



Pages 12 | ₹5/LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

The Sunday Statesman



NEW DELHI
OLYMPICS



A PALACE BLIGHTED
BY SCANDAL



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

DEMOCRATS CALL
ON CUOMO TO QUIT



TIME FOR INDIANS
TO GET EVEN
WITH ENGLAND

P6

P7

P10

P12

WEATHER

Mainly clear sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 32 and 15 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 84%	Min: 43%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 31.2°C (+2)	Min: 15.2°C (0)
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
06:31 hrs	18:29 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
07:44 hrs	19:22 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports Kiren Rijiju attends the inaugural event of 100 days countdown for 'International Day of Yoga 2021' in New Delhi on Saturday.

PB

Dehradun-bound Shatabdi bogie catches fire: One bogie of Dehradun-bound Shatabdi Express caught fire on Saturday but no casualty was reported, police said. The train's bogie caught fire near Kasro railway station when it was coming from Delhi, Uttarakhand police chief Ashok Kumar said, adding no one, however, was injured in the incident. Kumar said all passengers were evacuated from the affected coach which was separated from the train. Railway officials in New Delhi said the fire broke out in coach C5 of the train due to a short circuit. (P4)

NCR air quality panel shuts down: The Central government's Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas has been shut down within five months of its constitution. The commission, which was established by the Centre in October last year, has shut down as the ordinance under which it was set up has lapsed. Union Environment Secretary R P Gupta said since the ordinance was not introduced in Parliament within six weeks of its constitution, it has lapsed.

Autonomy violated,
pronounced guilty
by TRP-seeking
channels: Disha Ravi

NEW DELHI, 13 JANUARY

Climate activist Disha Ravi, arrested last month by Delhi Police in connection with the farmer protest toolkit case, on Saturday issued a statement addressing her arrest, saying that her autonomy was violated and she was pronounced guilty by TRP-seeking channels.

Charged with sedition for her alleged role in the creation of an online "toolkit" that police said contained action plans used to foment violence during the farmers' protest, Ms Ravi was picked up on the night of 13 February from her Bengaluru home, triggering an international outcry about the crackdown on dissent in India.

She was granted bail after ten days in police custody by a court which slammed police for their scanty and sketchy evidence.

In a statement published on social media, Disha Ravi recalled how she was not provided with a lawyer in the first hearing in court and sent to police custody.

"As I stood in that courtroom, desperately searching for my lawyers, I came to terms with the fact that I would have to defend myself. I had no idea whether there was legal assistance available... Before I knew it, I was sent to 5 days in police custody," she said.

"It's no surprise that in the days that followed, my autonomy was violated; my photographs were splashed all over the news; my actions were pronounced guilty - not in the court of law, but on flat screens by seekers of TRPs [Television Ratings Points]. I sat there, unaware of the many abstractions made of me in order to satiate their idea of me," she said. SNS

POLL BOUND



TMC supporters during party candidate for Kasba Assembly constituency Javed Ahmed Khan's election campaign for the upcoming state Assembly polls, in Kolkata, on Saturday.

AGENCIES

**SC: SECs have to be
independent persons**

SNS & PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

of Article 243K by appointing only independent persons to this high constitutional office". A three-judge bench, headed by Justice R F Nariman, issued the direction to all states and Union territories while taking recourse of its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution that empowers it to pass any order in the interest of justice.

The directions were issued that the constitutional mandate of an independent State Election Commission to conduct elections is "strictly followed in the future", said the bench. The observations and directions were given on a batch of pleas relating to the urban local body polls in Goa.

DMK eyes comeback in TN with a shower of doles

SNS & PTI
CHENNAI, 13 MARCH

The main Opposition DMK in Tamil Nadu on Saturday made a whopping 500 plus promises in its manifesto for the 6 April Assembly elections which includes a shower of doles like Rs 4,000 relief to Covid-19 hit rice ration card holders.

The lines of Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, which passed laws to reserve 75 per cent jobs for locals, DMK president M K Stalin assured legislation to earmark 75 per cent of jobs in industrial houses for locals and promised to press for quota in private sector. Crop and jewel loans (upto 5 sovereigns) of small and marginal farmers in cooperative banks, pending loans of Women Self Help

Groups in co-op institutions and educational loans of college students below the age of 30 would be waived, he said, releasing his party's manifesto at the party headquarters.

jobs shall be increased from 30 to 40 per cent, he said.

Free computer tablets with data card for students, milk to school students in the mornings to provide nutritional support and distribution of napkins free of cost to girl pupils of schools and colleges were some of the other promises.

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If we work together, I strongly believe TMC will win all six seats in the district

ARPITA GHOSH, LEADER, TRINAMUL CONGRESS

ON HER BID TO KEEP THE PARTY IN SOUTH DINAJPUR INTACT BEFORE THE WB ELECTIONS

Delhi again sees a spike of over 400 new virus cases

Chief Minister Kejriwal hands over ₹ 1 crore compensation to the family of a deceased 'corona warrior'

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

Delhi today recorded 419 new coronavirus infections, crossing the 400-mark for the third consecutive day, even as its Covid positivity rate stood at 0.56 per cent, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin.

The city's Covid toll climbed to 10,939 with 3 more fatalities, the health bulletin said.

The national capital had yesterday recorded 431 Covid cases - the highest in more than two months - and 2 deaths while the positivity rate was 0.60 per cent. It had logged 409 cases on 11 March.

Delhi had recorded 370 Covid cases and 3 deaths on 10 March and 320 cases and 4 deaths on 9 March.

On 7 and 8 March, 286 and 239 coronavirus cases, respectively, were logged in the national capital. The city had

registered 321 coronavirus cases and 1 death on 6 March, and 312 cases and 1 fatality on 5 March.

A total of 585 Covid cases were reported in Delhi on 1 January and 384 cases on 4 January. The daily coronavirus count had dropped to 306 on 11 January and had risen again to 386 on 12 January, according to official figures.

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

With today's fresh coronavirus cases - detected out of 74,326 tests including 47,120 RT-PCR tests and 27,206 rapid antigen tests - Delhi's Covid tally rose to 6,43,289, the bulletin said.

The number of active cases rose to 2,207 from yesterday's 2,093. The number of people under home isolation increased to 1,204 from yesterday's 1,097, the bulletin

stated. Over the last 24 hours 302 Covid patients recovered in the national capital, which took its cumulative recoveries to over 6.30 lakh so far.

At a felicitation function, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain awarded 80 "corona

warriors" of Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital and Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital for their undeterred efforts and spirit in combating the Covid pandemic.

Jain had yesterday told reporters that the figures of over

400 cases per day in Delhi suddenly were "not alarming".

He said Delhi's Covid positivity rate was still less than one per cent, "much lower" compared to the figures in Maharashtra and Kerala. He also asserted that the Delhi government was on "full vigil" to tackle the Covid pandemic.

Meanwhile, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal today met the family members of a civic hospital's lab technician who died due to Covid, and offered them a compensation of Rs 1 crore, officials said.

The CM met the mother, wife and children of Rakesh Jain, who was working at Hindu Rao Hospital in North Delhi.

"While working on Covid duty, Jain contracted the Covid infection. He was shifted to Metro Hospital, but later he lost his life due to Covid. He was martyred but till his last breath, he served the citizens of Delhi. The Delhi government

salutes such frontline workers who have served relentlessly the citizens of Delhi," Kejriwal reportedly said.

"Today, on behalf of the Delhi government, I have handed over a cheque of Rs 1 crore to the family members of Rakesh Jain," he said. "There is no compensation for anyone's life, but I am hopeful that this financial assistance will provide some ease to his family."

Many doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers and frontline workers, have got the coronavirus infection in Delhi over the past one year, and a number of them have also died.

"His (Jain's) elder son is looking for a job. The Delhi government will also provide a job to his son. I want to assure the family of Rakesh Jain that the Delhi government will stand beside them in the future also, whenever they need any help," Kejriwal said.



JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS QUEST

LEGAL NOTICES

COURT NOTICE
IN THE COURT OF
SH. JITENDER KUMAR
Collector-cum-S.D.M.
Gurugram
NDOH : 25-03-2021
Haryana State Industrial
Institution and Development
Corporation (HSIIDC) IMT
Manesar, Gurugram through
its authorized person

Versus
1. M/s. Schiffries India Pvt.
Ltd, Plot No. 59, Sector-4, IMT
Manesar, Gurugram through
its Proprietor/Director,

2nd Address
2. M/s. Schiffries India Pvt.
Ltd, Regd. Office L-1-72A,
Kalkaji, New Delhi-110019
through its Proprietor/Direc-

-tor

To
1. M/s. International Techno
Tex Pvt. Ltd, Mani Prabha
Farm House, Sector-D-4, Vas-
ant Kunj, New Delhi-110078
through its Proprietor/Direc-

tor

2nd Address
2. M/s. International Techno
Tex Pvt. Ltd, Plot No. 21, Sec-
tor 4, Phase-1, IMT Manesar,
Gurugram through its Proprie-
tor/Director Umesh Kumar

Jain.
2nd Address
2. M/s. Lumax Automotive
Systems Limited, 63-64, Gokhal
Market, Delhi-110054 through
its Proprietor/Director Umesh
Kumar Jain.

To
1. M/s. Lumax Automotive
Systems Limited, Plot No. 46,
Sector-3, IMT Manesar, Guru-
gram through its Proprie-
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PETITION U/S 4 & 7 OF
HARYANA PUBLIC PREMISES
& LAND (EViction & RENT
RECOVERY) ACT, 1972.

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BJP has to win Bengal to expand ideological footprint, secure eastern borders...

WEST BENGAL BJP CHIEF DILIP GHOSH
AHEAD OF THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

The Sunday Statesman
NEW DELHI, 14 MARCH 2021

03

Centre clears ₹740 cr to develop Central varsity's campuses in HP: Thakur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 13 MARCH

The Union Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Anurag Thakur on Saturday said the Ministry of Finance has approved a grant of Rs 740.79 crore to develop a Central University's campuses in Dehra and Dharamshala in Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh.

The Central University, announced by the then UPA government in 2007, has been functioning with a temporary campus near Dharamshala in the midst of tug of war between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress over its location since 2010. However, BJP leader Anurag Thakur, who represents Hamirpur Parliamentary constituency (Himachal Pradesh) which includes the Dehra Assembly segment of Kangra, had pushed the case to have a campus in Dehra over the



years. So finally, a decision was taken to have the campus at two locations, Dharamshala and Dehra.

Thakur hailed Prime Minister Modi for the grant of Rs 740.79 crore for the Central University. He said the Finance Ministry has approved Rs

512.37 crore as non recurring expenditure and Rs 210.55 crore as recurring expenditure for the Central University, which also includes Rs 17.87 crore expenditure incurred till 2019-20.

"We can see how the double engine of central and state governments in the education sector is pushing Himachal Pradesh to a new frontier to meet the demands of the 4th industrial revolution," he said.

Thakur said the approval of grants for the Central University will boost the education sector in Himachal Pradesh.

"In fact students will also benefit from the National Education Policy we announced recently, which is expanding the education sector and is also empowering India's youth to become future ready," he said.

He said the aim of the Modi government is to make India the world's largest skilled workforce.

Air'moderate'in Noida, Faridabad; 'poor'in Ghaziabad, Gurgaon

PTI
NOIDA, 13 MARCH

The air quality was recorded in the "moderate" category in Noida and Faridabad while it was "poor" in Greater Noida, Ghaziabad and Gurgaon, according to data issued by a government agency on Saturday.

Pollutants PM 2.5 and PM 10 also remained high in the air of the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

The average 24-hour AQI at 4pm on Saturday was 244 in Ghaziabad, 229 in Greater Noida, 167 in Noida, 145 in Faridabad and 217 in Gurgaon, according to CPCB's Sameer app.

On Friday it was 263 in Ghaziabad, 240 in Greater Noida, 199 in Noida, 243 in Faridabad and 240 in Gurgaon.

The CPCB states that an AQI in the "poor" category may lead to breathing discomfort to most people on prolonged exposure, while an air quality in the "moderate" zone may cause breathing discomfort to the people with lungs, asthma and heart diseases.

The AQI for each city is based on the average value of all monitoring stations there. Ghaziabad, Gurgaon and Noida have four such stations while Greater Noida and Faridabad have two stations each, according to the app.

HP to hold elections for 4 MCs, 6 Nagar Panchayats on 7 April

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 13 MARCH

The Himachal Pradesh State Election Commission on Saturday announced that the elections for four Municipal Corporations (MCs) - including Dharamshala, Mandi, Palampur and Solan MCs - and six new Nagar Panchayats of the state will be held on 7 April.

HP State Election Commission secretary Surjeet Singh Rathore issued a notification in this regard and said the voting for four MCs

and six Nagar Panchayat polls will be held on 7 April from 8 am to 4 pm.

The counting of votes will take place on the same day immediately after the polling for MCs and Nagar Panchayats ends, he added.

"The process of filing nominations for the municipal bodies will start on 22 March and end on 24 March.

The scrutiny of nomination papers will be done on 25 March and candidates can withdraw their nominations by 27 March," he said.

Rathore added with announcement of election schedule by the State Election Commission, the Model Code of Conduct had come into effect in areas of these four MCs and 6 Nagar Panchayats.

The Model of Conduct will be in force till the completion of election process, he added.

Of the four MCs, Solan, Mandi and Palampur were upgraded to Municipal Corporations from Municipal Councils last year while Dharamshala MC was formed in 2015.

The six Nagar Panchayats for which elections will be held include Chirgaon and Nerwa in Shimla district, Ani and Nirmand in Kullu, Kandaghat in Solan and Amb in Una district. They were also created by the state government last year along with 3 MCs.

The Municipal Corporations elections in Himachal Pradesh will be fought on party symbols this time and a Bill in this regard had already been passed in the state Assembly in the ongoing Budget session.

₹700 cr bogus GST billing scam busted in Punjab

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 MARCH

The investigation wing of Punjab state good and services tax (SGST) on Saturday arrested five persons for creating and operating a bogus billing network across various states including Punjab, Delhi and Haryana and availing and passing on fraudulent input tax credit (ITC) of over Rs 122 Crore to various firms without due payment of tax to the ITC.

An authorisation for arrest of seven persons was issued by commissioner state tax, Niltan S. Avhad, under section 69 of the GST Act for violation of section 132 (1)(a), (b) & (c).

Search and seizure operations were conducted at multiple locations in Khanna town by the teams of the department, including at houses of the accused in order to gather evidence.

The modus operandi involved creating firms in states outside and within Punjab dealing in copper scrap and hosiery items and thereafter passing the same to various beneficiary firms

help of some other accomplices some of whom have also been arrested.

During search operations incriminating documents related to various firms and mobile phones used for sharing fake invoices and e-way bills generated were seized, an official spokesperson said.

The total bogus billing by the network is likely to be more than Rs 700 Crore while ITC created or availed and tax evaded is more than Rs 122 Crore. Evidence was also gathered about various beneficiaries of the bogus network and other accomplices involved, the spokesperson added.

Five of the seven accused were arrested today for violation of Section 132 of the GST Act by a team led by assistant commissioner, mobile wing Patiala. The accused were produced before the duty magistrate and were remanded to judicial custody for 14 days. The persons arrested are Vinod Kumar, Maninder Sharma, Sandeep Singh, Amarinder Singh and Sunny Mehta. All the arrested persons belong to Khanna town of Ludhiana district.



in the state of Punjab. The ITC created through bogus firms was used to support the local movement of goods of various traders.

Department had got alerted about the network after a vehicle carrying copper scrap was detained by mobile wing Jalandhar last year and investigation had revealed that the goods had been procured locally while as e-way and invoice were generated from some other firm.

Detailed investigation revealed a network of 44 firms spread across states that was being used to create the bogus ITC for setting off the tax liability arising out of purchases made from local unregistered dealers. On being confronted with the evidence, the main kingpin accepted that he was operating the network with the

help of some other accomplices some of whom have also been arrested.

During search operations incriminating documents related to various firms and mobile phones used for sharing fake invoices and e-way bills generated were seized, an official spokesperson said.

The total bogus billing by the network is likely to be more than Rs 700 Crore while ITC created or availed and tax evaded is more than Rs 122 Crore. Evidence was also gathered about various beneficiaries of the bogus network and other accomplices involved, the spokesperson added.

Five of the seven accused were arrested today for violation of Section 132 of the GST Act by a team led by assistant commissioner, mobile wing Patiala. The accused were produced before the duty magistrate and were remanded to judicial custody for 14 days. The persons arrested are Vinod Kumar, Maninder Sharma, Sandeep Singh, Amarinder Singh and Sunny Mehta. All the arrested persons belong to Khanna town of Ludhiana district.

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Commuters travel in an auto-rickshaw as an airplane approaches for landing at an airport in Ahmedabad, on Saturday.

AGENCIES

AC fly terminal in B'luru: The country's first centralised air-conditioned railway terminal in Bengaluru would be operational soon, Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday. Built at an estimated cost of Rs 314 crore, the station building is of 4,200 sq metre covered area to cater to daily footfalls of 50,000. It has a fully air-conditioned entrance lobby and a well-marked parking space for four-wheelers and two-wheelers.

PTI

Covid-19 +ve after vaccination: A senior doctor of Bhopal Gandhi Medical College has contracted Covid-19 despite having received the two doses of vaccine. Sources said, Dr Vandana Sharma's antigen test report came positive two days ago. She has received the two doses of the Covishield. She took the first dose on 16 January and second dose on 1 March. She tested positive on 11 March.

SNS

Suvendu Adhikari declares net worth of over ₹ 80 lakh

KOLKATA, 13 MARCH

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikary, who is pitted against his mentor West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at Nandigram in the coming state election, has declared net worth of over Rs 80 lakh.

As per the 50-year-old leader's affidavit to the Election Commission, his net worth is Rs 80,66,749.32.

His movable assets are worth Rs 59,31,647.32 while his bank balance is Rs 46,15,513.32, including Rs 41,823 in his election expenditure account.

His income in 2019-20 was Rs 1,115,715.00 and his cash in hand is Rs 50,00,00, as per his affidavit.

Adhikary also has National Saving Certificate (NSC) deposit of Rs 5,45,000 and insurance of Rs 7,71,165.

Adhikary has immovable assets including plots of land worth Rs 46,21,102, it said.

In his affidavit the BJP leader has declared that he has criminal cases pending against him.

He also claimed that he is a post graduate from Rabindra Bharati University and a resident of Nandigram constituency.

'SC left with one woman judge is deeply worrying'

Justice Indu Malhotra retired as a judge from Supreme Court on Saturday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH



The Supreme Court having left with only one woman judge is "deeply worrying" and must promptly receive serious introspection, apex court judge, Justice DY Chandrachud, said on Saturday.

Justice Chandrachud was speaking at a farewell ceremony organised by the Supreme Court Young Lawyers Forum to honour Justice Indu Malhotra, who was the first woman lawyer to be appointed directly as a judge of the Supreme Court, retires from the apex court on Saturday.

Justice Malhotra's retirement means that the SC now has only one female judge on the Bench. As an institution,

I find that this is a deeply worrying fact and must promptly receive serious introspection," Justice Chandrachud said. He said that "as an institution whose decision shape and impact lives of everyday Indian, we must do better".

"We must ensure the diversity of our country find reflection in making up of our court. Intrinsically having a more diverse judiciary is an end, a goal in itself and worth pursuing in its own sake.

"Instrumentally, having a more diverse judiciary,

ensured diversity of perspectives is fairly considered, instills high degree of public confidence," he said.

He said that it was required that stories such as Justice Malhotra become more common place.

"As members of legal fraternity we do our bit to ensure that it doesn't remain as hard as it was for Justice Malhotra for women to climb upper echelons of our profession," he said.

Justice Malhotra said that for a lawyer it was important to conduct yourself with high degree of professionalism.

"You must be properly attired, professionally at all times and be punctual in your engagements. One issue I flagged when I was called by women lawyers to Bar room

after becoming a judge, I said please don't wear fashionable clothes, which you must keep for the evening and not while you are at work."

In her farewell speech, she said that the verdict delivered by the apex court decriminalising consensual gay sex was the "most moving moment" as the emotions that swept the courtroom was quite overwhelming.

Justice Malhotra, who took office on April 27, 2018, penned several important verdicts, including her dissenting judgement in the historic Sabarimala Temple case in which she had said judicial review of religious practices should not be done as courts cannot impose their morality or rationality on the form of worship of a deity.

The incident created panic among the passengers and

they pulled the chain to stop the train. Railway staff, forest, police, local administration and fire brigade staff rushed to the site. Five fire tenders were used to extinguish the fire. Kunso's forest ranger Rajendra Nautil said, "Forest staff helped the police and railway staff in shifting the passengers and their luggage in other bogies."

The railways issued helpline numbers, arranged ambulances and buses for ferrying unharmed passengers to Dehradun.

Due to the fire incident, the departure timing of Dehradun-Kathgodam and Dehradun-Subedarganj has been rescheduled.

The Kansro railway station, which otherwise remains deserted, was hub of high activity on Saturday. Police, local administration, fire brigade staff rushed to the site.

The passengers consider themselves lucky as all escaped unharmed.

Peace-march in troubled Maoist hotbed Bastar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
RAIPUR, 13 MARCH

The march was flagged off by tribal leader and ex union minister Arvind Netam

dominantly tribal state of Chhattisgarh in forested central India on 23 March.

Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Gopal Gandhi has agreed to preside over the final event, Choudhary whom both sides of ideological divide view with 'suspicion', said.

The march was flagged off by veteran tribal leader and former union minister Arvind Netam on Friday from the Maoist pocket-borough of Narayanpur which serves as the nerve centre of Abhujmaad. The march is slated to reach Raipur, the capital city of once impoverished pre-

prosperity where victims from both sides will meet for the first time.

Shubhranshu said that 92 people had advocated in a phone based opinion poll held in October 2020 that the Maoist problem in Central India should be resolved through the dialogue. The 222 km long peace march, which will traverse through several Maoist bastions has been organised to press for more dialogue than the use of bullets, he added.

The march was set out on 12th March on the same day when Mahatma Gandhi had undertaken Dandi March in Gujarat to protest a tax proposal on sea-salt by the then

British government in India.

Gandhi broke Salt law at the end of Dandi March whereas, the pedestrians in this march will request both sides to start dialogues to resolve the problem. Dropping a hint that government often do not keep its word, Shubhranshu said that marchers will request the government to follow the constitution and keep its promises.

The current Congress Govt in Chhattisgarh had promised to initiate serious dialogue their election manifesto promised in 2018 to do serious efforts to start dialogue to solve the Naxal menace, however not much has been done in this direction, he alleged.

LOCKING HORNS



Blackbuck lock horns inside an enclosure at Mini Zoo, in Bathinda on Saturday.

AGENCIES

Aide of coal scam accused in CID custody

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DURGAPUR, 13 MARCH

The West Bengal CID on Saturday made the first arrest in the illegal coal mining scam from Andal and has taken him into its custody for further investigations.

The CID started a probe in February and inspected various places in the Kajora area of Andal police station.

The CID officials talked to locals and ECL officials also.

It is now suspected that the CID will further arrest the members of the racket after taking the accused into their custody after grilling.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed by the CID to investigate the alleged biggest illegal coal mining scam in recent decades.

The CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are also probing the illegal coal mining scam in the Raniganj Coalfield area.

Though the CBI started a probe in November last year, it is yet to arrest anybody in that case so far. The CID however, started a probe much later led by DIG, Ajay Thakur.

The Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) has lodged written complaints with the Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate alleging illegal coal theft in areas under

Akhilesh, SP workers booked over alleged assault on scribes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LUCKNOW, 13 MARCH

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and 20 party workers have been booked in connection with an alleged assault on some journalists in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district, police said on Saturday.

A counter-FIR has been also lodged against the journalists by Samajwadi Party district president Jaiveer Yadav.

On the basis of a complaint by a journalist, an FIR was registered at Pakhwara police station late on Friday night under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), officials said.

According to the complainant, Yadav, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister, was irked by a few personal questions posed by some journalists during an interaction with him at a hotel on 11 March after a press conference.

Following this, Yadav allegedly instigated his security guards and aides to attack the journalists, the FIR

claimed. It also alleged that the security guards and over 20 SP workers beat up the journalists causing grievous injuries.

The journalists in question claimed, "We asked many questions about Azam Khan and since Yadav couldn't answer those properly he got irritated and ordered his security guards to force the journalists out. During the scuffle, we got injured."

Superintendent of Police Amit Anand said, TV and CCTV footage would be examined during the probe into the case. It was initially reported that a journalist

had suffered injuries allegedly after being pushed by security personnel guarding Yadav as mediapersons jostled to get a byte from the leader in Moradabad district.

After the incident, Shabbir Mani Tripathi, the media advisor to CM Yogi Adityanath, alleged that SP goons badly beat up journalists for questioning to Yadav, threatened, humiliated and chased them away. "Many were injured," he had claimed. Rejecting the allegation, Samajwadi Party MP from Moradabad Syed Tufail Hasan, who was with Yadav during the incident, said the former CM did not refuse to talk to mediapersons.

"Some electronic media persons broke the security cordon and fell amid jostling after being stopped by guards. One journalist suffered injuries in his leg and has been sent to a hospital," Hasan told.

Yadav has expressed grief over the incident, he said.

The Samajwadi Party chief was in Moradabad to attend the wedding of an MLA, Hasan had said.

SC displeased over HP court's 'incomprehensible' verdict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

The Supreme Court has expressed its displeasure on the "incomprehensible" judgment of the Himachal Pradesh High Court and said no coercive action be taken against the bank and others as per the award of Central Government Industrial Tribunal (CGIT).

"We are constrained to observe that the language in the judgment of the high court is incomprehensible. Judgments are intended to convey the reasoning and process of thought which leads to the final conclusion of the adjudicating forum.

A bench of justices was dealing with an appeal filed by the State Bank of India and others in a matter arising out of the disciplinary action against an employee, stayed the order of the high court and said no coercive action be taken against the bank and others as per the award of Central Government Industrial Tribunal (CGIT).

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Sympathy, hamlaa, durghatna, the buzzwords

MANAS R BANNERJEE
SILIGURI, 13 MARCH

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, an unpredictable politician known for formulating strategies to turn adverse situations in her favour, may have managed to gain people's 'sympathy' once again, even as she fights former TMC heavyweight and now a BJP leader, Suvendu Adhikari, in the Nandigram seat, political observers and party leaders in north Bengal feel. However, amid such assumption, state BJP observer Kailash Vijayvargiya yesterday said that the CM's "traditional style to earn sympathy votes" had boomeranged this time.

There is a fight going on between the BJP and the Trinamul Congress over the issue of attack ("hamlaa") and accident ("durghatna"), following Miss Banerjee's claim that she was attacked during campaigning in Nandigram.

Going by the initial statement made by Miss Banerjee

overcoming the situation brought about by the Nandigram incident by showcasing the law and order problem, which is a subject of the state government.

Former IGP Pankaj Datta, during a panel discussion on television, recently pointed out to how the CM's three-tier security was breached and top security officials failed to maintain protocol. "Following standard operating protocol, the CM cannot sit on the front seat of the car," he said.

Miss Banerjee has been using the front seat on the driver's side ever since she became the Youth Congress leader. Even after becoming the CM, she continued to sit

the front seat, while she had been using the same seat when the Nandigram incident happened. She was using the front seat when the door was opened for her. Significantly, the state BJP leadership and the party's groups of intellectuals have been circulating a video clip, which has gone viral, based on a Bollywood film. The video clip shows a political leader hatching a plot to fake an attack on him just before the election campaign begins. The politician also informs his close associate that he would release a press statement from the hospital and then he would use the wheelchair.

Soul of Irresponsibility

The United Forum of Bank Unions, an umbrella organization of nine unions, has betrayed the soul of irresponsibility yet again. It will be shutters down in the country's banking sector on March 15 and 16, with the employees deciding to keep operations in suspended animation for two days in protest against the proposed privatisation of two nationalised banks. The privatisation plan was announced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Union budget on February 1 this year.

Once again ~ and this is unlikely to be the last occasion ~ the bank unions have suffixed their two-day agitprop to a second Saturday and Sunday, holidays both. Noticeable also is the tendency to either prefix or suffix the strike with holidays. This newspaper has had occasion to depurate such vacuous initiatives that are announced with a singular intent ~ to enjoy a prolonged weekend unlike perhaps any other segment in the organised sector.

In the net, there will be no banking in the country for four days, and this is unimaginable in any civilised set-up. This contrived dislocation is bound to impinge on the economy in the season of the pandemic and vaccinations, not to forget the electioneering in the states that are headed for the Assembly elections later this month. Most of the banks, notably the State Bank of India ~ with its motto, "Bankers to the Nation" ~ have informed their customers of the impact on functioning of the ubiquitous branches and offices.

In point of fact, it is the nation that has been accorded the short shrift arguably to lend an impetus to the agitation. The impact, in a word, will render banking out of joint, and cause tremendous inconvenience to individual clients, the corporate sector, and the government in the wider canvas not the least because banks are largely nationalised ever since 1969, the high noon of the Indira Gandhi dispensation.

If indeed "conciliation meetings" were held on March 4, 9, and 10, both sides ought to have made an earnest effort to avert the strike. The talks have distinctly drawn a blank. Though some banks have informed their clients that they are taking what they call "necessary steps" to ensure the "smooth functioning" of branches, till Friday afternoon, no steps had been announced to give effect to the saccharine assurance. There are far too many red herrings across the trail.

Considerable will be the backlog of pending work in the aftermath of the four-day closure, one major aspect being the clearing operations that affect the majority of clients. The latter must have expected the banks, their managements as well as the United Forum of Bank Unions, to devise a plan of corrective action. And if this entailed putting in longer hours, sacrificing the second and fourth Saturdays coupled with Sundays, so it should have been.

New Delhi Olympics

Perhaps the most amusing ~ or bemusing ~ aspect of India's oft-expressed participatory interest in the Olympic Games is that it is seldom about winning medals and always about staging an edition of it.

So it was business as usual when Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said recently that he was targeting 2048 for the Big Event, having in the meantime primed the nation's Capital for it. Last year, it was Indian Olympic Association chief Narinder Batra who voiced similar ambitions, though he bubbled with the confidence that suggested 2032 might not be a bridge too far. They are always crouching for the spring.

Batra, of course, has since iterated that India would land the Games well before 2048, his indulgent disposition hinting at Kejriwal dabbling in stuff he knew nothing about. But turf custodianship was at the core of Batra's spiel when he let it be known, quite correctly, that the IOA should have been consulted before any babbling was gone ahead with. But Kejriwal had not really been waffling, even if he was completely innocent of the rules, or protocols, of the game.

There always is a very good reason why the archetypal sport official and the seasoned politician ~ they can be one and the same and examples abound ~ are in pursuit of the same objective, usually eloquent in making a virtue of necessity. If you remember Rio, all you as an Indian wanted to know was whether PV Sindhu would bag the gold. When it turned out to be the silver, you settled for it all right, quite thankful that the girl had saved our collective face.

But if the high-ups, aware that jump-cuts to Arabian Nights riches, however cinematically spectacular, can be reminiscent of the 2010 Commonwealth Games scandals, making the wicket sticky, there is the chance that the going will be just that bit less glutinous. Little drops of water, little grains of sand and all that jazz.

The game is all about, ahem, building the infrastructure, and that implies digging deep into the public exchequer. It may be the reason why most of the rest of the world tries its best to steer clear of extravagant multi-discipline events ~ ask Tokyo ~ but, in India, the complication is bypassed by the simple expedient of impassioned rhetoric calling attention to our national prestige.

Favours are distributed, crores of rupees change hands and the big boys fulfil themselves in so many ways. This is also how India's honest grassroots enthusiasm and flair get squashed flat. We hold an edition of the Afro-Asian Games and the beginning of it was also the end of it. "Sell the idea and bob's your uncle" is the organisational game. It is touched by Midas. And it at least partially is why few mainstream Olympic medals have ever come India's way.

Welfare and State

Remote work is here to stay permanently, warranting rapid digitalisation of the work processes along with psychological and social support for their workers to help them adapt to the new work environment



In their essay, "How Poverty Ends" in Foreign Affairs journal, Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo pointed out that the period from 1980 to 2016 had seen remarkable reduction in global poverty, with doubling of the average income of the bottom half of workers. The number of extreme poor living at less than \$1.90 a day as per the World Bank definition had also declined from nearly two billion to only 700 million. Never before in human history were so many people lifted out of poverty so quickly, a transition that was also accompanied by massive improvements in quality of life of the poor.

In India too, between 1993-94 and 2011-12, poverty ratio declined from around 45 per cent to 22 per cent. Instead of being measured by income merely to provide for basic needs, multidimensional poverty index (MPI) got developed to measure access to education, healthcare and a minimum standard of living in terms of electricity, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel and assets. The Global MPI 2020 ranked India at 62nd place among 107 countries, with 28 per cent headcount of poor in the population, based on the NFHS 4 (2015-16) data.

According to another study by Surjit S Bhalla, Arvind Virmani and Karan Basin, only 84 million Indians were poor in 2017, down from 270 million in 2011. But all this was before the pandemic and the lockdown. Now we just don't know how many more have been pushed back into poverty of basic needs, not to speak of the MPI, by the disruption and loss of income caused by the pandemic.

Much of the earlier decline in global poverty had come as a result of growth which directly correlated with increased government investments in education and healthcare ~ and especially in the two most populous countries - China and India. Now that growth has slowed down in both these countries, we ought to be anxious. But what are the levers of growth and where should we focus? Actually, nobody knows. Banerjee and Esther cite an interesting study by a commission on economic growth in 2006, appointed by the World Bank and headed by economist Michael Spence, whose final report said enigmatically: "After two years of work by the commission of 21 world leaders and experts, an 11-member working group, 300 academic experts, 12 workshops, 13 consultations, and a budget of \$4m, the experts' answer to the question of how to attain high

growth was roughly: we do not know, but trust experts to figure it out."

Disruptions and the resultant process of creative destruction have always driven growth by allocating resources optimally between the factors of production. But as productive and non-productive firms always coexist in an economy, the allocation is not always efficient, necessitating reallocation of resources within industries to enhance productivity and boost growth. However, since the law of diminishing returns would operate here also, growth cannot be pushed indefinitely beyond a point and the economy must adjust to a lower growth trajectory. If we are expecting continuous and sustained high growth rates once the economy operates at full throttle, we are likely to be disappointed.

As examples of China and the Asian miracle economies show, the era of runaway growth is perhaps over. Export-oriented economies like these cannot grow unless the importing countries also grow at the same pace, and underutilised capacity would cause unemployment and other undesirable consequences. The economy must therefore adjust to and produce at a lower level which means a greater role for the State to support the poor deprived from the benefit of high growth.

After contraction by 23.9 per cent and 7.5 per cent respectively during the first two quarters of FY21, the Indian economy has finally returned to positive growth (0.4 per cent in the third quarter of FY21). The Economic Survey 2020-21 projected India's real GDP growth for FY22 at 11 per cent, which is obviously high due to the low base after two successive contractions, followed by 7 per cent in FY23 and FY24, which may still be a tad optimistic. Growth rate of around 5 per cent may be our new normal for the next few years, trapping us in the 'middle income trap' out of which very few countries have emerged to become rich ~ only 13 of the 101 middle-income economies in 1960 could become rich by 2008.

Banerjee and Duflo warn that in order to push up growth, countries may be tempted to adopt policies that would ultimately hurt the poor, such as tax cuts for the rich and bailouts for corporations. The countries which have adopted these pre-

scriptions faced skyrocketing inequality and proliferation of the super-rich, while real growth mostly eluded them. Even the IMF today recognises that its past policies of 'sacrificing the poor to promote growth' was perhaps 'a bad policy'; such a policy today would inevitably lead to a political backlash by populist leaders who would exploit popular sentiments to further sacrifice growth. If improving the quality of life and the standard of living remain the ultimate goal, the State must take the lead by focusing on thoughtfully designed empowering interventions in education, health and financial inclusion for the poor, to improve their lives.

Every crisis tests the resilience of society and redefines the social contract between the State and the individual. State interventions and stimulus packages announced by governments during the pandemic have expanded the role and outreach of the welfare state like never before in history. As The Economist pointed out, earlier during the global financial meltdown of 2008, Governments bailed out banks; this time they bailed out citizens. Welfare has also acquired a different connotation ~ from being only for the poorest, it now practically envelopes almost all whose lives have been battered by a ruthless virus. People are naturally demanding stronger social safety nets, but how much of it would be sustainable without permanently locking people in a 'welfare trap' is questionable.

The welfare state was the child of the Great Depression and was embraced by Europe at the turn of the last century. It came of age after WW-II when governments in war-ravaged countries were forced to provide free healthcare, education and social security. The stagflation of the 1970s altered its scope ~ by replacing doles and subsidies that were seen to promote laziness and dependency with incentives and tax credits to encourage people to work and produce. As States retracted and reduced their interventions, risks shifted to the individual.

Covid-19 has now retransformed the welfare state again, shifting the risk back to the State which was forced to dole out huge stimulus payments everywhere, and throw fiscal prudence to the winds to borrow heavily, stretching public finances to the

breaking point as taxes nose-dived. But the heavy debt burden is not worrying any nation; besides the fact that borrowing and debt servicing has become cheap due to the prevailing low interest rates, countries are also getting used to the idea of stabilising their debts at higher levels, just as they are trying to adjust themselves to the below-par growth rates. Once economies start recovering, governments will be forced to start tapering off the benefits.

Like every crisis, the pandemic has also highlighted the outmoded pattern of the welfare state where most workers, especially in the informal sectors in developing countries, have no social security umbrella to shelter them from a storm. But those countries which had put in place financial infrastructure supported by technology to reach people quickly through digital platforms have succeeded in mitigating the suffering of their poor to some extent. With Aadhaar-Jan-Dhan accounts and Mobile troika, India has also successfully transferred some cash to the neediest, to keep them from starving. Though it was a pittance, it highlighted the saviour role technology can play in a crisis, and in shaping the post-crisis world.

The World Economic Forum's latest Future of Jobs Report, 2020 highlights that speedy automation of the workforce would disrupt 85 million jobs in the next five years in addition to the Covid-19 disruption of livelihood, and the dual disruption would transform tasks, jobs, and skills by 2025. But this 'robot revolution' will also create 97 million new jobs ~ in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, social media management, content writing and green economy; in this scenario, critical and analytical thinking, creativity, and flexibility would be the most sought-after skills. Workers would need retraining to upgrade their skills and here again the State must provide necessary support.

Remote work is here to stay permanently, warranting rapid digitalisation of the work processes along with psychological and social support for their workers to help them adapt to the new work environment

A MEMBER OF THE

ANN
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES

Ethical issues in Covid-19 vaccine roll-outs

Among my family members, a few work in the healthcare and essential service sectors. They were called up quite quickly to get their Covid-19 vaccine jabs. About half my family members have now been vaccinated. I remain among the unjabbed half. Early last month, I asked my company's human resources department if there were plans to vaccinate staff, especially journalists who are out covering events and interviewing people. As a columnist whose bread and butter is information and insights, I often meet people face to face. The rapport and information flow are just not the same over WhatsApp chats, a virtual meeting, or by e-mail. The HR folks said they had asked the Government and were awaiting a reply.

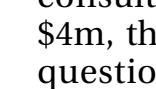
I hushed my vaccine envy and got on with life. On Wednesday, I took part in a webinar organised by the Centre for Biomedical Ethics (CBME) of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the National University of Singapore. Titled Covid-19 Vaccines: Ethical Issues In Allocation, Administration And Public Acceptance, the panel featured infectious diseases experts such as Professor Paul Tambyah from the National University Hospital, Associate Professor Lim Poh Lian from the National Centre for Infectious Diseases and Assistant Professor G. Owen Schaefer from the CBME.

I was on the panel as a member of the National University Health System's Patient and Family Advisory Council, and also sharing my views as a journalist, on the public policy aspects of the ethical issues in the vaccine roll-out. Coincidentally, an hour before the webinar began, I got a WhatsApp update from the Ministry of

THE STRAITS TIMES

Health that said vaccination will be extended to those in the critical functions of "postmen, delivery staff, news reporters, bank ops". My vaccine envy stilled, I am more chuffed that news reporters are included this round, which shows that journalism is considered a critical function in Singapore ~ a topic for another day. Meanwhile, I look forward to my colleagues and me getting the vaccine at the proper time. Every vaccination programme carries with it ethical concerns over, among other things, safety, efficacy and how to distribute and allocate the vaccine when there are limited supplies.

A vaccine programme in the middle of a global pandemic is even trickier. On the one hand, speedy access to the vaccine can make the difference between life and death. On the other hand, the vaccines for Covid-19 are new and relatively untested: The world is learning of side effects as millions more get jabbed; and while we know the short-term efficacy, no one knows how long the protection lasts. As Prof Lim said at the webinar, rolling out vaccination in the middle of a public health emergency is like chasing after a moving target. This requires constant monitoring and updating of rules and plans. So while some people like me may have vaccine envy, millions around the world do not want to be jabbed. In America, one-third of military personnel offered the vaccine reportedly declined it. In Germany, so many doses are unused, they are called "shelf warmers". Reports of some people dying or falling severely ill after vaccination have spread virally, eroding confidence in the jabs even though the cause of the deaths and complications have yet to be established. Amid all this uncertainty, and with vaccines still in short supply worldwide, the question arises: How should vaccine programmes be rolled out and how can they be allocated equitably?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Dam the river

SIR, This refers to today's news report, "China's parl clear decks for dam on Brahmaputra". To devise a plan to engage China on the issue of the Brahmaputra dams, it is important to understand two fundamental issues. One, China's geographical position (an upper riparian State) cannot be altered. Two, the Indian and Chinese praxis towards

water-related issues with the neighbours have followed different trajectories. While India, as an upper riparian neighbour, has always opted for a treaty-based approach with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, China's approach with 11 of its neighbours with whom it shares rivers, has been more unilateral. Beijing uses water and dams as instruments of

hard politics. Unlike India, Beijing has little respect for legal conventions notably the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention is an example. India does not have a water treaty with China. In this backdrop, India needs to refine its approach. While pushing China for seamless data-sharing on Brahmaputra-related aspects such as rainfall and water flow (irrespective of the politics of the day), New Delhi must strive

**POPE IN IRAQ**

SIR, It was the 84-year-old Pope Francis's courage which was repeatedly applauded throughout his recent Iraq trip, more than the words he spoke. His choice of popemobile on a potentially risky visit ~ open to the crowds rather than encased in bulletproof glass ~ seemed to represent the dissolving of barriers between the papacy and the country's downtrodden. To many in the region it seemed that this trip straddled an old, dark chapter and something altogether new. In a bid to revive coexistence, Pope Francis, surrounded by the shells of destroyed churches, attended a prayer for the victims of war at Hosh al-Bieaa Church Square, in Mosul, Iraq, once the de facto capital of ISIS. It is tempting to think of Francis's visit as a trailblazing tour. This was the first-ever papal trip to Iraq, despite the country figuring in the Old Testament. He boosted the visibility of an ancient Christian church that makes up less than a percentage point of Iraq's population. He drew the world's attention to the war-torn country and this marginalized community in particular. He met the widely respected Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, forming one of the most prominent Shia-Catholic summits in decades. The Pope's tour also highlighted the diversity that has always formed the social fabric of the Middle East where regional coexistence has been the exception, but the norm.

Yours, etc., Sanjay Chopra, Mohali, 12 March.

to make water a core issue for bilateral dialogue along with the boundary issue.

At the same time, India must focus on building water storage capacities in the North-east so that its

needs are not compromised in case of a natural or man-made crisis; draw benefits

from its own rivers; and focus on building a lower riparian coalition of Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bang-

ladesh and Myanmar to lobby international support for recognising Tibet's water as a common resource.

Yours, etc., N Sudhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru, 12 March.

ABHINAV MEHROTRA

Myanmar has endured 50 years of rule under military junta. The last five years had raised hopes for a brighter future but what transpired just before Aung San Suu Kyi's party assumed office for the second time has brought back memories of the old dark days where there was disregard for democracy and rule of law.

Democracy is about achieving balance between dissent and agreement and not zero-sum scorched earth attacks on anyone who does not follow the orthodoxy of one political group. This attack on dissent and disagreement is the approach taken by the military junta in Myanmar and several other governments around the world that are less democratic than others.

The threat posed to the rights of individuals, more specifically human rights and in a larger context the survival of the democratic structure at the international level, ultimately leads to the discussion of whether there should exist a right to democracy as a human right, because the more democratic a society is, the more we see human rights being honoured and protected. If the right to democracy is enshrined in the constitutions of countries, it would ensure a better protection of human rights, growth, development and security.

This idea of democracy is further supplemented by the views expressed by former United Nations Secretary General Boutros-Boutros Ghali who had argued that 'human rights, equal rights and government under law are important attributes of democracy'.

It cannot be emphasised enough that the human rights records of most European countries, Japan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have received worldwide appreciation. The common thread among these is the presence of a strong democratic political system that aims to safeguard the rights of citizens by upholding the rule of law, respect for individual liberty, protection from oppressive state interference and defence of human rights.

Coming to Myanmar, on 1 February this year, the Myanmar military also called the Tatmadaw staged a coup d'état by detaining the leaders of the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party and the civil leadership that included Aung San Suu Kyi as well as President U Win Myint under the garb of fraud in last year's general election where NLD

A case for democracy to be a human right



had secured a landslide victory, under the export and import law and under the natural disaster management law. Two more charges were added later. These developments have received widespread condemnation from countries around the world including the EU, the United States and Australia. US President Joe Biden labelled the coup as "a direct assault on the country's transition to democracy and the rule of law".

Such an act of nullifying the results of the election has happened in the past. In 1990, when the first national elections were held, the NLD had won but the military disregarded the elections. However, at that time the military was ruling the country which was not the case in the 2021 coup which makes the fresh developments even more significant.

It was only in 2010 that Myanmar's reputation at the international level began to recover when Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest and the NLD was allowed to

contest elections. As a result, the sanctions imposed on Myanmar were eased and trading relations were re-established by countries around the world. To illustrate, in the period between 2012 and 2017, the foreign development aid increased from \$285 million to \$1.06 billion.

This shows the importance of a democratic structure in the growth of the country and leads us to the discussion of what are the criteria that are required to be met for the right to democracy to be recognised as a human right. According to Charles Beitz, who was a Professor of Politics at Princeton University, there exist three claims that are required to be met: the reasonableness of the right, absence of which would lead to atrocities against right holders by municipal level institutions and it must not result in undue burden.

One such example where the municipal authorities violated the rights of citizens in the absence of a democratic structure that resulted in

grave violations was the Arab Spring. In 2011, the Egyptian government had imposed a shutdown of the internet to suppress dissenting voices of its citizens which was in direct contravention of the covenant dealing with civil and political rights.

It was the Special Representative on the Promotion of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression who emphasised the gravity of the situation and urged the government to restore the freedom of expression and access to information for citizens. Other examples where the reasonableness and necessity of democratic structure has been proven include raising of voices against subjugation of indigenous communities in Latin America; ensuring dissemination of information in Mexico and to restore political accountability in the Arab World as described above.

In this respect, the role of the United Nations to ensure democracy assumes significance. The United Nations has on the one hand put the

idea of human rights at the forefront of the issues dealt by the international community. This has given impetus to various non-governmental organizations to promote and protect human rights. Nonetheless, the concerns regarding sovereign equality and non-intervention under Article 2 (7) of the UN Charter place an obstacle in realizing human rights and more so when we argue for a right to democracy as a human right which is a direct interference in the internal affairs of a country.

From an international perspective, the United Nations needs to take up the responsibility as it has done in the past in countries like Kosovo to establish a democratic structure in Myanmar and take the lead and facilitate an international instrument that specifically deals with the right to democracy as a human right.

The writer, an LL.M in International Human Rights Law from the University of Leeds is a Lecturer at the O P Jindal Global University, Sonipat.

THE POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

A palace blighted by scandal



Three beautiful women have rocked the world of the British royal family in the past century and more. Wallis Simpson married Edward VIII and Princess Diana married a future King in Prince Charles. The third is Hollywood star Meghan Markle, Prince Harry's spouse.

The entire royal clan gathered for Diana's and Meghan's weddings. Wallis' marriage to the former King was a tense affair at a French château, with only seven British guests present.

The three women came from different backgrounds. Simpson was

33 when King Edward fell in love with her. When the royal family refused to accept the divorcee as the future queen, the King decided to abdicate in 1936. Diana was 19 years old when Charles married her. Diana said in her famous BBC interview in 1995, "At the age of 19, you always think you're prepared for everything, and you think you know about what's coming ahead. But although I was daunted at the prospect at the time, I felt I had the support of my husband-to-be."

Meghan was a Hollywood star, biracial, and a divorcee. At the age

of 33, she married Prince Harry, who was three years younger than her, in 2017.

It was Prince Harry who drew attention to the similarities and said it was like history repeating itself. He said that if Diana were still alive, she would be friends with Meghan as they had many things in common.

Many commentators see the symbolism between Meghan's interview outfit this week and a similar one worn by Simpson in a 1936 portrait before becoming Edward's Duchess. Meghan wore Diana's diamond bracelet while sitting down

with the famous American anchor Oprah Winfrey this week.

Edward and Wallis Simpson's relationship was the "greatest love story of the twentieth century." The world loved Edward, but it loathed Wallis and blamed her as the 'wicked witch.' She said, "I who sought no place in history would now be assured of one – an appalling one, carved out by blind prejudice." A peep into their autobiographies - 'A King's story' by Edward and 'The heart has its reasons' by Wallis - reveal the pain they went through.

While Wallis and her husband lived in Europe for the rest of their lives, Princess Diana died young in a road accident after her messy divorce. Meghan and Harry shifted to the US in 2020, giving up their public role.

Many compare Meghan's bare-all interview to Oprah's BBC interview in 1995. Diana spoke about the royal family's treatment of her. Meghan made some startling revelations about her life in the palace.

All three had a love-hate relationship with the media. Princess Diana spoke about how "isolating" the media attention became, and at many times, overwhelmed her. Meghan faced the brunt of a much larger tabloid press as well as social media. Harry said, "I asked for calm from the British tabloids once as a boyfriend, once as a husband, and once as a father." But it did not happen.

Meghan and Diana revealed that they felt exhausted by the constant pressure to perform as working royals. Diana said, "The pressure

was intolerable then, and my job, my work was being affected. I wanted to give 110 per cent to my work, and I could only give 50. I was constantly tired, exhausted because the pressure was just, it was so cruel." Meghan echoed similar views in her interview with Oprah. However, for Meghan, there are now more laws to protect her from what Diana went through. After 1998, photographers were not allowed to use long-lens cameras to capture people in private places.

While Wallis had the full support of the abdicated King Edward, Prince Harry sat by Meghan's side in the recent interview. Diana fought her case alone as she was divorced. Prince Harry told Oprah: "I can't begin to imagine what it must have been like for her (Diana), going through this process by herself, all those years ago."

To Winfrey, Meghan alleged that "The Firm" (meaning the palace) did little to protect her from the British tabloids' ravages. It was unconcerned about her deteriorating mental health, causing her to confess startling thoughts of suicide.

As far as the British monarchy is concerned, this is not the end of the story. Six months after ceasing to be working members of the British royal family, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have become Hollywood producers. The couple has also signed a deal for speaking engagements, which may bear much more. The palace is on a damage containment mission. Still, it is probably a futile exercise since the horse has already bolted to LA.

NOW AND AGAIN

Back to school

BUDDHADEV NANDI

Three or four decades ago private educational institutions were not very popular even in cities and towns. Most students would be educated in government-aided or government schools. Corporal punishment in schools was an accepted norm.

For most ordinary students like us the school would appear as a place of "compulsory purgatory". Monday, the first day of the week, would be considered the most detestable one. We would concoct different alibis to stay home. Most common were bellyaches, headaches etc. – malaises without external symptoms.

Some students would keep a few cloves of garlic under their armpits to simulate the symptoms of fever. When class teachers encountered a tepid response during roll call, they would send truancy squads to bring those playing hooky to the school.

Today's school is quite different. Corporal punishment has been done away with. But the mounting pressure of syllabi in private schools has almost broken the backbone of childhood. On the other hand, the picture in many government schools is quite different. They are marked by sheer negligence in studies.

As a habitual truant in school life, I thought that as a result of prolonged school closures a substantial number of school students must have been overjoyed this past year. But I failed to appreciate the negative impact on students of lower primary schools (LPS), especially government schools. Many students could not help having zero years as most states have decided to keep LPS closed.

A recent study over the "loss of learning during pandemic" made by Azim Premji University reveals a gloomy picture. On average, 92 per cent children have lost at least one specific language ability from the previous year across classes II to VI. In mathematical ability the loss is 82 per cent. Over 16,000 students across five states including Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand were surveyed on the two parameters of language knowledge and mathematical ability.

What causes concern is that regression in language and mathematical abilities is diametrically opposite to the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 that has laid special emphasis on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). Though a large number of private institutions conducted regular online classes, the government-aided and government institutions failed to do so widely or efficiently.

If this continues for longer, the regression might be irreparable. It may lead to an increase in the percentage of dropouts. School closure for about a year has clear negative impacts on child health, education and family income. Now I realize why teachers in our school life would lay so much emphasis on regular attendance.

It is studied that children are at lower risk of Covid-19 than adults. Children under the age of 18 years represent about 8.5 per cent of reported cases with relatively few deaths compared to other age groups. So, all state governments and the Union government should devise plans so that students of all classes can be drawn back to school with required precautions.

Equilibrium needs to be maintained between two dangerous extremes – prevailing pandemic situation and the bleak prospects of children's education – to erase the losses already caused by the pandemic.

100 YEARS AGO

POSITION OF STUDENTS

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - In these days of the non-cooperation movement I think it is a highly injudicious step for the students to withdraw from their respective colleges and join the movement. They should consider well before they take a leap in the dark. They should see what arrangements are being made for their education and future career. Especially the post-graduate students, who are on the threshold of entering the worldly life, should take this into account and think of the hungry mouths that are waiting for them. One may ask the question, have not the post-graduate students any duty to their motherland? We are going to shatter their long-cherished hopes by withdrawing ourselves from colleges. It is a matter of great pleasure to note that the majority of the post-graduates have not responded to the calls of the leaders of non-cooperation because they have a sense of duty. Now this is the consequence of the childishness of the so-called non-cooperationists.

HEMENDRA CHANDRA MUKHERJI,
Calcutta.

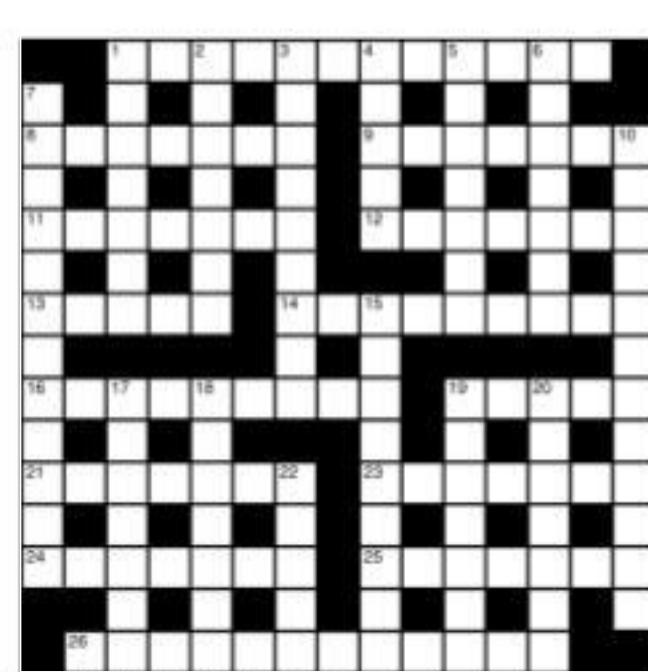
AGITATION IN CHAMPARAN

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The tenant population of the Champaran district is naturally peaceful and law-abiding. On occasions of official visits and shikars you may see them mending roads and conveying rasads and paras gratis. Very recently the President of the Rayots Sabha got a certificate from the S.D.O. for his services regarding the same. But the so-called "leaders" are trying to make a split between the tenants and their landlords, apparently for their own gains. I challenge anybody to prove that any "abwab" is ever demanded. The landlords are being further put to pressure to submit to all sorts of insults and losses. The managers alone, without being informed, are taken to task for any alleged irregularity or offence of any of his subordinates or rent-collecting agents or peons. The landlords are bearing all this difficulty on account of the misrepresentation and misdirected movements of the so-called non-cooperation "leaders". How long is this state to last?

J.P.

CROSSWORD



SOLUTION FOR 07 MARCH

ACROSS

- 1 Rolling Stone review initially delighted musician (6,6)
- 8 Contest featuring Oxford University is level (4,3)
- 9 Soldier possibly joins wife before heading back for port (7)
- 11 Silicate almost cracks, showing signs of stress (7)
- 12 Shut your mouth after admitting lies regularly (7)
- 13 Incite, say, unlimited agony (3,2)
- 14 Animal's limb badly beset by trouble (9)
- 16 Leading a bike race –
- 19 Nothing featured in new online talks is well-known (5)
- 21 Criminal thus called the shots and carried out scams (7)
- 23 Endlessly travelled around, having left part of Wales (7)
- 24 Plan 24 hours in Ibiza? Good stuff! (7)
- 25 Cookie containing odd bits of grain and herb (7)
- 26 Unite extremists to do what's necessary financially (4,4)
- 27 chortle – by 50 minutes! (2,3,4)
- 28 Digger finally departs from highway, leaving nothing behind (9)
- 29 Garments in wide, upright box (5)
- 30 Wound up line that has caught on the outside (7)
- 31 Persistent bird tucked into decapitated mammal (7)
- 32 Type of property developed this decade to incorporate space (4-8)

DOWN

- 1 The terms of this fresh scheme absolutely matter! (7)
- 2 Feeling of ecstasy comes with travelling (7)
- 3 Digger finally departs from highway, leaving nothing behind (9)
- 4 Garments in wide, upright box (5)
- 5 Wound up line that has caught on the outside (7)
- 6 Persistent bird tucked into decapitated mammal (7)
- 7 Type of property developed this decade to incorporate space (4-8)
- 10 Up-front requirement: change old pic on Tinder (12)
- 15 Significant American in pursuit of second Oscar (9)
- 17 Hot jalapeño peppers to finish with ... et voilà, Mexican food! (7)
- 18 Expatriate and agree to differ about the origins of natural law (7)
- 19 Straight away, this place is out of contention (7)
- 20 Tate's opening week has Bridget Riley works in more than one section (3-4)
- 22 Very skilled person made money to some extent (5)

NO 28853

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



India is already looking at 'V-shaped' recovery.

ANURAG THAKUR

THUMBNAILS

ICRIER's new director: Deepak Mishra, practice manager in the World Bank's macroeconomics, trade, and investment global practice has been appointed as the next director and chief executive of the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, the economic think tank said on Saturday. He will take over from Rajat Kathuria who has been the director & chief executive of ICRIER since 1 September, 2021.

Ratan Tata takes first shot of vaccine: Veteran industrialist Ratan Tata on Saturday hoped everyone can be immunised and protected soon from the coronavirus pandemic, having got himself vaccinated. Tata in a social media post praised the process of vaccination, describing it as "effortless and painless". "Very thankful to have gotten my first vaccination shot today. It was effortless and painless," he said.

Forex reserves fall: The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$ 4,255 billion to \$ 580,299 billion in the week ended 5 March, according to RBI data. In the previous week ended 26 February, the reserves rose by \$ 689 million to \$ 584,554 billion.

Survey Sparrow announces hiring initiative: Survey Sparrow, an experience solutions service provider, on Saturday announced a hiring initiative a joining bonus of Rs 50,000-for women candidates. The company said the initiative will cover women candidates who apply for positions of product developers, quality analyst, technical writers on or before 15 March and join the company by 15 April.

Modern street vending carts: The commerce and industry ministry on Saturday said it has held a competition for designing new and cost effective modern street vending carts to cope with the recent challenges emerging due to Covid-19.

Draft e-comm policy: Govt to prevent data misuse

To identify "rogue e-commerce entities", a body of identified trusted parties will be created

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, 13 March



The government would lay down principles for usage of data for the development of any industry, where such norms do not already exist, and put in place adequate safeguards to prevent misuse and access of data by unauthorised persons, according to a draft national e-commerce policy.

The government is in the process of developing regulations for personal and non-personal data, the policy, which is under discussion, said.

The draft has stated that sharing of data for industrial development would be encouraged and regulations for data will be provided for the sharing mechanism.

"The government shall lay down principles for usage of data for the purpose of development of any industry, e-commerce, consumer protection, national security,

economic security and law enforcement including taxation where such principles do not already exist and put in place adequate safeguards to prevent misuse and access of data by unauthorised persons," it said.

According to the draft, the government acknowledges the importance of data as an asset and needs to use data emanating from India for "Indian entities first".

An inter-ministerial meeting, under the chairmanship of a top official of the department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT), was held on Saturday to deliberate upon this draft.

For free and informed choice, it said e-commerce operators would have to ensure that algorithms used by them, are not biased and that no discrimination due to digitally induced biases is prevalent. Consumers have a right to be made aware of all relevant details about the goods and services offered for sale including country of origin, value addition in India,

and any other such information which may be necessary for making an informed decision at the pre-purchase stage," it said.

To promote fair competition, the draft said that e-commerce operators must ensure equal treatment of all sellers/vendors registered on their platforms and not adopt algorithms which result in prioritizing select vendors/sellers.

It said the operators have to bring out clear and transparent policies on discounts, including the basis of discount rates funded by platforms for different products/providers and implications of participation/non-participation in discount schemes, so as to ensure fair and equal treatment.

"In the interest of the Indian consumer, and the local startup ecosystem, the government will aim to ensure that there are more service providers available, and that network effects do not lead to creation of digital monopolies misusing their dominant market position," it added.

Further, to eliminate counterfeit products from online platforms, it said the companies would create adequate safeguards to ensure that products offered are genuine and the liability for counterfeit products would be "jointly and severally" of the online firm and the seller. In order to ensure that e-commerce is not used to defraud customers, registration with an authority identified by the government would be made mandatory, it added.

"In order to keep up with the technological and economic transformations in the e-commerce sector, measurement of e-commerce activities, including but not limited to details of sale, import and customs duties, grievance redressal, compliance to existing or new regulations/rules, rogue sellers, counterfeit items etc. will be undertaken by concerned agencies in a periodic manner," it added.

Govt committed to promote renewable energy: Gadkari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

manirbhar Bharat Opportunities in Solar & MSME on Friday evening.

In his address, Gadkari said that the MSMEs with good track record are now being encouraged for capital market.

He said there exists a huge opportunity for investment in scrapping policy.

The minister highlighted that India will be a top manufacturing hub for automobiles in the world.

Gadkari, who holds MSME portfolio along with road transport, said by making solar energy available, "we will create big market for electric vehicles".

He invited investors abroad to invest in Indian MSMEs and expressed hope that this will provide a number of opportunities to the MSME sector to become the world's largest manufacturing hub.

The minister was addressing a webinar on 'Aat-

No adverse findings against Franklin Templeton, its employees so far: Sanjay Sapre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH



Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund, which closed down its six schemes in April 2020, has said that so far there have been no adverse findings against the fund house or its employees or management.

This comes following reports of markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) issuing show-cause notices to the fund house and its officials with regards to the fund house's practices around risk management, inter-scheme transfers and personal transactions by employees and management, among others.

"We have submitted detailed responses to show-cause notices issued by Sebi. We cannot go into detail of our responses, but we believe that we acted in compliance with applicable regulations and rules and that we have strong defenses to the allegation," Sanjay Sapre, President of Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) Pvt Ltd, said in a letter to investors.

With respect to the accusations regarding personal transactions of employees and management, the fund house said it takes such matters seriously.

The personal redemptions by certain individuals before

the winding-up decision are under review and those individuals have cooperated fully with that process and submitted detailed responses to Sebi, which are under consideration, Sapre said in the letter on Friday.

He further said "the schemes under winding up continue to have significant investment from employees and management," Sapre said.

He said these issues remain under regulatory review, "we are constrained from commenting on specific details at this juncture, but we can con-

business

India's oil demand falls 5% in February

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

were up 7.6 per cent. Crude oil suppliers group OPEC's monthly oil report on Thursday forecast a 13.6 per cent jump in India's oil demand in 2021 to 4.99 million barrels per day. India's oil demand had fallen 10.54 per cent in 2020 to 4.40 million bpd from 4.91 million bpd in 2019. "The encouraging macroeconomic indicators, together with significant decreases in Covid-19 cases across the country, provided a solid foundation for the 2021 oil demand outlook in India," the report said.

The recent positive developments in industrial activities will result in industrial fuels being the backbone for oil demand growth in 2021, with a healthy rebound for transportation fuels providing further support, it said adding the aviation sector will remain under pressure throughout 2021 and will also be a major source of uncertainty.

"Despite some improvements month-on-month, domestic flight operations remained more than 10 per cent lower than the levels recorded during the same period in 2020," the OPEC report said.

India's FinTech industry valuation estimated at \$150-160 billion by 2025: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

60 billion.

The industry's growth has been undeterred by the pandemic, as it has seen the emergence of three new Unicorns and five new Soonicons (\$500 million valuation) since January 2020.

Prateek Roongta, managing director and partner, Boston Consulting Group, India said, "We believe India's FinTechs are at the precipice of significant value-creation of \$100 billion over the next five years," says the report.

To actualise this potential, the industry would require investments to the tune of \$20-25 billion till 2025. Consequently, the number of Indian FinTech Unicorns will more than double over the next few years."

The total valuation of the industry is estimated at \$50-

'Demand for coronavirus disabling device strong across markets'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

tive officer Alok.

The company has already sold around 25,000 units in the domestic market. The Shycocan device is priced at Rs 25,000 per unit and can be installed at schools, colleges, homes and businesses like hospitals, hotels, offices, restaurants and auditoriums among others.

"Shycocan has been proven to disable the Coronavirus and Influenza virus families in indoor spaces with 99.99 per cent efficacy, as per various virology reports from accredited laboratories worldwide. There is no adverse impact on humans. The device does not affect any other bacteria or fungi, thus maintaining a balance of microbes in the environment," informed Shycocan Corporation chief execu-

tive officer Alok.

The company has already sold around 25,000 units in the domestic market. The Shycocan device is priced at Rs 25,000 per unit and can be installed at schools, colleges, homes and businesses like hospitals, hotels, offices, restaurants and auditoriums among others.

"It is already in use in India,

the US and many countries in Europe, Asia Pacific, Australia,

New Zealand, Middle East,

and Africa. We are also intro-

ducing this innovative made-

in-India device in more than

20 countries around the world," he said.

Delhi/NCR is a very impor-

tant market for the company

and it expects to sell several

thousand devices in the city

this year, he added.

'Need to step up skilling, focus on new age skills'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, 13 MARCH



To create employability and employment opportunities, there is a need to focus on new age skills and step up the momentum of skilling, union minister for skill development and entrepreneurship Mahendra Nath Pandey said on Saturday.

The minister said that to achieve these objectives, trainees need to be updated on new technologies. Pandey was speaking at the inauguration of L&T's skill trainers academy in Mumbai.

He said L&T's STA supports short-term skill training through a wide network of training providers and district nodal skill centres called Prad-

han Mantri Kaushal Kendra. "It is aimed at creating a holistic environment for the trainees and providing them a space to grow and learn while developing into valuable assets of the industry. L&T is preparing the youth to facilitate the delivery of their mega projects at its training centres across the country, he added.

Set up in an existing facility of L&T, the academy has

a capacity to train 1,500 trainees per year, equipped with state-of-the-art classrooms, workshops and hostel facilities. The programme comprises a 10-day classroom training followed by a 15-week 'On the Job' training. The curriculum is developed by Singapore Polytechnic as part of a Memorandum of Understanding with NSDC.

At the end of the 10-day programme candidates go through an assessment process and those who qualify get a certificate valid for two years.

Commenting on the occasion, A M Naik, group chairman, L&T and chairman NSDC said, "The academy is a step forward in achieving our goal of developing a skilled workforce".

Indian Oil Corporation helps India's vaccination drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH



The company's management has also left no stone unturned to inspire the company's stakeholders to get vaccinated at the earliest to contribute to the success of the world's largest vaccination drive.

Shrikant Madhav Vaidya, chairman, IOC and Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra, director were amongst the first few to get the indigenous vaccines to allay apprehensions amongst stakeholders.

Renewal of registration for 15-yr-old govt vehicles to stop from 1 April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

cificate of registration of their vehicles, after 15 years. This will apply to all government - central, state, UT, PSUs, municipal bodies & autonomous bodies," Nitin Gadkari said in a tweet. The development comes close on heels of the voluntary vehicle scrapping policy announced in the Union Budget on 1 February for 2021-22 which provides for fitness test after 20 years for personal vehicles while commercial vehicles would require it after the completion of 15 years.

Notification of the draft rules has been issued to this effect on 12 March by the ministry seeking comments, objections and suggestions from the stakeholders within 30 days.

The certificate of registration shall not be renewed after the laps of 15 years for government vehicles, it said.

Ministry of road, transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari had said that initially one crore vehicles will go for scrapping and the policy will lead to new investments of around Rs 10,000 crore and create as many as 50,000 jobs. These old vehicles are estimated to cause 10-12 times more pollution than the latest vehicles.

The government had earlier said it plans to impose green tax on old polluting vehicles soon in a bid to protect the environment and curb pollution. While vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles and those running on alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol and Liquified Petroleum Gas will be exempted. The revenue collected through the green tax will be utilised for tackling pollution.

Under the scheme, transport vehicles older than eight years could be charged green tax at the time of renewal of fitness certificate at the rate of 10 per cent to 25 per cent of road tax, as per green tax proposal sent to states for consultations after cleared by the ministry.

Vehicle Registration in India



Tumult in Odisha Assembly

Ruling BJD demands apology from BJP MLA for attempting suicide

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 13 MARCH:

Odisha Assembly witnessed tumultuous scenes on Saturday with both the Opposition and ruling BJD members paralyzing proceedings for the entire day forcing the Speaker Suryanarayan Patro to adjourn the house till Monday.

The rarity of ruling BJD members storming the Well of the House demanding an apology from BJP MLA Subash Panigrahi for having 'attempted suicide' in the Assembly yesterday came about even as the Opposition BJD and Congress had occupied the Well raising slogans on the non-procurement of

paddy and farmers distress.

Both sides were seen in the centre of the House voicing their demand. Speaker Patro resorted to several brief adjournments to try and restore calm.

But each resumption was greeted with pandemonium till Patro called it a day.

Earlier as soon as the House assembled for the day, the Opposition BJD and Congress members trooped in demanding that the government should keep its promise of procuring all the paddy stock from genuine farmers.

Even as they were shouting, the ruling BJD members were on their feet saying BJP MLA Subash Panigrahi should first apologise for having consumed sanitizer and

threatening suicide in the House yesterday.

Soon, the BJD members marched into the Well.

BJD Chief Whip Pramila Mallick said the member had created a scene by threatening suicide which is unprecedented.

Countering the charge, the Opposition said the ruling party has to apologise for having entered the Well of the House.

Talking to media persons outside, Congress senior MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati alleged "this is the first time that Ministers joined BJD mla's in stalling the proceedings. He condemned the act of suicide attempt by the BJP MLA.

Veteran Congress MLA

and former law minister, Narasingha Mishra denounced the ruling BJD saying it is highly improper for the treasury bench members to disrupt the Assembly.

There are several other ways to initiate or take action against any member, he noted.

Mishra iterated that the government had failed to keep its promise of procuring paddy from genuine farmers and taking action against 'fake farmers' who had managed to sell their paddy at the mandies. Both these assurances had been given to members, but no progress has taken place since last fortnight, he alleged.

BJP leader Mohan Majhi told reporters that Subash Panigrahi will not apologise.

He had said he will be forced to commit suicide as farmers of his constituency are in distress and are on the verge of committing suicide. The government did not respond, said Majhi.

Ruling BJD MLA Pratap Deb lashed out at the BJD saying the Subash Panigrahi incident was unprecedented and had lowered the dignity of the Assembly. A member attempting suicide by consuming sanitizer is unheard of in the entire country, said Deb adding that the BJD MLA must apologise for such a shameful incident. Attempting suicide is an offence, he noted.

The BJD will stick to its stand as it is a question of dignity of the Assembly, he said.

Eight rape cases per day in Odisha in 2020

10 per cent rise in crime rate during pandemic

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 13 MARCH:

The upward trend of rape cases in Odisha goes unabated if the Home department's standing committee report tabled in the Assembly yesterday is any indication.

With commission of 2,984 rape cases registered in police stations, the state reported 8.17 rapes on an average in daily basis in 2020.

The number of rape cases registered in the year 2017 was 2,221 against 2,144 cases in the previous year. In 2018, it climbed to 2,502 cases. A total of 2,950 rape cases were reg-

istered in 2019 and in 2020 2,984 rape cases.

Odisha reported a jump in crime rate by 10 percent as the state battled in 2020.

The State recorded 1,34,230 cognizable offences including 1,470 murder, 514 dacoity, 2,166 robbery, 4,500 burglary, 10,412 theft, 3,524 swindling, 2,059 rioting and 2,984 rape cases in 2020.

There was a 10.45% jump in the commission of cognizable offences than that of 2019. A total of 1,21,525 cognizable offences were committed in 2019 stated the standing committee report.

The cases of murder also

rose from 1,356 in 2019 to 1,470 in 2020.

In the registration of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act cases, Odisha achieved a new record, with the cumulative seizure surpassing the total seizure of the past ten years. Over 1,800 drug peddlers were nabbed and 1,374 quintals of ganja besides 34 kilograms of brown sugar were seized from their possession. During 2020-21,

Furthermore, around 20,000 acres of cannabis cultivation were destroyed in 2020, which was incidental- ly a new record.

The cases of murder also

COVID testing extended to 30 April in Odisha

Returnees from five high risk states under surveillance

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 13 MARCH:

Odisha government has decided to extend the last date for COVID testing from March 31 to April 30.

Even though the virus infection has substantially declined in the state, the government is in no mood to take chances as possible resurgence of infection may not be entirely ruled out. Therefore the testing will continue till 30 April side by side with the administration

of vaccine to the targeted beneficiaries, said Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare P K Mohapatra.

Currently Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh have been put under restricted state category. The returnees from these high-risk are being put under surveillance and the symptomatic returnees are being tested, Mohapatra said.

As per the latest report, 3,00,589 elderly persons aged 60 years and above have been

inoculated so far. About 84 per cent healthcare workers and 98 per cent frontline workers in the state have already taken the second dose of vaccine for COVID-19.

Meanwhile the State on Saturday reported 63 fresh cases of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours.

Odisha currently has 651 active cases.

A total of 85,80,019 sample tests have been conducted in the state so far including 21,907 on Friday.

Move to provide Rs 5 lakh interest free loan to WSHGs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAGATSINGHPUR, 13 MARCH:

The department of Mission Shakti proposes to enhance the interest free loan from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh to Women Self Help Groups in Odisha, said Ms Sujata Kartikeyan, director of Mission Shakti.

Ms Sujata Kartikeyan reviewed the different activities of women SHGs here and held a meeting with district collector Sangram Keshari Mohapatra and other officers.

The review revealed that a total of 1,338 WSHGs are functioning in the district benefiting over 2,17 lakh, many of

whom are engaged in various activities ranging from supply of Mid Day Meal to schools, electricity meter reading at Paradip, horticulture, mushroom and vegetable cultivation etc.

Ms Kartikeyan, who is

regarded as the driving force of the successful WSHG movement in the state, noted that the state cabinet has decided to provide work worth Rs 500 crore to WSHGs.

Till date, loan assistance worth Rs 4,000 cores have been given to the women groups, she said.

She said that the state government has decided to provide Rs 50 lakh to each federation in each block towards construction of special mission Shakti Griha and they will take all responsibility for construction of these buildings.

Training centers and selling centers of different products of local SHGs will be opened.

Besides this, the state government has given Rs 25 lakh to each block towards the revolving fund.

Collector Mohapatra noted that SHGs had played a crucial role during the pandemic by supplying masks, sanitizers etc. The WSHGs in the district had generated an income of Rs 3 crore as labour charge by supplying uniforms to school students, he added.

It may be noted here that over 70 lakh women are involved in WSHGs in Odisha and CM Naveen Patnaik describes it as a 'silent revolution' empowering women in transforming the rural economy.

Road accident fatalities due to speeding & riding without helmets

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 13 MARCH:

The over-speeding, non-wearing of helmets is attributed to be the major causes of road accident fatalities in the State, an official said on Monday.

It's the motorcyclists and two wheeler riders who are perishing in large numbers every year as they throw road safety norms to the wind and get killed in road accidents.

As many as 41% road accident fatalities were reported

last year as the victims did not wear helmets, said officials who attended a high level meeting, chaired by chief secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra yesterday.

The 2019 year saw the death of 2,397 motorcyclists and two-wheeler riders, who did not sport helmets. The death toll in the road accidents stood at 5,333 in 2019.

However the road accident fatalities dropped by 11% in 2020, largely due to Covid induced lockdown. Still the death of helmet-less riders

goes unabated in the State. As many as 1,331 accident-prone black spots have been identified across the State. The Rural development and works department, State Transport Authority, Police and National Highway authorities have been asked to work in a coordinated manner to bring down the accident and fatality rate in the State, Chief Secretary Mahapatra said.

The road accident fatalities have risen by 9.5%, 3.7%, 7.3% and 11%, 0.34% respectively in Odisha during the years 2014 to 2019, although the apex court had directed the State to reduce fatalities by 10% every year. In 2020 however, the road accident fatalities dropped by 11%.

Besides helmet-less riding and over-speeding, drunken driving, use of mobile phone by driving while driving, unregulated vehicular traffic, the violation of road safety norms and unauthorized roadside parking have all contributed to the rise in the mishaps and fatalities.

Forest fire in Odisha 'under control': Task Force

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 13 MARCH:

The forest fire situation over the last fortnight in Odisha is now under 'total control' and the blaze in Simlipal National Park is 'completely contained' said the Task Force set up by the state government.

The central team sent by the Union Minister Prakash Javadekar which had been to Simlipal forests is now visiting Kudliha Wildlife Sanctuary, informed the officials here.

In fact the central team which was deployed after a delegation of BJD MPs met Minister Javadekar had reached Simlipal when the situation was already under control and fire points were reduced to a large extent.

The state government had set up a Task Force which included experts from Dehradun and Hyderabad to deal with the situation.

Two held for setting fire in forest of Jajpur dist

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAJPUR, 13 MARCH:

Two persons were arrested by the forest officials on charges of setting fire in the Mahagiri reserve forest under Tomka Forest range of Jajpur district on Saturday. The accused have been identi-

fied as Mahadeva Tiria of Raighati and Gobinda Jangala of Kanas village in Sukinda areas, forest officials said.

It may be noted here that Mayurbhanj district forest officers have arrested four persons on similar charges over the last eight days.

the community as well as the district administration, deployment of additional manpower and equipment have resulted in the containment, they claimed.

Additional Chief Secretary, Mrs. Mona Sharma visited the fire affected areas of Simlipal and interacted with villagers as well as forest officials.

Bailed prisoners languishing in jails: Orissa HC seeks report

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, 13 MARCH:

The Orissa High Court directed the Odisha State Legal Services Authority (OSLSA) to facilitate early release of prisoners who are reportedly languishing in jails on account of inability on their part to furnish bail bonds.

The High Court was hearing public interest litigation (PIL) which submitted that under-trial prisoners are still lodged in various jails in Odisha despite the concerned courts granting them bail.

The bailed out prisoners are unable to walk out of jails for failing to furnish bail bonds.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice S. Muralidhar and Justice B.P. Routray directed the Member Secretary, OSLSA to gather information in close coordination with the Inspector General of Prisons, Odisha on the number of such prisoners in various jails in Odisha.

The OSLSA shall take steps to facilitate their release by getting panel counsel to file further applications before the

court which granted such bail to modify the conditions in terms of the judgments. The OSLSA also, in consultation with the jail authorities, shall examine the possibility of conducting Jail Adalats for the purposes of compounding offences, which can facilitate early release of such prisoners, the division bench ordered.

Ruling on the alleged lack of medical attention on sick prisoners, the High Court directed the State government to conduct at least one medical inspection of each of the district jails and sub-jails in the by a team of medical professionals.

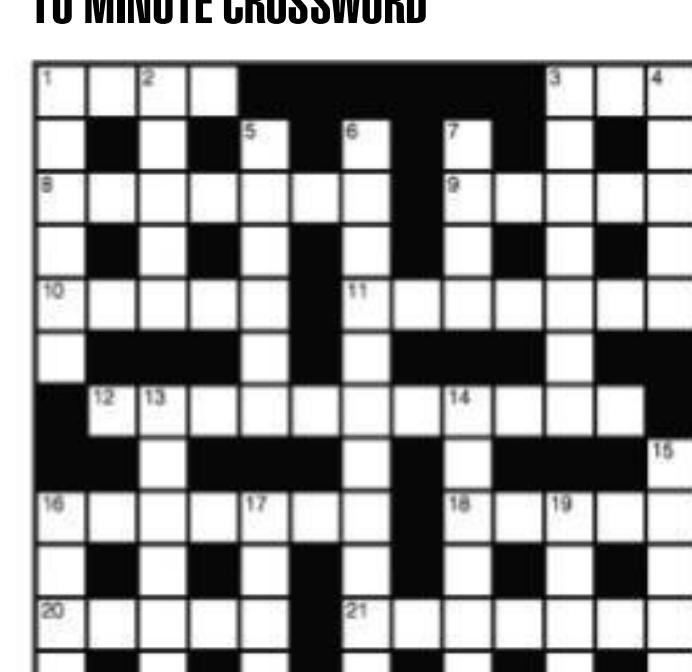
The District Magistrates of the various districts will make a surprise visit to the jails within their jurisdiction, in coordination with the Secretary of the concerned District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and submit a joint report on the conditions of the jails, condition of the prisoners, issues of overcrowding, the status of facilities within the jails including provisions for food and shelter, recreation etc. Preferably, these visits should be unannounced, the HC ordered.

There is also the issue of handcuffing of prisoners in jail or while bringing them from the jail to the court. That practice has been proscribed by the Supreme Court in several judgments, the HC stated asking the government to furnish a report in this regard.

The matter was posted on 27 April for further hearing.

LEISURE

10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Bucket (4)
- 3 Lyric poem (3)
- 8 Entourage (7)
- 9 50-50 odds (5)
- 10 Big (5)
- 11 Result (7)
- 12 Dispute (11)
- 16 Pantomime character (7)
- 18 Wallpaper adhesive (5)
- 20 Little (5)
- 21 Set apart (7)
- 22 Auction item (3)
- 23 Exaggerated publicity (4)

DOWN

- 1 Corpulent (6)
- 2 Bury (5)
- 3 Burdensome (7)
- 4 Come next (5)
- 5 Contaminate (6)
- 6 Excessive admiration (4-7)
- 7 Become liquid (4)
- 13 Pariah (7)
- 14 Hire (6)
- 15 Harsh (6)
- 16 Culinary herb (5)
- 17 Make eyes at (4)
- 19 Unstable (5)

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



NEED TO KNOW

HOSPITALS

22586262, 22585007

RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139

Toll Free Nos. 1800125151

SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747



President Joe Biden believes that the US is going to end up in a stiff competition with China and intends to prevail in that

US NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR JAKE SULLIVAN

A WEEK BEFORE HE IS SET TO MEET HIS CHINESE COUNTERPART FOR THE FIRST TIME

WEATHER

CITY	MAX(°C)	MIN(°C)
SINGAPORE	31	25 H
HONG KONG	23	20 CL
TOKYO	17	10 CL
LONDON	9	6 R
DUBAI	29	21 CL
SAN FRANCISCO	11	8 H
NEW YORK	11	1 S
MOSCOW	-1	-8 H

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

THUMBNAILS



A ballet dancer performs on the frozen ice to protest the construction of a grain terminal and other infrastructure in the Gulf of Finland, in Leningrad region, Russia.

AGENCIES

Plane crash in Kazakhstan: A military plane crashed in Kazakhstan on Saturday, killing four of its crew and injuring the other, officials said. The ex-Soviet country's Emergencies Ministry said the two survivors were hospitalised. The cause of the crash wasn't clear.

AP

Former Jamaat-e-Islami leader held: A 60-year-old former leader of Islamic organisation Jamaat-e-Islami, Rasheed Hajjul Akbar, has been arrested in Sri Lanka for allegedly promoting extremism in the country. He was publishing articles to promote Wahhabism and Jihadist ideology in Sri Lanka.

PTI

National Day of Reflection: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Saturday backed a charity-led initiative to declare March 23 as a National Day of Reflection, marking the one-year anniversary of the day he declared a national stay-at-home lockdown to control the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

PTI

UK slams China for violating Sino-British Declaration

LONDON, 13 MARCH

Britain's foreign secretary on Saturday criticised China for continuing to violate the Sino-British Joint Declaration as Beijing further tightens control over Hong Kong.

Dominic Raab said Beijing's decision to impose radical changes to restrict participation in Hong Kong's electoral system... is part of a pattern designed to harass and stifle all voices critical of China's policies."

The moves amount to the third breach of the Joint Declaration in less than nine months, Raab said in a statement.

The Chinese authorities' continued action means I must now report that the UK considers Beijing to be in a state of ongoing non-compliance with the Joint Declaration, a demonstration of the growing gulf between Beijing's promises and its actions," the foreign secretary said.

British and Chinese authorities signed the agreement in 1984, paving the way for Hong Kong's handover from British to Chinese rule in 1997. The agreement stipulated that the former British colony would retain a high degree of autonomy and its civil rights and freedoms for at least 50 years.

The UK and US criticised China Thursday when its ceremonial legislature endorsed the Communist Party's move to reduce the role of Hong Kong voters in picking the territory's lawmakers and ensure patriots rule the city. Under the changes, a pro-Beijing committee that picks the city's chief executive will have the power to also appoint a relatively large number of members of Hong Kong's 90-seat legislature.

AP

Police detain 150 in Russian Opp forum

Crackdown follows the arrest and imprisonment of Alexei Navalny

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MOSCOW, 13 MARCH

Russian police on Saturday detained about 150 participants of a forum of independent members of municipal councils, an action that comes amid the authorities' multi-pronged crackdown on dissent.

Police showed up at the gathering in Moscow shortly after it opened, saying that all those present will be detained for taking part in an event organised by an undesirable organisation.

A police officer leading a leading role in Open Russia, a group funded by self-exiled Russian tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, moved to London after spending 10 years in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging President Vladimir Putin's rule.

A 2015 law introduced criminal punishment for membership in undesirable organisations. The government has used the law to ban about 30 groups, including Open Russia.

Their goal was to scare people away from engaging in politics, Andrei Pivovarov, a politician who helped organize the forum, said in a video from a police van.

Pivovarov has played a leading role in Open Russia, a group funded by self-exiled Russian tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, moved to London after spending 10 years in prison in Russia on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging President Vladimir Putin's rule.

The laws have been widely criticised as part of the Kremlin's efforts to stifle dissent, but the Russian authorities have described them as a response to alleged Western efforts to undermine the country.

The police crackdown on Saturday's forum follows the

arrest and imprisonment of Russian opposition leader, Alexei Navalny.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's most determined political foe was arrested on January 17 upon returning from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin. Russian authorities have rejected the accusation.

Last month, Navalny was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for violating the terms of his probation while convalescing in Germany charges he dismissed as a Kremlin vendetta. His arrest and imprisonment triggered a wave of protests across Russia, to which the authorities responded with a massive crackdown.

The government has intensified its crackdown on the opposition ahead of parliamentary elections set for September as the popularity of the main Kremlin-backed party, United Russia, has dwindled.

The police crack down on Saturday's forum follows the

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS, 13 MARCH

The city of Minneapolis on Friday agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a civil lawsuit from George Floyd's family over the Black man's death in police custody, as jury selection continued in a former officer's murder trial.

Council members met privately to discuss the settlement, then returned to public session for a unanimous vote in support of the massive payout.

It easily surpassed the \$20 million the city approved two years ago to the family of a white woman killed by a police officer.

Floyd family attorney Ben Crump called it the largest pre-trial settlement ever for a civil rights claim, and thanked city leaders for showing you care about George Floyd.

It's going to be a long jour-

ney to justice. This is just one step on the journey to justice," Crump said.

This makes a statement that George Floyd deserved better than what we witnessed on May 25, 2020, that George Floyd's life mattered, and that by extension, Black lives matter.

"Even though my brother is not here, he's here with me in my heart, Philonise Floyd said. If I could get him back, I would give all this back." L. Chris Stewart, another attorney who worked with the family, said the size of the settlement "changes evaluations and civil rights for a Black person when they die."

"And what happens is that trickles down to decisions in the communities across this country. When there is a city council or a mayor deciding, 'Oh, should we get rid of no-knock warrants, should we get

rid of chokeholds, do we want to change these policies?' They have 27 million reasons now why they should. And that will make decisions happen. That will make accountability happen."

The settlement includes \$500,000 for the south Minneapolis neighbourhood that includes the 38th and Chicago intersection that has been blocked by barricades since his death, with a massive metal sculpture and murals in his honour.

The city didn't immediately say how that money would be spent.

Floyd was declared dead on May 25 after Derek 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.

It's going to be a long jour-

ney to justice. This is just one step on the journey to justice," Crump said.

This makes a statement that George Floyd deserved better than what we witnessed on May 25, 2020, that George Floyd's life mattered, and that by extension, Black lives matter.

"Even though my brother is not here, he's here with me in my heart, Philonise Floyd said. If I could get him back, I would give all this back." L. Chris Stewart, another attorney who worked with the family, said the size of the settlement "changes evaluations and civil rights for a Black person when they die."

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Floyd family agrees to \$27mn settlement amidst ex-cop's trial

ASSOCIATED PRESS
MINNEAPOLIS, 13 MARCH

The city of Minneapolis on Friday agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a civil lawsuit from George Floyd's family over the Black man's death in police custody, as jury selection continued in a former officer's murder trial.

Council members met privately to discuss the settlement, then returned to public session for a unanimous vote in support of the massive payout.

It easily surpassed the \$20 million the city approved two years ago to the family of a white woman killed by a police officer.

Floyd family attorney Ben Crump called it the largest pre-trial settlement ever for a civil rights claim, and thanked city leaders for showing you care about George Floyd.

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China aims to vaccinate 70-80% of citizens by mid-2022

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIJING, 13 MARCH

China is aiming to vaccinate 70-80 per cent of its population by the end of this year or mid-2022, the head of the country's Center for Disease Control said Saturday.

Although emergency vaccinations have been underway in China since at least last summer, the country has been slow to announce whether it had any plans to achieve herd immunity.

China currently has 17 vaccine candidates for clinical trials. It has approved four domestically made vaccines: two from state-owned Sinopharm, one from SinoVac, and another from CanSino. China announced on Friday that it would waive a Covid test and health form requirement for foreigners applying for visas to the mainland from Hong Kong if they have been vaccinated with a Chinese-made vaccine.

other countries, including the US, government health experts have acknowledged. China has committed roughly 10 times more doses abroad than it has distributed at home.

China had administered 52.5 million vaccine doses through the end of February. It has been slower in its vaccination campaign than many

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According to the scientists, including Alejandro Balazs from the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in the US, neutralising antibodies work by binding tightly to the virus and blocking it from entering cells, thus preventing

infection.

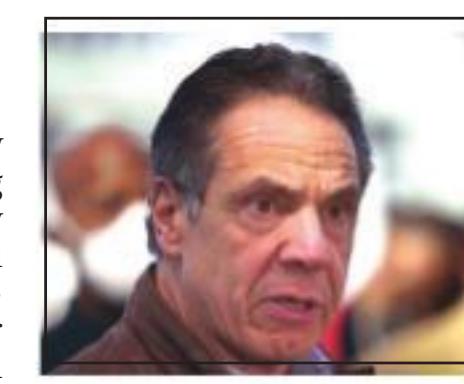
They said this binding only happens when the antibody's and the virus' shapes are perfectly matched to each other "like a key in a lock."

If the shape of the virus changes where the antibody attaches to it, in this case, in the spike protein of the novel coronavirus, they said the antibody may no longer be able to recognise and neutralise the virus as well.

In the study, the researchers developed assays for Covid-19, comparing how well the antibodies worked against the original strain versus the

Dems call on Cuomo to resign amid harassment allegations

ASSOCIATED PRESS
ALBANY (US), 13 MARCH



New York Governor Andrew Cuomo confronted a stunning series of defections Friday amid allegations of sexual harassment that left the high-profile Democrat fighting for his political survival, angry and alone.

By day's end, the three-term governor had lost the support of almost the entire 29-member New York congressional delegation and a majority of Democrats in the state legislature. None of the deserters hurt more than those of New York's two US senators, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand.

Due to the multiple, credible sexual harassment and misconduct allegations, it is clear that Governor Cuomo has lost the confidence of his governing partners and the people of New York, the Democratic senators wrote in a joint statement. Governor Cuomo should resign.

The escalating political crisis has spawned an impeachment inquiry in an

overwhelmingly Democratic state, and threatens to cast a cloud over President Joe Biden's early days in office.

Republicans have seized on the scandal to try to distract from Biden's success tackling the coronavirus pandemic and challenge his party's well-established advantage with female voters.

Biden, a longtime ally of Cuomo and his father, former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, has avoided directly addressing the controversy, although it's becoming increasingly difficult.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Friday declined to say whether Biden believed Cuomo should resign. She said every woman who has come forth deserves to have her voice heard, should be treated with respect and

should be able to tell her story.

The senators' statement, which cited the pandemic as a reason for needing sure and steady leadership, came shortly after Schumer stood alongside Biden at a Rose Garden ceremony celebrating the passage of the Democrat-backed USD 1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

A defiant Cuomo earlier in the day insisted he would not step down and condemned his Democratic detractors as reckless and dangerous."

I did not do what has been alleged. Period, he said, before evoking a favorite grievance of former President Donald Trump. People know the difference between playing politics, bowing to cancel culture and the truth.

Never before has the brash, 63-year-old Democratic governor, who had been expected to run for a fourth term in 2022, been more politically isolated. Some in Cuomo's party had already turned against him and his coalition of critics has expanded geographically and politically.

IN MEMORIAM

The Afghan government will take part in both the Moscow and Turkey conferences

AFGHANISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR HAMDULLAH MOHIB

AGREEING TO RENEW AFGHAN PEACE TALKS

Six killed overnight in Myanmar

Leaders of the US, India, Australia and Japan vow to restore democracy in the S-E Asian nation as crackdown continues

AGENCIES

YANGON, 13 MARCH

At least six protesters were killed by security forces in Myanmar, witnesses and media reported, as activists marked the death anniversary on Saturday of a student whose killing in 1988 sparked an uprising against the military government.

Three people were killed and several injured when police opened fire on a sit-in protest in Mandalay, Myanmar's second-biggest city, two witnesses told Reuters. Another person was killed in the central town of Pyay and two died in police firing in the commercial capital Yangon overnight, domestic media



reported.

"The security forces initially stopped the ambulance from reaching the injured people and only allowed it later," a 23-year-old protester in Pyay said, asking not to be named for fear of retribution. "By

the time they allowed it, one of the injured became critical and he later died."

The deaths came as the leaders of the United States, India, Australia and Japan vowed to work together to restore democracy in the

Southeast Asian nation.

More than 70 people have been killed in Myanmar in widespread protests against a February 1 coup by the military, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners advocacy group has said.

Saturday's protests erupted after posters spread on social media urging people to mark the death anniversary of Phone Maw, who was shot and killed by security forces in 1988 inside what was then known as the Rangoon Institute of Technology campus.

His shooting and that of another student who died a few weeks later sparked widespread protests against the military government known as the 8-8-88 campaign, because they peaked in August

that year. An estimated 3,000 people were killed when the army crushed the uprising, at the time the biggest challenge to military rule dating back to 1962.

Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as a democracy icon during the movement and was kept under house arrest for nearly two decades.

She was released in 2008 as the military began democratic reforms. Her National League for Democracy won elections in 2015 and again in November last year.

On February 1 this year, the generals overthrew her government and detained Suu Kyi and many of her cabinet colleagues, claiming fraud in the November elections.

The coup in Myanmar,

where the military has close ties to China, is a major early test for US President Joe Biden.

His administration described a virtual meeting with the Indian, Japanese and Australian leaders on Friday, the first official summit of the group known as the Quad, as part of a push to demonstrate a renewed US commitment to regional security.

"As longstanding supporters of Myanmar and its people, we emphasise the urgent need to restore democracy and the priority of strengthening democratic resilience," the four leaders said in a statement released by the White House.

A spokesman for the junta did not answer phone calls from Reuters seeking comment.

Prachanda-led CPN-MC recalls its ministers from Oli's Cabinet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 13 MARCH



norms of the party.

Since the Supreme Court invalidated the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) merger and revived its constituents CPN-UML and Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Centre)

on Sunday last, Oli has been keeping a bay the faction led by Madhav Kumar Nepal that had opposed him and tightening his hold on the party by relieving leaders close to Nepal from party positions, the daily said.

Nepal's Election Commission on Tuesday asked the CPN (UML) and the CPN (Maoist Centre) led by Prachanda to come up with a new name and election symbol of the party if they decide to merge their parties again after the Supreme Court quashed the 2018 unification of the two parties.

The CPN (UML) and CPN (Maoist Centre) merged in May 2018 to form a unified Nepal Communist Party following the victory of their alliance in the 2017 general elections.

On last Sunday, the apex court quashed their unification and granted authenticity of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) to Rishiram Kattel, who had registered the party at the Election Commission in his name prior to the formation of Nepal Communist Party (NCP) led by Oli and Prachanda.

Kattel had challenged the Election Commission's decision to register Nepal Communist Party (NCP) under Oli and Prachanda in May 2018. The bench said that a new party cannot be registered with the Election Commission when it already has a party registered with a similar name.

Ethiopia denies 'ethnic cleansing' claim by US, terms it 'unfounded'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KAMPALA, 13 MARCH

The Ethiopian government is disputing charges of ethnic cleansing in the Tigray conflict, calling allegations by the United States unfounded.

Nothing during or after the end of the main law enforcement operation in Tigray can be identified or defined by any standards as a targeted, intentional ethnic cleansing against anyone in the region, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Saturday.

That is why the Ethiopian government vehemently opposes such accusations. Allegations of ethnic cleansing amount to a completely unfounded and spurious verdict against the Ethiopian government, it said, accusing Washington of overblowing things out of proportion. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken asserted Wednesday that ethnic cleansing has happened in western Tigray, the first time a top official in the



international community has openly described Tigray's alleged atrocities as such.

Blinken told the foreign affairs committee of the US House of Representatives that the US is seeing very credible reports of human rights abuses and atrocities that are ongoing in Tigray, a region in the north of Ethiopia that is the base of a party that dominated Ethiopian politics for decades before the rise of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

The leaders of that party, known by its initials TPLF, are in hiding as federal forces and their allies, including fighters from Eritrea, hunt down fighters loyal to the local administration in Tigray. The conflict began in

November, when Abiy sent government troops into Tigray after an attack there on federal military facilities.

No one knows how many thousands of civilians have been killed in the conflict.

While Ethiopia's government says a federal investigation of the alleged crimes is underway, critics say the government cannot effectively investigate itself.

They want an international probe, ideally led by the United Nations. The latest government statement suggested an openness to a probe featuring outside groups.

If necessary, the statement said, the government will conduct joint investigations with the relevant bodies from the international community, including the African Union.

Blinken has urged Abiy, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for his efforts to make peace with neighboring Eritrea, to end hostilities in Tigray. Eritrean troops as well as fighters from Amhara, an Ethiopian region.

HOLIDAY MOOD



Participants take part in a performance as students and teachers of a local school celebrate Maslenitsa, also known as Pancake Week, a pagan holiday marking the end of winter, in central Moscow, Russia.

AGENCIES

Afghan bomb kills at least 8; UN slams high civilian deaths

KABUL, 13 MARCH

A powerful car bomb killed at least eight people and injured 47 in Afghanistan's western Herat province, officials said Saturday.

The death toll in the explosion late Friday that also destroyed 14 houses is expected to rise because several of the injured were critical, said Rafiq Sherzai, a spokesman for the provincial hospital.

One among the dead and 11 of the injured were Afghan Security Forces personnel while the remainder were civilians, including women and children, said Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian.

No one has claimed responsibility.

Within hours of the attack, the UN Security Council at a press briefing in New York condemned an alarming increase in attacks in Afghanistan targeting civilians even as the Taliban and the Afghan government hold on-again-off-again talks in Qatar.

These heinous attacks have targeted civil servants, the judiciary, the media, health care and humanitarian workers, including women in prominent positions, those who protect and promote human rights, and ethnic and religious minorities, the council said.

The Islamic State group has claimed responsibility for many of the targeted killings while the Taliban and the government have blamed each other for trying to sabotage efforts to reach a peace agreement.

The slow pace of talks and the increasing violence has prompted the US to cobble together a peace proposal, which was delivered last weekend. Both sides are expected to review and revise the eight-page plan ahead of a far-reaching meeting the US has proposed to be held in Turkey within weeks, when Washington hopes to see an agreement. The US meanwhile is reviewing a peace deal the Trump administration signed with the Taliban.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

COLOMBO, 13 MARCH

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has praised his brothers, saying that all three of them are firmly united and anyone trying to drive a wedge between them will not succeed.

In a comment made by the president at a political gathering on Friday, Gotabaya Rajapaksa praised the maturity of his elder brother Mahinda, the prime minister, and the younger brother Basil, the key presidential adviser.

Mahinda Rajapaksa is currently one of the greatest leaders not only here but also in Asia. His political experience, maturity and knowledge cannot be matched by anyone, he said during the programme.

"His mature leadership is a great relief to me in taking the country forward," he was quoted as saying by an official statement released on Saturday.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, 71, praised Basil as the man who created the Rajapaksa political party, the Sri Lanka Peo-

Rajapaksa siblings firmly united: Gotabaya



COLOMBO, 13 MARCH

Sri Lanka will ban the wearing of the burqa and shut more than a thousand Islamic schools, government minister said on Saturday, the latest actions affecting the country's minority Muslim population.

Minister for public security Sarath Weerasekera told a news conference he had signed a paper on Friday for cabinet approval to ban the full face covering worn by some Muslim women on "national security" grounds.

"In our early days Muslim women and girls never wore the burqa," he said. "It is a sign of religious extremism that came about recently. We are definitely going to ban it."

The wearing of the burqa in the majority-Buddhist nation was temporarily banned in 2019 after the bombing of churches and hotels by Islamic militants that killed more than 250.

Weerasekera said the government plans to ban Islamic schools flouting the national education policy.

AGENCIES

Lanka to ban burqa, shut Islamic schools

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS, 13 MARCH

The UN Security Council voted unanimously on Friday to extend the almost 20,000-strong UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, with a mandate "to advance a three-year strategic vision to prevent a return to civil war" and build peace both nationally and locally.

The resolution approved by the council also authorizes the mission, known as UNMISS, to "support inclusive and accountable governance and free, fair and peaceful elections."

It demands that all parties to the conflict and armed groups "immediately end the fighting throughout South Sudan."

There were high hopes that South Sudan would have peace and stability after gaining its long-fought independence from neighbouring Sudan in 2011. But the world's youngest nation slid into ethnic violence in December 2013, when forces loyal to President Salva Kiir, a Dinka, started battling those loyal to Riek Machar, his for-



The civil war has killed nearly 400,000 people and displaced millions, and the death toll keeps rising

mer vice president who belongs to the Nuer people.

Numerous attempts at peace failed, including a deal that saw Machar return as vice president in 2016, only to flee the country months later amid fresh fighting. Intense international pressure followed a 2018 peace deal, and on February 22, 2020 a coalition government led by Kiir, with Machar as his deputy, was formed. But peace still remains elusive.

The civil war has killed nearly 400,000 people and displaced millions, and the death toll keeps rising.

UN mandates S Sudan force to prevent return to civil war

The Security Council resolution recognised the reduction in violence between parties to the peace agreement, "and that the permanent cease-fire was upheld in most parts of the country."

But it also strongly condemned all fighting, including increased violence between armed groups in some parts of the country which has killed and displaced thousands. And it condemned the mobilisation of these armed groups by members of the government's forces and by armed opposition groups.

The council demanded that South Sudan's leaders fully implement the permanent cease-fire including reconstituting the Transitional National Legislative Assembly and the Council of States and initiating a permanent constitution-making process, with broad-based public consultations.

Council members expressed "grave concern" at ongoing reports of sexual and gender-based violence and demanded that all parties immediately halt all violence and human rights abuses.

UN urges Somalia to organise polls without delay

UNITED NATIONS, 13 MARCH

The UN Security Council urged Somalia's government on Friday to organise elections without delay in a resolution that stressed the pressing threat to the country's security from al-Shabab and armed opposition groups.

This resolution, which was adopted unanimously, authorised the African Union to maintain its nearly 20,000-strong force in Somalia until the end of the year with a mandate to reduce the threat from the extremist groups to enable a stable, federal, sovereign and united Somalia.

The UN's most powerful body said its objective is to transfer security to Somali authorities, with the aim of Somalia taking the lead in 2021, and achieving full responsibility by the end of 2023.

It emphasises the importance of building the capacity of Somali forces and institutions so they are able to manage current and future threats.

US resumes aid to Yemen's rebel north as famine threatens

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 13 MARCH



The United States announced a resumption of aid to Yemen's rebel-held north on Friday to fight a looming famine as the country's nearly six-year-old war grinds on. UN officials warned that a blockade of fuel deliveries to a main port was heightening the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The aid concern came as President Joe Biden's envoy to Yemen expressed frustration at the country's Houthi rebels, saying they were focusing on fighting to capture more territory while an international and regional diplomatic push was underway to end the conflict.

The developments deepen the challenges for the Biden administration as it

Lenderking said the Houthi rebels had a cease-fire proposal before them for a "number of days" and urged them to respond positively.

He gave no details, including whether the proposal was new or an updated version of a nationwide cease-fire plan that UN special envoy Martin Griffiths announced last year.

Fighting and massive displacement of people, crippling fuel shortages and rising food prices have 50,000 Yemenis already caught up in famine and 5 million more a step away from it, the United Nations says. It projects 400,000 Yemeni children under 5 are at risk of dying this year from malnutrition.

The war began when the Houthi rebels seized the cap-

ital, Sanaa, and much of the north in 2014. Saudi Arabia has led an unsuccessful air campaign since 2015 to try to dislodge the rebels, while rival Iran has consolidated its support for the Houthi.

Biden has reversed Obama and Trump administration policy in the conflict by pulling US support for the Saudi-led offensive. Biden's six-week-old administration is reviving US diplomatic efforts to end the conflict.

Friday's announcement on renewed US humanitarian support for the north comes about a year after the Trump administration stopped some aid on the grounds that Houthi rebels were diverting the foreign assistance for themselves. The Trump administration move affected about

USD 50 million in aid, out of more than USD 1.5 billion in humanitarian assistance the US has provided Yemen since 2019, the US Agency for International Development said.

The Biden administration as of Friday will "cautiously resume" support to humanitarian groups working in Yemen's north, said Sarah Charles, a senior official for humanitarian assistance at the US AID.

The



ONCE AGAIN

Chris Gayle (in photo, left) is targeting a third Twenty20 World Cup trophy with the West Indies, having made his return to international cricket following a two-year absence. The former captain played for the Caribbeans in a One-Day International against India in 2019, calling it his last international appearance.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

Windies win: A record opening stand of 192 runs between Evin Lewis and Shai Hope followed by composed batting by Nicholas Pooran guided the West Indies to a five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the second one-dayer. The West Indies made 274-5 in 49.4 overs.

Hales unwanted: Alex Hales' chance of making a redemptive England return in time for the Twenty20 World Cup is receding, with captain Eoin Morgan insisting he is not in need of top-order reinforcements. Hales has not played for his country since March 2019.

All praised: Moeen Ali's tough winter with England is heading for a brighter period, with Eoin Morgan declaring the all-rounder "worth his weight in gold" in the white-ball team. Ali has endured a tricky start to the year, testing positive for Covid-19 on arrival in Sri Lanka.

Wright chosen: Punjab Kings have appointed former Australia first-class cricketer Damien Wright bowling coach for the Indian Premier League's 2021 edition. The former cricketer, who represented Tasmania for a large part of his career, coached Hobart Hurricanes.

'Poor' pitch: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has expressed concern about the state of the pitch at Etihad Stadium. City have had few problems playing at home this season but Guardiola feels the surface is in poor condition compared with other venues.

Money game: Manchester United say that co-chairman Avram Glazer stands to make approximately £71.5m by selling a portion of his shares in the Old Trafford club. The Glazer family's combined ownership of United will thus drop from 78 per cent to 75 per cent.

New contract: Angel Di Maria has signed a one-year extension of his contract with Paris Saint-Germain, tying him to the club until June 2022, the French champions announced on Friday. On the club's website, PSG said the deal included the option for an extra season.

Vaccine complication: Japanese athletes at the Olympics will not be eligible for coronavirus vaccines offered by China since Japan has not approved them, Olympics minister Tamayo Marukawa said. China has offered vaccine doses for participants.

Tsitsipas upset: World No 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas saw his hopes of a third successive Marseille title dashed by No 93 Pierre-Hugues Herbert in the quarter-finals on Friday. Herbert, better known as a doubles specialist, swept past Tsitsipas 6-7 (6/8), 6-4, 6-2.

Batra files nomination: Seeking re-election as the International Hockey Federation (FIH) president, incumbent Narinder Batra has filed his nomination ahead of the governing body's 47th Statutory Congress, scheduled in Delhi on 22 May.

Why Indian batsmen must buck up

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
AHMEDABAD, 13 MARCH

Sharma's presence is necessary at the top of the order and even though no one is really talking about it, it's been long since the Indian skipper has put up an impactful T20 performance.

They are more than competent and will be expected to give a far better account of themselves, trying to play more shots square of the wicket like Shreyas Iyer did during his innings of 67 off 48 balls. Both Pandya (19 off 21 balls) and Pant (21 off 23 balls) weren't able to gauge the pace of the track as Archer and Mark Wood bowled fast and straight denying them any width for the cut shot. The extra bounce didn't allow them to drive on the up.

The wicket didn't allow

you to hit the kind of shots you wanted to. Shreyas' innings was an example of how you could use the depth of the crease and ride the bounce. There was variable bounce at times, and he hit to the areas square of the wicket, which the others failed to do," Kohli said, adding: "It was just a below-par batting performance and England made us pay for it."

The captain's acknowledgement of Iyer's utility could well mean that the wait for Suryakumar Yadav might

get a tad longer with only one middle-order slot available currently. But then, Kohli's propensity to change his playing XI at the drop of a hat is well-documented.

While giving his team's oldest member, Shikhar Dhawan, a couple of matches is perfectly understandable, how long Kohli wants to persist with the left-hander, who inspired no confidence making 4 off 12 balls, is an important question.

Rohit Sharma, Kohli said, had been rested for a couple

of matches after playing six consecutive Test matches apart from spending 14 days in a hard quarantine at the start of the Australia series.

Sharma's presence is necessary at the top of the order and even though no one is really talking about it, it's been long since the Indian skipper has put up an impactful T20 performance. The bowling department didn't have enough runs on the board to put up a fight but whether one of the three spinners can make way for a tearaway like Navdeep Saini remains to be seen. Perhaps Yuzvendra Chahal could make way for Rahul Tewatia, who may not be as crafty a leg-break bowler but is certainly a decent one with a good batting prowess.

Mumbai City FC beat ATK Mohun Bagan 2-1, win ISL title

AGENCIES
GOA, 13 MARCH

Mumbai City FC muscled their dominance in the seventh edition of the Hero Indian Super League with an emphatic 2-1 win over ATK Mohun Bagan at the Fatorda Stadium, pocketing an enviable achievement of capping the season title with the League Shield.

Sergio Lobera's men made it two trophies in two weeks becoming just the second team to top the group phase and win the title. Bipin Singh scored a 90th-minute winner after a Tiri own goal (29') had dragged Mumbai level. Bagan had earlier taken the lead through David Williams (18').

Mumbai continued with their usual possession-based football but for Bagan who were out of the blocks early, it was all about surging ahead. While the islanders had over 60% possession in the first quarter, Bagan had more shots on target. There was an early penalty call when Bipin Singh was challenged in the box by Pritam Kotal, but the referee disallowed no interest.

Thereafter, it was all about

the Mariners. The Kolkata side pinned their opponents with a high pressing game which forced the Islanders into errors. The first real threat for Mumbai came from a Javier Hernandez free-kick which brushed the crossbar. Roy Krishna then forced a save from Amrinder Singh from a tight angle.

With pressure mounting on Mumbai's defence, the Kolkata side broke the deadlock first. Krishna dispossessed Ahmed Jahouh just outside the box and slipped a pass to Williams. The Australian got on to his stronger right foot and fired a firm shot past Amrinder.

But with Jahouh and his trademark long deliveries, it was always going to get difficult for ATKMB. And with one such move, Mumbai found themselves back in the game. On seeing Bipin make a run upfront, Jahouh played along ball from his own half into the Kolkata box. Tiri attempted a clearance but his header landed in his own goal. Mumbai continued with attack after restart and Raynier Fernandes forced yet another save from Arindam after breaking into the

area skipping past challenges from Kolkata defence. The Bagan keeper then produced a fine save to deny Hernan Santana from a free-kick.

At the hour mark, Mumbai probably had the best chance of the game. Arindam managed to block Le Fondre's shot but the rebound traveled to Boumous, whose shot was off-target. Bagan had the ball in the back of the net when Hernandez's freekick was deflected off Mohamad Rakip into his own net, but the linesman caught Krishna offside.

After producing some fine saves, Arindam made a huge mistake which cost his team the title. After he failed to deal with a long ball properly, Bartholomeu Ogbeche chased it down. The ball found its way to Bipin who made no mistake from close range.

Krishna was adjudged the Hero of the League while Igor Angulo won the Golden Boot. Amrinder won the Golden Glove award. Alberto Noguera won the DHL Winning Pass of the Season while Lalengnawia of the NorthEast United was adjudged the Emerging Player of the League.



Women's match

LUCKNOW, 13 MARCH

Vijay Hazare final: Shaw v Sharma

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

India's women's cricket team hope their lower-order batting comes good this time around and they are able to challenge South Africa in the fourth One-Day International, a game they need to win to stay alive in the five-match series.

The Proteas lead the series 2-1 and a win at Ekana Stadium will seal the serialised contest in their favour. India were coasting along to set up a challenging total against the visitors in the third ODI but the failure of their lower-order batswomen to make the most of the last five overs restricted them to 249. Captain Mithali Raj admitted the lower-order batters needed to chip in.

The series assumes importance as the women's World Cup to be held in New Zealand is less than a year away and India have not played any cricket over the past year owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. India's selections for this series have fuelled some uncomfortable questions with medium-pacer Shikha Pandey, the team's second-highest wicket-taker in the 2020 Twenty20 World Cup, left out surprisingly. JANS

Shaw's battle with left-arm spinner Shivam Sharma will be the highlight of the match. While Shaw has topped the scoring charts of the tournament this season -- 75 runs at an average of 188.5, Sharma is the leading wicket-taker having taken 20 wickets at an average of 142 and an economy rate of 4.22.

Ever since the current format of the tournament came into existence at the turn of the century with each zone's top teams playing a round-robin format followed by semi-finals and a final to determine an all-India winner, Mumbai have won the tournament thrice and Uttar Pradesh just once.

On paper, Mumbai start favourites due to the sheer experience they have in the line-up although they have been heavily dependent on Shaw like in the semi-final against Karnataka.

UP's batting will find it difficult

against a Mumbai bowling that boasts of former India internationals Shivam Dube and Dhawal Kulkarni. UP will be missing the services of Bhuvneshwar Kumar who is on Indian duty and had played only in the league stages of the tournament.

Mumbai are yet to concede 300 in the entire tournament whereas they have managed to breach the 300-run mark four times out of the four occasions they have batted first. They also managed to put 457 on one occasion, against Puducherry. Uttar Pradesh have just one score of 300 out of three times they have batted first in the tournament. UP's net run rate of 1.559 in the group stages was also inferior to Mumbai's 2.603 and unlike Mumbai, who have been unbeaten, UP lost a game in the league stage.

After three ducks, Kohli says 'it's part of the journey'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, 13 MARCH

India skipper Virat Kohli was yesterday dismissed for a duck for the third time in his last five innings against England. Kohli, struggling to get off the mark after four balls in the first Twenty20 International here, tried to hit Adil Rashid over the 30-yard circle only to be caught by Chris Jordan for a duck.

This followed his zero in India's only innings in the fourth and final Test in which he was removed by Ben Stokes and a duck in the first innings of the second Test in Chennai. He made a fighting 62 in the second innings of the second Test and 27 in the only innings of the pink-ball Test against England.

"Kohli is obviously a dangerous batter and to see the back of him early so many times is a real bonus. I think it probably might have dampened their camp a little bit," pace bowler Jofra Archer, who was Man of the Match in the first T20I, told the media.

Kohli's dismissal yesterday pushed India into a difficult position, at two wickets down for three runs. It was a posi-

tion from where they never managed to recover to post a competitive total. Asked about his inability to get a big score in his past few innings, Kohli said: "It is part of the whole journey in international cricket. If we play long enough, we will have our ups and downs and you have to accept that as a batsman."

The 32-year-old said he would continue to bat with intent and stick to his plans as a batsman. "On your day, you will probably end up scoring more. The important thing is to stay true to your intent, to your plans as a batsman. Accept as a batsman that as a bowling team, they will come out and (some-

times) execute their plans better than you can be with your ones. For me, it has always been about going out there and trying to be as positive as I can," said Kohli.

Kohli batted well through the T20I and the One-Day Internationals series in Australia. India could make only 124-7 yesterday. While Kohli admitted his batsmen had failed to read the wicket, Shreyas Iyer (in photo) - the only one among the home boys to shine, scoring 67 - said the hosts' approach would not change at all.

"If you see the batting line-up we have and the power-hitters down the line, we really don't have to change anything, to be honest."

"We have come with a plan and we need to execute it as much as possible. Because going into the World Cup, we have to see to it that we have ticked all the boxes and this we have to try as much as possible," said Iyer.

The match was seen by perhaps the largest crowd at a venue since cricket resumed across the world after Covid-19 lockdowns with as many as 57,000 people, including volunteers and police, attending it, say local officials.

From squash courts to Harvard, India's No. 1 junior player Amira is an ace

NEW DELHI, 13 MARCH

Like in Indian basketball, there are 'Singh Sisters' in the country's squash fraternity too, where 18-year-old Amira and her 13-year-old sister Anahat are top ranked juniors in their respective categories.

If that wasn't enough, Amira, a student of British School in Chanakyapuri, will be flying to Boston this year to study economics and pursue her passion at the prestigious Harvard University. But will India's junior No. 1 (U-19) be able to strike a balance between studying economics at the Harvard and playing the game at the highest level? "That's what she aims. The current world No. 1 Ali Farag of Egypt

graduated from the Harvard with a degree in mechanical engineering. Harvard University has an excellent squash team along with some of the best coaches. It will help her (Amira) grow as a player," mother Tani Vadhera Singh told PTI on Saturday.

"She was always good in academics and was able to balance both. That was also one of the reasons that the university selected her," she added.

Amira has represented India

Smartly back in customary business, though short on ideas

PULAKESH MUKHOPADHYAY

With his hair parting unusually on the right, Sourav Ganguly looked like someone trying imperfectly to impersonate him but to happen on the interview on YouTube was to feel reassured that he was, well, ticking along quite nicely. The nightmare was over. And that was what he told the very noticeably deferential interviewer, representing a television network, very clearly and unambiguously too.

There had been no scare around his heart problem. Not at all. Or, not one that he'd been aware of, it seemed. The anxious-to-please interview-

Printed and published by VINOD KUMAR GUPTA for THE STATESMAN LTD, Statesman House, 148 Barakhamba Road, New Delhi

Editor: RAVINDRA KUMAR Executive Editor: ARYA RUDRA Printed at Vibha Publication Pvt Ltd, D-160 B, Sector 7, NOIDA 201301 (UP). © The Statesman Ltd. RNB REG. No. M-8905, RNI No. 59445, Vol. No. 26 Issue 55

SHORT POINT

science, they can be coped with and got rid of, Ganguly said hot-totally.

Which implied that it would once again be business as usual, now that he was back in circulation, but there would

be a return to the nub of the matter - will he be up to it when all returns are in? - towards the end of the tete a tête, even if as blandly as on the first occasion. Ganguly's vocabulary was different but his message, such as it was, was this.

What therefore filled much of the time were mostly generous nuggets of praise

for the players who had beaten Australia in Australia and England at home. There, of course, was a reference to Rahul Dravid's behind-the-scenes but invaluable contribution to the collective

national enterprise in terms of lifting youngsters to stardom and well might that have fuelled a few queries about the cricket board chief's detailed assessment of the managerial role of Ravi Shastri but that perhaps would have been a throwback to another age when the raising of nettle-some matters was par for the course.

Instead, a beaming Ganguly was told how Kolkata's citizens discussed him round the clock - apparently a North-to-South trip sufficed to drive it home - and how its newspapers were full of him every day, each week. Well, almost. God was in his heaven and all was right with the world. And when the question, "What next?" popped up again, all that

Ganguly reeled off was his itinerary for the immediate future: he'd go where the boys would play.

That underscored his determinations to push on - and why not? - but what you were left in the dark about was the vision of the cricket board's chief, if any, when India were on the crest of an awesome wave of success.

In Wodehouseian idylls,

Jeeves the butler, looking askance at what he deemed a flawed dinner dress, could communicate his disapproval with an icy stare but then Bertie Wooster's friend,

philosopher and guide knew none of today's all-encompassing, all-pervasive insecurity.

That's what he aims. The current world No. 1 Ali Farag of Egypt

graduated from the Harvard with a degree in mechanical engineering. Harvard University has an excellent squash team along with some of the best coaches. It will help her (Amira) grow as a player," mother Tani Vadhera Singh told PTI on Saturday.

"She was always good in academics and was able to balance both. That was also one of the reasons that the university selected her," she added.

Amira has represented India

at the Asian and World Junior Championships and