems."

"The enormous production of disposable masks is on a similar scale as plastic bottles, which is estimated to be 43 billion per month."

But they said unlike plastic bottles, of which approximately 25 per cent are recycled, there is no official guidance on mask recycling, making them more likely to be disposed of in inappropriate ways, the researchers said.

If not disposed of for recycling, like other plastic waste, disposable masks can end up in the environment, freshwater systems, and oceans, where weathering can generate a large number of micro-sized particles (smaller than five mm) in a matter of weeks and



further fragment into nanoplastics (smaller than one micrometre).

Last summer marine biologists warned that improper disposal of pandemic-related waste meant there could soon be "more masks than jellyfish" in the Mediterranean Sea.

French politician Eric Pauget, who represents the department of Alpes-Maritimes, said, "The friable polypropylene nanoparticles making up these masks which protect humans, risk lastingly affecting our ecosystems and their biodiversity."

The scientists now warn that the composition of the masks means they breakdown into dangerous micro-sized particles very quickly.

"When breaking down in the environment, the mask may release more micro-sized plastics, easier and faster than bulk plastics like plastic bags," they said.

The researchers stressed they do not know exactly how masks contribute to the large number of plastic particles detected in the environment – simply because no data on mask degradation in nature exists.

"But we know that, like other plastic debris, disposable masks may also accumulate and release harmful chemical and biological substances, such as bisphenol A, heavy metals, as well as pathogenic micro-organisms," said Genbo Xu, "These may pose indirect adverse impacts on plants, animals and humans."

The researchers have urged authorities to set up "mask-only" trash cans for collection and disposal, and said other means of reducing the impact of the masks could be for more people to use reusable cotton masks, developing biodegradable disposable masks, and implementing standardised waste management for disposing of masks.

The research is published in *Frontiers of Environmental Science & Engineering*.

—THE INDEPENDENT



'SO BE IT'

Ravichandran Ashwin (photo, left) says questions about his comeback to white-ball cricket are ridiculous as he is at peace with himself. He has not played an international limited-overs match since July 2017. "Given an opportunity... I would make a game-breaking performance... because of the space I find myself in," says he.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Proteas win: At Raipur on Monday, South Africa legends entered the semi-finals of the Road Safety World T20 Series, drubbing Bangladesh by 10 wickets. Andrew Puttick and Morne van Wyk hit unbeaten half-centuries as the Proteas chased down 161.

Best pundit: Michael Holding, who had supported of the Black Lives Matter movement, has been named the Best Pundit for the British Sports Journalism Award 2020. He delivered a powerful message against racism during last year's England-West Indies series.

Fifth match: The series already lost, India's women cricketers, will have only their pride at stake when they clash with South Africa in the fifth and final One-Day International on Wednesday. The South African women have already clinched the series 3-1.

Real & Ronaldo: Zinedine Zidane opened the door to Cristiano Ronaldo returning to Real Madrid on Monday, admitting a comeback is "possible" for the striker. Asked if there is any truth to rumours Ronaldo could rejoin Madrid, Zidane said: "It's possible, it's possible."

Pedri included: Young Barcelona playmaker Pedri was called up for Spain's senior national team for the first time. He was included in a 24-man list announced by coach Luis Enrique for World Cup qualifying matches against Greece, Georgia and Kosovo, a mixed bag.

Messi shines: Lionel Messi scored twice as he tied Xavi Hernández's record of most appearances for Barcelona, putting them within four points of the Spanish league lead after beating last-placed Huesca 4-1. It's incredible," Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman said.

Narrow win: Jota scored the winner against his former club as Liverpool beat Wolverhampton 1-0 in an English Premier League match that ended with Wolves goalkeeper Rui Patrício being carried off with a head injury. Patrício was said to be all right.

Gasquet milestone: Richard Gasquet defeated Marco Cecchinato 6-4, 6-2 in the first round of the Dubai Championships for his 550th career victory. He saved the only break point he faced, converting three of his own to become the sixth active player to reach the 550 mark.

Torch relay: The Tokyo Olympics torch relay will kick off as scheduled in north-eastern Japan's Fukushima prefecture on 25 March, organisers said on Monday. A grand start of the torch relay is to be held at the J-Village National Training Centre in Fukushima.

Sreeshankar shines: Long jumper Muri Sreeshankar on Tuesday qualified for the Tokyo Olympics by bettering his own national record with a leap of 8.26m on the second day of the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships. The Olympics qualification mark in men's long jump event is 8.22m.

Federation Cup: National record holder Dutee Chand was beaten to second place by S Dhanalakshmi, while Hima Das was disqualified after a false start in a much-anticipated women's 100m sprint final in the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships on Tuesday.

Match-fixing ban: The ICC on Tuesday slapped eight-year bans on United Arab Emirates (UAE) cricketers Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt for their attempted role in trying to fix matches in the T20 World Cup qualifier in 2019. The bans are backdated to October 16, 2019.

Kohli plays blinder as India finish on 156/6

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD, 16 MARCH

Skipper Virat Kohli's magnificence overshadowed an otherwise ordinary batting performance as India recovered from a difficult situation to manage a decent 156 for 6 against England in the third T20 International here on Tuesday.

Kohli played a captain's knock once again, following the unbeaten and match-winning 73 he made in the second T20I, as wickets around him kept falling.

Skipper Kohli (77 not out, 46 balls) picked opposition's hostile fast bowler Mark Wood (3/31 in 4 overs) for some special treatment in the 18th over with some "gourmet hitting" that changed the course of the innings after England put India under the pump at 86 for 5.

Wood's thunderbolts at 90 plus miles per hour found the younger Indian batsmen in considerable discomfort.

Woods didn't do anything extra but bowled fast and straight, mixing the well disguised short pitched stuff to get them into a tangle.

Saheb Kohli, other Indian youngsters found it difficult to put bat to ball as pace and bounce off the pitch worked wonders for English speed merchants.

The Indian skipper with his near perfect technique fought fire with fire, playing those pull shots and the lofted hit, shuffling towards leg stump and making room for himself.

He was lucky when his mistimed flick to a short ball fetched him a six but then the second flick was perfectly dispatched to the longest corner for a maximum.

But the shot of the night was a straight six off Wood, which made the bowler take his time to finish the over. Not to forget the shape which he was in while executing a ramp shot off Jofra Archer.

The partnership with Hardik Pandya (17 off 15 balls) fetched 70 off 5.3 overs but it was all about Kohli for the hosts looked in complete disarray.

At the time of going to print England were 4/1. England need 110 runs in 89 balls with a required RR of 7.41. The current RR at the time was 9.09

India would have been in a poor position had they not managed quick runs in the slog overs. They made 69 in the last five overs with majority of those runs coming off Kohli's bat.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA INNINGS	
R Sharma	c Archer b Wood 15
KL Rahul	b Wood 0
I Kishan	c Buttler b Jordan 4
Virat Kohli	c not out 77
R Pant	run out (Buttler/Curran) 25
Shreyas Iyer	c Malan b Wood 9
H Pandya	c Archer b Jordan 17
Extras	(0, 1, lb 5, w 3) 9
TOTAL:	(20 Ov, RR: 7.80) 156
BOWLING:	A Rashid 4; 0, 26.0
J Archer	4, 0, 32.0
M Wood	2, 0, 31.3
C Jordan	4, 1, 35.2
B Stokes	2, 0, 12.0
S Curran	2, 0, 14.0

Azam unhappy with team selection for Africa tour

DAWN/ANN
KARACHI, 16 MARCH

sure and disappointment to his intimates, the sources said.

Babar reportedly made contacts with the chief selector, conveying his reservations. The sources said Babar might also speak to Pakistan Cricket Board bigwigs on the matter in the next few days.

"Azam feels there are way too many changes in the Twenty20

squad and the players who didn't get enough chances to prove themselves against South Africa at home should not have been dropped. He is not happy with the axing of Kamran Ghulam, who has scored the most runs in the current domestic season.

Babar also thinks the inclusion of Shahnawaz Dhani is quite premature as he has played in just one domestic season so far. He could be okay for the T20 squad but not the Test side. He thinks the Pakistan cap should not be given so easily," the sources said.

They also revealed Babar had felt seven changes in the T20 squad meant quite a lot and that players selected on the basis of their performances in the Pakistan Super League needed more time to prove themselves to make the national team. "Babar reportedly was keen on the selection of talented players such as Ammad Butt, Aamer Yameen and Iftikhar Ahmad but all of them were ignored by Wasim and Co in the final selection,"

said the sources. "Besides, the exclusion of Imdad Wasim has also left Babar thoroughly disappointed," they said. "He wanted Imdad in the T20 squad but selectors replaced him with Mohammad Nawaz in all three formats while talented spinner Zahid Mahmood was dropped from the T20 squad despite his fine performance against South Africa in home series."

Azam was in favour of Shan Masood's selection for the Zimbabwe Test series after failure of the openers Imran Butt and Abid Ali in the home series against South Africa. The selectors chose to ignore him on the basis of his bad tour of New Zealand.

Arrows win

KOLKATA, 16 MARCH

The All India Football Federation's (AIFF) developmental side, Indian Arrows showed great determination to notch up a thrilling 2-1 win over Aizawl FC in an I-League match here on Tuesday.

Parthib Gogoi's (11th) early strike was cancelled out by a wonder goal from Malsawmluanga (22nd), but the Arrows showcased their never-say-die attitude as Lalchhanhima Sailo's strike in the 36th minute proved to be the difference between the two sides.

Goalkeeper Syed Zahid Hussain Bukhari, in inspired form, made some crucial saves in the second half to help maintaining their lead. PTI

Revised ranking system makes no sense: Zverev

AGENCIES
LOS ANGELES, 16 MARCH

US Open runner-up Alexander Zverev (in photo) says it is "absurd" he remains behind Roger Federer under the Association of Tennis Professionals Tour's revised rankings system during the Covid-19 pandemic, given that the Swiss was out injured for more than a year.

"The ATP, which runs the men's tour, froze the rankings last year during the five-month shutdown of professional tournaments with countries imposing lockdown and sealing borders to check the spread of the coronavirus. When the tour restarted in August a revised system that we have now is a little bit absurd."

Zverev, who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

catering the rankings, which determine a player's ability to enter events and receive seedings.

"The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The rankings traditionally operate on a "Best 18" results basis over 52 weeks but the system was changed to cover a 22-month period from March 2019 through December 2020 to allow players flexibility to skip events amid the pandemic.

Reuter

calculated the rankings, which determine a player's ability to enter events and receive seedings.

"The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,

who is ranked seventh, told reporters. "I should be top-four, top-five in the world right now in the normal ranking system. But the ranking system that we have now is a little bit

absurd."

The ranking doesn't really matter, especially with the system that we have now," Zverev,