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14 killed as minibus crashes into lorry in Andhra Pradesh  
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Locked up in our homes with no explanation, says Omar Abdullah  
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Cong. won't implement CAA if voted to power in Assam, says Rahul  
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## NEARBY



'Inter-State boundary issue creating bad blood'

BHUBANESWAR  
A day after Andhra Pradesh held an election in a disputed region in Odisha's Koraput district, Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday said it was a matter of concern that a State had conducted panchayat elections inside another State's geographical boundary.

REGION ▶ PAGE 6

Army jawan home on leave beaten to death

LUCKNOW  
A 40-year-old Army jawan who was home on leave died after being beaten and hit with bricks by unidentified persons in Prayagraj. Ashutosh Singh, a jawan posted in Udhampur, was declared brought dead at a hospital with severe head injuries, said a police officer.

NEWS ▶ PAGE 12



Show of support: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami, right, and Deputy CM O. Panneerselvam in Chennai on Sunday. ■ RAGU R.

## PM hands over Arjun Mk-1A tank to Army

It showcases India's united spirit, self-reliance, says Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday handed over the indigenous main battle tank Arjun Mk-1A to the Army in a function at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai. Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane received the model of the tank, designed and developed by Chennai-based Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE), a unit of the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).

"A tank made in Tamil Nadu will be used in our northern borders to keep the nation safe. This showcases India's united spirit – Bharat Ekta Darshan," Mr. Modi said.

"We will continue working to make our armed forces one of the most modern forces in the world. At the same time, the focus on making India *aatmanirbhar* (self-reliant) in the defence sector moves with full speed," the Prime Minister said at the event attended by Tamil Nadu Governor Ban-



A view of the indigenous main battle tank Arjun Mk-1A. ■ RAGU R.

wari Lal Purohit, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and other dignitaries.

Mr. Modi was on a flying visit to Chennai where he inaugurated a slew of development projects across several sectors, before flying to Keralia.

He had a 15-minute conversation with Mr. Palaniswami at the venue, according to sources. The AIADMK is an ally of the BJP, and the BJP national president J.P. Nadda, during his visit to the State last month, announced that the alliance would continue.

## Five projects in Kerala launched

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched five projects in Kerala. He said the projects would strengthen the growth trajectory of the country and help create a self-reliant India. He asked start-ups to consider developing projects for the tourism sector. ■ PAGE 10

Mr. Modi posed for photographs with the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, with the three of them raising their hands together in a show of solidarity.

The Prime Minister spoke at length of how India's armed forces signified the country's ethos of courage.

"They have shown, time and again, that they are fully capable of protecting our motherland. Time and again, they have shown India believes in peace. But, India will protect its sovereignty at all costs," he said.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

DU student booked for injecting saline solution

NEW DELHI  
A Delhi University student was nabbed for allegedly administering saline solution to underprivileged children who took tuition from him in east Delhi's Mandawali. The second-year BA student, Sandeep, told the children that the injection would boost their memory. The students who took the injection are fine, said the police.

CITY ▶ PAGE 3

EDUCATIONPLUS ▶ PAGE 2

Uttarakhand landslip toll rises to 50

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Twelve more bodies were recovered on Sunday in Uttarakhand, taking the death toll in the torrential flood to 50. Nearly 154 persons are still missing, according to an update from the police.

Rescue operations are on at the Tapovan hydropower station in Chamoli, which was ravaged by the flood caused by a glacier-linked landslip last Sunday. Many of those killed are believed to be workers, who were trapped inside the tunnels of the hydropower project by massive piles of rubble and debris.

Forty-one bodies were found in Chamoli, seven in Rudraprayag, and one each in Pauri Garhwal and Tehri Garhwal. Only 25 of the deceased have been identified so far.

Efforts are on to divert the river's course from the left bank to the right to aid in desilting operations. Nearly 325 engineers, officers, geologists and scientists are engaged in rescue operations. Officials are also monitoring the size of a lake that has been forming on the upper reaches of the Rishiganga as the natural course of the river has been obstructed by debris. The lake is estimated to be 350 metres long, with a dam height of 50 metres.

The lake, which was detected on Friday, has already started letting out water, multiple scientists said.

  In association with 

## INDIA'S STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

As economies emerge from the effects of the pandemic, India is taking all the steps in the right direction. The year 2021 started with a bang. On January 16, India rolled out the world's largest corona virus vaccination drive. Also, in Q3FY2021, India Inc exceeded the financial

**TURN TO PAGE 11 TO READ MORE**

  
AYUSH SANGHI  
Will the Post-COVID era be the new 'Golden Age' for India?  
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Cong. won't implement CAA if voted to power in Assam, says Rahul  
page 12

Ashwin puts India in dominant position in second Test  
page 15



## Senate acquits Trump of incitement

Former U.S. President hints at return to active politics after 57-43 vote



Donald Trump

by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

**Sad chapter: Biden**

"While the final vote did not lead to a conviction, the substance of the charge is not in dispute," President Joe Biden said in a statement re-

leased late on Saturday. He has been mostly quiet about the trial. "This sad chapter in our history has reminded us that democracy is fragile. That it must always be defended," Mr. Biden said.

Mr. Trump, who won just over 74 million votes in the elections – a record for any incumbent – and has repeatedly said he will continue to be politically active, hinted at the possibility again on Saturday. His massive support base has made the majority of Republican Senators wary of crossing the former President.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10  
MORE REPORTS ON ▶ PAGE 13

## 22-year-old activist sent to Delhi police custody

Disha Ravi shared toolkit with Greta'



Disha Ravi being taken to police custody. ■ ANI

SAURABH TRIVEDI  
NEW DELHI

Disha Ravi, a 22-year-old climate activist, was on Sunday remanded in custody of the Delhi police for five days after she was arrested from Bengaluru for allegedly sharing with Greta Thunberg a "toolkit" related to the farmers' protests.

Ms. Ravi was brought to Delhi where she was formally arrested on Sunday and produced before a magistrate at the Patiala House Courts complex.

The public prosecutor

claimed that the "toolkit" was created as part of a plan to revive pro-Khalistan groups in the country.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

INTIMIDATION TACTIC ▶ PAGE 12

## Bulk of vaccine recipients pass up second dose

Only 1 in 10 take jab after four weeks

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Only about one in 10, or about 23,628 healthcare workers, got inoculated with the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine on Saturday, according to data from the Health Ministry.

Two-dose vaccines  
The second doses of Covaxin and Covishield, the two vaccines approved, are recommended to be administered four to six weeks apart, according to guidelines from the Drug Controller-General of India.

Saturday was an important day in India's COVID-19 vaccination calendar marking 28 days – or four weeks – since the vaccination programme was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on January 16.

On day one, 2,07,229 people

were inoculated, according to figures from the Health Ministry so far. Ideally all of them should have been inoculated with the second shot on Saturday.

Two-dose vaccines  
The second doses of Covaxin and Covishield, the two vaccines approved, are recommended to be administered four to six weeks apart, according to guidelines from the Drug Controller-General of India.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10

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## SCHOLARSHIPS

**IITDM-Jabalpur Department of Electronics and Communication Junior Research Fellowship**

Indian Institute of Information Technology, Design and Manufacturing, Jabalpur, invites applications for the project "FPGA prototype of non-recursive key-based cryptosystem for the secure transmission of real-time privacy signal".

**ELIGIBILITY:** Open to those with a BE/ BTech/ ME/ MTech degree and a good academic and research background with GATE qualification.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** ₹25,000 per month plus HRA

**DEADLINE:** February 20

**APPLICATION:** Via email  
[b4s.in/edge/CJF7](http://b4s.in/edge/CJF7)

**Piaggio "Shiksha Se Samriddhi" Scholarship**

Piaggio Vehicles Pvt. Ltd. supports the study of students in Class II/ 12/ ITI/ Polytechnic/ Diploma/ Undergraduate courses.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Open to children/wards of drivers/ owners from the three-wheeler community. Applicants should have passed Class 10/12 with at least 55% marks and must be studying in Class II/ 12/ ITI/ Polytechnic/ Diploma/ Undergraduate courses at recognised institutions in India. The annual family income must be less than or equal to ₹3 lakh.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** 80% of total fee reimbursement or maximum up to ₹20,000 per year

**DEADLINE:** February 28

**APPLICATION:** Online  
[b4s.in/EDGE/PSDI](http://b4s.in/EDGE/PSDI)

**IIT Kanpur Department of Physics Research Associateship**

IIT-Kanpur invites applications for the project "Developing efficient methods for measurement and characterisation of high-dimensional quantum states for photonic quantum information".

**ELIGIBILITY:** Open to candidates with a Ph.D in Physics/Optics/Electrical Engineering and theoretical background in quantum mechanics and optics and research experience with experimental projects, preferably in optics/ quantum information.

**PRIZES AND REWARDS:** ₹54,000 per month plus HRA

**DEADLINE:** February 20

**APPLICATION:** Via email  
[b4s.in/edge/IDCS5](http://b4s.in/edge/IDCS5)

Courtesy: buddy4study.com

Multilingualism brings with it a cornucopia of opportunities, especially in the new normal



V.T. GOPAKUMAR

The big shift caused by COVID-19 in every sector of industry and academics is here to stay. One way of adapting to this shift is gaining knowledge of an additional international language. The many advantages of learning languages has already been established by many studies.

Spanish, with around 400 million speakers in 44 countries, is the second most-spoken and most-popular language in the world after English. Similarly, French has around 290 million speakers spread across 24 countries and is one of the official languages of the United Nations, NATO and Red Cross. Mandarin has 1,200 million speakers worldwide. German has 90 million speakers and people spread over six countries speak German as their mother tongue.

**Benefits galore**  
When considering international languages other than English, one must keep in mind that it is not just the language of communication in business and academia, but also the language of the Internet. We can refer to English as the "Digital language" or "Digital English". However, in today's professional world, one of the top skills is felicity in more than one international language. This will become a pre-requisite in this new normal.

With face-to-face interactions becoming minimal, it has become essential for businesses to talk in the customer's native language as much as possible. A qualified person, who knows one or more foreign languages, serves as a virtual assistant. He/ she can work together with teams across the globe to strike a deal

**...being multilingual is not just a good skill, but a necessity, especially considering the interconnectedness of the global economy.**

or help companies expand their business in new markets.

Other areas that can be advantageous for a linguist could be game designing, remote teaching, learning process in advanced technological areas, coding in native languages, interpreter (translator), virtual tour guide (travel, tourism and hospitality), blogging, content writing, and journalism, to name just a few. YouTubers, especially those in the areas of fashion design, cooking and sales and marketing, can benefit greatly from being polyglots. Healthcare professionals

can also reach out to give proper guidance and explain newly-developed routines.

Learning a new language can also play a vital role in the area of natural language processing (NLP) – a branch of AI that enables computers to understand, interpret, and manipulate human languages. In addition, one can find more pleasure in the fascinating world of music, TV series, and movies from other languages.

In the new professional world, being multilingual is not just a good skill, but a necessity, especially considering the interconnectedness of the global economy. So, don't wait; start learning at least one foreign language right away.

The writer is an academician and entrepreneur.

## VALUE ADD



## Creating a network of 'solutionaries'

A rising trend of fellowship programmes are helping equip Indian youth with the tools to battle social challenges

■ ANUNAYA CHAUBEY

India's educational landscape is changing rapidly. The new National Education Policy is focusing on introducing innovative pedagogies and learning techniques in the education system; several institutes of higher education, especially for liberal arts, have been spearheading the discourse on interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary education and changing the definition of advanced learning while also joining the international education system for wider scope and opportunities.

This also stems from the deep human need to fully understand our world and its issues and respond to it with equal richness. A response that springs from an interdisciplinary understanding becomes a solution rooted in diverse knowledge domains and is likely to be more effective.

Problems like climate change need a multidisciplinary approach with the application of learnings from domains such as psychology, politics, development economics, history, sociology, anthropology and culture studies.

The skill of problem solving is cultivated by engaging with vocations from multiple dimensions of life such as ecology, environment, society, policy, innovation, technology, education and more. For this, educators need to acquire multiple intelligences and use them to reshape our world in

a healthy and a sustainable way.

India's academic framework is designed to segregate students based on their performance in the board exams, their attendance in premier institutes of learning, their regional/national identity and their field of study. Hence, job opportunities follow a similar trajectory, allowing little room for cause-based careers. Most students who dreamt of fighting social injustice, designing policies or carrying out wide-spread social change were relegated to the social sciences.

As a result, educators found the Indian higher education system lacking in creating world-class institutes that can both train educators with multiple intelligences and provide the necessary infrastructure for growth and institutional independence.

**Recent changes**

However, this has been changing in the recent past, and students are now choosing to stay in the country for their higher education. Through world-wide philanthropic movements, educators looked for and found opportunities where students could network and benefit from shared knowledge resources.

A movement to build an environment that provided hands-on learning and experiences was undertaken. Programmes were curated to provide tools to understand social landscapes and train students for life-long learn-

ing. As a result, teachers, policy-makers, social entrepreneurs, architects, academics and others made room for young cause-driven individuals and supported the creation of an environment that cultivates curiosity. Such programmes were offered as fellowships.

Today, India boasts of some of the best fellowship programmes around the world, in the field of liberal arts, policy, built environment, climate action, governance, law, social entrepreneurship among others. Some target specific sectors of work and/or study while others target networking capital, remaining loyal to the idea of providing real-life experiences of learning and world-class academic capital.

While the models of these programmes may differ, many have developed a niche field of application and do not discriminate against a student's background or field of study.

Many students find this opportunity liberating. Fellowships not only groom students to become responsible impact-makers, but also alert citizens and holistic individuals. Many fellows apply their home-based learnings in worldwide contexts and accrue international acclaim and recognition. This widening of context gives Indian institutes the necessary edge to participate in a global academic realm.

A good educational institute provides students an opportunity to conduct an open discourse about the issues they face. With their attachment to social causes and vision-driven framework, fellowship programmes invite diverse discourses and, hence, attract global academicians, who find time to interact with students and question the world alongside them.

While the curated format of a fellowship is tasked with building a community of impact-driven empathetic individuals, it also provides an interesting insight into the systemic gaps of the Indian educational system and leverages the drive among the youth to be heard on urgent social and environmental issues.

The programmes provide a window of study to those who are interested in understanding the spirit of this generation. The hope is that this will lead to the creation of a vast network of 'solutionaries' (revolutionary thinkers with solution-oriented mindset) who can confidently step into the uncharted seas of change, and lead us to safer shores.

The writer is the Provost at Anant National University, Ahmedabad.

## SAVE THE DATE

**■ Indian Institute of Art and Design (IIAD) admission open**

The Indian Institute of Art and Design (IIAD), in collaboration with Kingston School of Art, London offers undergraduate programmes in Fashion Design, Fashion Business Management, Communication Design and Interior Architecture & Design. It also offers postgraduate programmes in Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management.

**ADMISSION PROCESS:** IIAD Entrance Test (Online on March 27-28; Offline on March 28)

**DEADLINE:** March 20  
[www.iiad.edu.in](http://www.iiad.edu.in)

**■ M.A. in Smart Cities and Urban Informatics**

The Rothberg International School at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, has announced an M.A. programme in Smart Cities and Urban Informatics. The programme is a one-year (two-semester) 32-credit Master's programme taught in English. The programme seeks to develop the new area of higher education and equip a new generation of urban planners, analysts and policy makers with the requisite toolbox for addressing the challenges of the Smart City.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Open to those who have obtained or are about to obtain a completed under-graduate degree from a recognised university in India. The students are required to have an average of 85% or equivalent grade average with a recommended band of 6 or above in IELTS.

**DEADLINE:** April 29  
<https://smartcities.huji.ac.il/>

## CAREERS



PIXABAY

## For the love of animals

Veterinary science continues to be a lucrative option with multiple specialisations and options for entrepreneurship

■ DR. T.P. SETHUMADHAVAN

Veterinary science has become a popular choice for higher education and research across the globe. Yet, in India, there is a huge gap between the availability of and requirement for veterinary graduates. Data reveals that India needs 72,000 veterinary graduates, but the current availability is only around 48,000. Interestingly, more than 72% of veterinary science students are girls.

**The course**

The courses in this discipline are offered by around 47 colleges, with the Veterinary Council of India being the regulatory body. The Bachelor's degree in Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry is a five-year programme with the final semester being devoted to an internship. Students who have passed Class XII with Physics, Chemistry and Biology are eligible to apply.

Admissions happen through the NEET or State-level entrance examinations.

Post-graduate courses in Veterinary Science involve various disciplines including veterinary physiology, biotechnology, dairy science, meat technology, livestock production management, anatomy, microbiology, parasitology, animal breeding, genetics, veterinary surgery, animal nutrition, animal welfare, zoo animal medicine, wild life science, conservation, food safety, food technology, sustainability issues, public health, residue monitoring, organic farming, and more. After graduation, students can work in various sectors ranging from government, academia, research institutions, civil services public or private pharma or biotech companies, dairy, poultry and other livestock farms and the food processing industry.

However, research and higher education opportunities are more popular abroad. Countries like Ukraine and Singapore offer DVM programmes for international students.

**Entrepreneurship**  
With livestock and poultry being the backbone of India's rural economy, entrepreneurship is emerging as one of the lucrative areas. Apart from this, many start-ups catering to pet-related services and speciality pet clinics are emerging along with super-specialties like orthopaedics, breeding, and canine medicine, among others. For those interested in the biological sciences and enjoy working with animals, this field has a lot to offer.

The writer is an education and career consultant and former Director of Entrepreneurship at Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University. [tpsethu2000@gmail.com](mailto:tpsethu2000@gmail.com)

**Interestingly, more than 72% of veterinary science students are girls.**

## FIR against company for fund misappropriation

'It misrepresented manufacturing cost'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Delhi Police has registered an FIR against directors of a company – GeneStore India Private Limited – on charges of alleged misappropriation of funds, cheating and criminal conspiracy, said an officer on Sunday.

GeneStore had promised to provide "most affordable COVID-19 testing kits" in India.

Complainant Vineet Singh Chauhan, who had sales rights in the firm, said the company was misrepresenting manufacturing expenses. He said even after getting feedback from the laboratories, GeneStore continued to sell bad quality testing kits through a diagnostic, endangering public health.

**'Forced to pay labs'**  
They forced complainant to pay the labs to accept items as they were doing, which Mr. Chauhan rejected.

The FIR stated that the firm cheated the complainant of ₹1.5 lakh loan/in-

Even after getting feedback from labs, GeneStore [accused company] continued to sell bad quality testing kits through a diagnostic, endangering public health

VINEET SINGH CHAUHAN  
Complainant

vestment with fraudulent intent for administrative cost in personal account by claiming certain promised benefits such as equity. Later, he was forced to accept less margin once all work was done.

The company used a diagnostics distributor to book sales in cash and hide actual sales to avoid tax and launder money to France.

The police said there are allegations of false declaration of orders and concealment of actual sales that was done by the company.

The case is under investigation. "We had received a complaint regarding the matter in October last year," the officer added.

## DU student held for giving injections to children

'He wanted to boost their memory'

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A Delhi University student was arrested for allegedly injecting a solution on a few underprivileged children, who took tuition from him, to "boost their memory" in east Delhi's Mandawali, the police said on Sunday.

The accused, a second-year BA student, Sandeep, is a resident of Mandawali, they said.

The police said the students, who took injections from him, are fine.

YouTube video

During probe, Sandeep said he got the idea from a YouTube video, which

showed that the injection would help boost students' memory.

The matter came to light on Saturday when the police received a call from a person informing them about the incident.

On reaching the spot, police questioned Sandeep and during enquiry, it emerged that he gives free tuitions to students of Class VI-IX.

**FIR registered**  
Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Deepak Yadav said an FIR has been registered under Section 336 (Act endangering life or personal safety of others) of the Indian Penal Code.

## Man held for 'selling' DDA plots using fake papers

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

A 42-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly indulging in illegal sale of DDA plots using forged documents, said an officer on Sunday.

Suresh Sharma from Faridabad, a proclaimed offender who has been nabbed after eight years, had duped a victim of ₹ 7 crore, they said.

Sharma was arrested on February 12 from Sector 81, Faridabad.

The matter came to the fore after a complaint was received from one man named Sanjay Goel, who said he and his family members were cheated by a property dealer – Jitender Gupta – on the basis of forged documents of different DDA plots. The accused duped them to buy six different DDA plots.

JCP (EOW) O.P. Mishra said during investigation when documents were verified from the DDA, it was established that the accused had conspired with each other and had enticed the complainant and his family to purchase these plots.

Sharma impersonated as owner of a plot in Sector-32 in Rohini. This deal was also brokered by Jitender at his office for ₹3.9 crore. So far six persons have been arrested in the case.

## Candle march at border for Pulwama martyrs

Protesters, ex-defence personnel, women and children also pay tribute to farmers who died during stir

SAURABH TRIVEDI

NEW DELHI

Protesters at the Ghazipur border protest site held a candlelight march on Sunday evening in remembrance of the Pulwama attack martyrs as well as the farmers who died during the stir while *Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan* (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer) echoed all around.

The march started from the main stage went towards the other side of the road on the blocked national highway, took a U-turn, and circled back to the main stage. A group of former defence personnel also reached the site to participate in the march.

**'Conspiracy by govt'**  
Satyendra Singh, a protester, said: "All tools and conspiracy planned by the government to uproot or defame the farmers' protest have been wasted. The government has no option other than repealing the new farm laws. We will go back home only after the new farm laws get withdrawn."

Former BSF jawan Tej Bahadur, who attended the protest and participated in the candle march, said if the government refused to repeal the laws, then they will change vote for someone else



Protesters taking out a candlelight march in memory of Pulwama attack martyrs as well as farmers who died during the stir, at Ghazipur border; security personnel keeping vigil at the Singhu border on Sunday. • R.V. MOORTHY; SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



in the next election.

According to him, not only farmers but also defence personnel are suffering. He requested the government for a detailed inquiry into the Pulwama attack. He alleged that the government has tried to pit farmers and soldiers against each other.

Another protester, Sushil Singh from Shamli, said: "More than 70% of India's population directly or indirectly depend upon agriculture. I request people to come forward and join the

I request people to come forward and join the protest. Today or tomorrow, the government has to agree to the demands of farmers!"

SUSHIL SINGH  
protester

protest. Today or tomorrow, the government has to agree to the demands of farmers!"

Pictures of farmers, who died during the protest, were pasted along with images of Pulwama martyrs on the main stage. Women and students also participated in the march.

"It's better to be an *andolanjeevi* than *jhalajeevi* or *dangsjeevi*. The country got freedom because of *andolan-*

*jeevisi*. It is an insensitive government and the death of farmers or jawans doesn't matter to them," said Ashok Kumar, a protester.

With the mercury rising, protesters said, they have installed more drinking water kiosks and started distributing oranges to keep protesters hydrated. Meanwhile, elderly protesters have been asked to remain inside tents or trolley.

## Three held for duping CM's daughter

STAFF REPORTER

NEW DELHI

Three persons were arrested for allegedly duping Chief Minister's daughter on an e-commerce website, a senior officer said on Sunday.

The accused were arrested from three different locations of NCR. The kingpin was arrested from Mewat in Haryana. Two separate bank accounts were used in the fraud case.

Last week, the victim, Harshita Kejriwal, was duped of ₹34,000 while trying to sell a second-hand sofa set on the website.

## Final-year PhD students to return to JNU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI

As part of its eighth and ninth phase of reopening, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has allowed final-year PhD students to return to the campus.

PhD scholars residing in hostels will be allowed to return from February 22, a notification said.

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India's National Newspaper

## New opportunities in the health sector of the State

Hon'ble Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee

will inaugurate  
the following projects

Date: 15 February 2021

1. 'Matri Maa' building (Mother & Child Hub) at Chittaranjan Seva Sadan Hospital



- Special Maternity Ward with 100 beds
- Modern Operation Theatre
- Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
- Sick Newborn Care Unit (SNCU)
- Hybrid Intensive Care Unit

Total project cost: Rs. 24.09 crores

Time: 11.30 am | Venue: Chittaranjan Seva Sadan Hospital

2. Hospital-based Cancer Registry Application



- This application will store all the details of the patient and the doctor and the patient will receive treatment-related SMS. It will provide hassle-free treatment
- This will aid in data collection, analysis and swift decisions on medical procedures
- This application will strengthen the scope and reach of cancer treatment in the State

3. Renovation & New Construction of D. N. De Homeopathic Medical College & Hospital



- Auditorium with 200 seating capacity, modern projection and sound system
- Introduction of MD course in Repertory Department
- Modern instruments and treatment methods sanctioned by the Central Council of Homeopathy
- Air-conditioned e-Library with computers
- Modern hostel with 60 beds adjacent to college for post-graduate students

Total project cost: Rs. 4.89 crores

Time: 3.30 pm | Venue: Nabanna Conference Hall

Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of West Bengal

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## Flash floods likely to hit water supply'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

DJB Vice Chairman Raghav Chadha on Sunday said that the flash floods in Uttarakhand's Chamoli have increased turbidity of raw water fetched by Delhi from Upper Ganga Canal to "unprecedented levels", which is likely to hit water supply in many parts of the Capital.

Mr. Chadha said the Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi water treatment plants were functioning at reduced capacity and the water supply is likely to be affected in south, east and north-east Delhi. He urged people to use water judiciously.

Mr. Chadha said the Delhi Jal Board is deploying water tankers in adequate numbers and all possible efforts are being made to reduce turbidity of water.

## CAT relief to reserved category nursing officers

They were denied their choice of branch posting in AIIMS

SOIBAM ROCKY SINGH  
NEW DELHI

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has granted relief to a bunch of reserved category nursing officers, who were denied their choice of branch posting in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

The tribunal ruled that meritorious reserved category candidates cannot be put to disadvantage merely because they make it to general unreserved list. It directed AIIMS to allot preferred choice of posting to those meritorious reserved candidates, who had filed the petition, taking into consideration their merit.

The applicants, who belong to OBC, SC and ST categories, in their collective petition had claimed that they

Many in the reserved quota lists who had scored less marks were allotted institutes listed as their first preference

GYANANT KUMAR SINGH  
Advocate

were not allotted their first preference of AIIMS institutes – Bhopal, Jodhpur, Patna and Raipur – even after scoring higher marks than other reserved category candidates.

## Not meritocracy

The petition filed through advocate Gyanant Kumar Singh claimed that after the result of the exam was declared on February 20, 2020, the petitioners were placed in the

unreserved/general category merit list, having scored more marks than their counterparts in the reserved category lists.

"The applicants being put in the general merit list were not allotted their first preference while many of their counterparts in the reserved quota lists who had scored less marks were allotted institutes listed as their first preference," Mr. Singh said.

He argued that an ST candidate having overall rank of 952 did not get Bhopal, while less meritorious ST candidate with rank as low as over 4,228 had been allotted AIIMS Bhopal as the candidate was in ST list.

Acting on the petition, the tribunal ordered AIIMS to revise the posting of the candidates within two months.

## Capital records 150 new COVID-19 cases, 2 deaths

56,902 tests conducted in 24 hours

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Capital reported 150 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, taking the total number to 6,36,946. Over the past 24 hours, two deaths were reported and 158 people recovered. The total number of fatalities due to the virus is 10,891.

The health bulletin issued by the Delhi government said that 56,902 tests were conducted with a positivity rate of 0.26%. Out of the total tests conducted, 38,213 were RT-PCR tests and 18,689 were rapid antigen tests.

The government said

## Virus spread

Total number of COVID-19 cases	Total deaths
<b>6,36,946</b>	<b>10,891</b>
New cases in the past 24 hours	New deaths
<b>150</b>	<b>2</b>

SOURCE: DELHI GOVERNMENT HEALTH BULLETIN

that currently there are 1,031 active cases out of which 384 were under home isolation. The government continues to reserve 5,775 beds for COVID-19 patients in hospitals out of which 452 are occupied.

## WEATHER WATCH

RAINFALL, TEMPERATURE &amp; AIR QUALITY IN SELECT METROS YESTERDAY



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

**Forecast for Monday:** Dense to very dense fog in some pockets very likely over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Utarakhand, Uttar Pradesh; thunderstorm accompanied by lightning very likely in isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	... 28.5...	13.1	...	Kozhikode	... 34.4...	23.5	...
Ahmedabad	... 33.5...	15.7	...	Kurnool	... 34.1...	17.1	...
Aizawl	... 23.0...	16.0	...	Lucknow	... 28.2...	12.6	...
Allahabad	... 29.7...	11.4	...	Madurai	... 32.3...	21.7	...
Bengaluru	... 31.0...	16.2	...	Mangaluru	... 34.0...	20.9	...
Bhopal	... 32.4...	16.0	...	Mumbai	... 29.5...	20.5	...
Bhubaneswar	... 35.4...	16.4	...	Mysuru	... 31.0...	16.0	...
Chandigarh	... 25.5...	9.9	...	New Delhi	... 28.7...	8.6	...
Chennai	... 30.4...	20.6	...	Patna	... 27.8...	12.6	...
Coimbatore	... 33.6...	21.4	...	Port Blair	... 30.1...	26.0	...
Dehradoon	... 23.9...	11.0	...	Puducherry	... 31.1...	19.8	...
Gangtok	... 16.8	9.0	...	Pune	... 33.0...	15.8	...
Goa	... 32.4...	19.8	...	Raipur	... 32.6...	14.5	...
Guwahati	... 29.0...	14.8	...	Ranchi	... 29.4...	12.6	...
Hubballi	... 31.0...	16.0	...	Shillong	... 18.6...	8.5	...
Hyderabad	... 32.1...	16.6	...	Shimla	... 19.4...	8.4	...
Imphal	... 26.7...	5.7	...	Srinagar	... 11.4...	1.2	...
Jaipur	... 29.2...	14.2	...	Thiruvananthapuram	... 32.4...	22.2	...
Kochi	... 31.4...	23.4	...	Tiruchi	... 33.0...	20.8	...
Kohima	... 20.2...	15.8	...	Vijayawada	... 32.4...	18.4	...
Kolkata	... 29.2...	19.6	...	Visakhapatnam	... 30.5...	19.0	...

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

## Pollutants in the air you are breathing

Yesterday

CITIES	SO <sub>2</sub>	NO <sub>x</sub>	CO	PM <sub>2.5</sub>	PM <sub>10</sub>	CODE
Ahmedabad	32	138	63	.194	196	...
Bengaluru	14	42	—	—	149	...
Chennai	12	36	14	.47	.81	...
Delhi	—	—	112	.403	353	...
Hyderabad	11	.56	31	.189	114	...
Kolkata	35	.23	.57	.289	.190	...
Lucknow	7	100	.63	.326	.226	...
Mumbai	4	.50	.50	.221	.199	...
Pune	—	.30	.40	.205	.131	...
Visakhapatnam	14	.58	—	.75	.109	...

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

SO<sub>2</sub>: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.NO<sub>x</sub>: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

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

PM<sub>2.5</sub> & PM<sub>10</sub>: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

In observation made at 4.00 pm, Noida, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 416 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Puducherry recorded a healthy AQI score of 43

Timings DELHI

MONDAY, FEB. 15

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## PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON PAR WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

- 45000 hi-tech class rooms, an additional admission of 6.8 lakh students • Digital classes for all students during the Covid-19 pandemic • Kerala becomes the first State to go digital in school education

## KERALA, NUMERO UNO IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

- Mighty resolve which defeated pandemics like the Nipah and the Covid-19 • Entire health system from sub-centres to medical colleges achieve excellence • E-health system gains efficiency • More than 500 primary health centres upgraded to family health centres
- Outpatient time extended till 6 pm

## MAJOR LEAP IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

- Public sector undertakings garner profits • Licenses and other permissions made online through K-Swift single window system • 62593 Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) units started between 2016 and November 2020 alone • 444 kilometre GAIL pipeline materialized

## ELECTRICITY IN EVERY HOUSE

- A state that has not had any power cut or load shedding for the past five years • 17 lakh new connections • A call to toll free number 1912 brings service at your doorstep
- Edamon-Kochi Punalur- Madakkathara power highways materialized

## 2.5 LAKH PLUS HOUSES CONSTRUCTED UNDER THE LIFE MISSION SCHEME

- More than 2.5 lakh houses provided • 1.5 lakh houses under construction • 101 housing complexes for the homeless and the landless

## SUMPTUOUS, SECURE

- Free food kit for everyone • 863107 families given new ration cards • E-ration card scheme commenced
- Rs 20 meal through 876 popular restaurants

## DRINKING WATER FOR ALL

- 11.33 lakh new drinking water connections including more than nine lakh connections by the Kerala Water Authority and 1.76 lakh connections through the Jalanidhi scheme were provided

## SECURITY IN THE CYBER WORLD

- Police App sets a model in the digital service sector
- DGP's online grievance redressal system and helpline came into force • Cyber police stations in all districts

## TITLE DEEDS TO MORE THAN 1.5 LAKH PEOPLE

- Online land mutation at 1656 villages • 441 smart villages
- 150 grama panchayats to ensure transparency of services provided by panchayats • Integrated Local Governance Management System enforced

## SHOULDERS TO SUPPORT

- Welfare pensions hiked to Rs 1600 • 60.31 lakh beneficiaries • Arrear-free pensions delivered at houses every month • 95 lakh families provided food through community kitchens during COVID 19 period

## K FONE SCHEME

- Free High Speed Internet connection to more than 20 lakh BPL families through K Fone Scheme

## FLOURISHING FARMS

- 19,555 hectare barren land turned to farming under the Subhiksha Keralam Scheme • Floor price for 16 different vegetables and fruits announced • Land for vegetable farming increased from 52829.99 hectare to 96313.17 hectare

## SUPERIOR QUALITY ROADS & BRIDGES

- The Public Works Department refurbished 11,580 kilometre road to higher quality in the past 4½ years.
- Kundannoor Vyttila flyovers at the cost of Rs.182 crore
- Alappuzha and Kollam bypasses, Thondayad and Ramanaattukara flyovers and six lane roads at Karamana-Kaliyikkavila were materialised

## CLASSROOMS FOR SC ST STUDENTS

- 12,500 classrooms completed for Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe students • Forest Rights for 3,500 people, Reserved Forest Land Rights for 2500 people and agricultural land for 300 people through the Kerala State Land Bank Project will be made available

## AYYANKALI URBAN EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME

- Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme allocation increased by five times • Wages increased to Rs 291
- Dairy farmers included in the scheme

## HOUSES FOR ESTATE WORKERS

- Special housing schemes for estate workers
- Financial aid for the dependents of deceased workers hiked from Rs 10,000 to Rs One lakh

## GROWTH IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

- Number of domestic and international tourists increased from 1.24 crore (2015-16) to 1.83 crore (2019-20)
- Income from tourism sector increased from 6949.88 crore (2015-16) to 10,271.06 crore (2019-20)

## FIRST OPEN UNIVERSITY NAMED AFTER SREE NARAYANA GURU

- Sree Narayana Guru Open University, the first Open University in the State and Digital University came into being

## CONSERVATION OF FORESTS

- New 319.50401 hectare land was declared as Reserve Forest • A vast project of Rs 800 crore to take over private estates within the forest land and to preserve mangroves • Compensation for the dependents of those killed in wild animal attacks increased from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh

## COMMUNITY SKILL PARKS

- 16 Community Skill Parks to provide employment skills through ASAP to educated youth
- She Skills scheme to ensure female representation at workplaces • A volunteer team of 3,67,603 members for the able execution of variety of programmes from Covid
- First Line Treatment Centres to pre-monsoon sanitation



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Backed by the khaps, men and women farmers have come en masse to support the protest

ASHOK KUMAR  
JATIN ANAND  
NEW DELHI

The two-month-old farmers' sit-in agitation around Delhi opposing the three farm laws seemed set to fizzle out in the aftermath of the Republic Day violence during the tractor parade, but the series of khap *mahapanchayats* in its wake have apparently turned the tide.

These *mahapanchayats* have emerged as new rallying points for the agitating farmers after Republic Day. The massive turnouts at these meetings have not only been just a show of strength, but also given a new lease of life to the movement.

First to hold a *mahapanchayat* in Haryana's Jind on February 3 on the farm laws, Kandela Khap president Tekram says the trend is catching up fast and khaps across Northern India, including Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, are now holding *mahapanchayats* to support the agitation. The aim, he avers, is to show the massive support to the movement and mount pressure on the government. "Earlier, the government would say it is the movement of Punjab farmers alone. Now khaps across Northern India have extended support to it," says Mr. Tekram, also the convener of Uttar Bharat Khap Panchayats.

A recent meeting between the khap leaders and the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, a coalition of around 500 farmer unions, has decided to hold more such meetings in Haryana, Rajasthan and U.P.

#### Swelling support

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Rajewal) president Balbir Singh Rajewal and Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab president Darshan Pal too have been going to these *mahapanchayats*. It signifies that Punjab unions' appreciation for the contribution and significance of the khaps has also gone up in the wake of the Republic Day violence.

Supported by the khaps, the farmers from Haryana have now outnumbered the protesters from Punjab at the Tikri and



Farmers attend the khap *mahapanchayat* in support of their agitation against the farm laws in Bahadurgarh. ■ V.V. KRISHNAN



at toll plazas and now at *mahapanchayats*.

#### Women power

All India Democratic Women's Association national vice-president Jagmati Sangwan says the women have been contributing to the agitation in multiple ways from the onset and their participation has grown.

"The women are more involved with the farming and the family than the men in Haryana. It is more so in case of small and marginal farmers."

So they are impacted the most.

We have been educating them about the impact of these laws and their participation is heartening.

The AIDWA also created awareness among the Dalit women and labourers to tell them that this movement is not just about farmers, but also about them. It is about the food security," says Ms. Sangwan.

Young women students and sportspersons have also been visiting the Tikri and Singhu borders both to conduct research and make the contribution.

Centre of Indian Trade Unions, Haryana, vice-president Satvir Singh says working class women, including the Accredited Social Health Activists and mid-day meal workers, have also been supporting the agitation and detained a couple of times.

Following the Republic Day violence, the number of women protesters is swelling at the Tikri and Singhu borders as well.

Having first come to the protest site to participate in the tractor rally on Republic Day, Ompati from Haryana's Hisar says she decided to

stay back at the Tikri border after things went awry on January 26. "We are from the Rakhrigari village, 50 of us have come; almost everyone except a handful [of women] need to tend to the fields are left in the village while the rest are here," she says.

Ompati says they would have returned if they had not seen how the government wanted to give the movement a bad name by orchestrating violence. But now they have decided to stay and not leave their boys alone.

Mini buses, too, have been arranged for women protesters to travel to and from the protest site. From helping the men with daily chores, the women and young children at the Tikri border also take out foot marches and raise slogans aboard tractors with tents erected by various khaps including the Poonia, Rathi, Hooda, Guliya, Malik and Dalal on both sides of the road.

But these *mahapanchayats* also have political overtones. Though the political leaders are not allowed to share the dias at the Tikri and Singhu borders, Meham Independent MLA Balraj Kundu was present at Charkhi Dadri meeting and three Congress MLAs from Haryana's Nuh attended the Bharatpur *mahapanchayat*. Mr. Tekram, however, denies the charge. "The political leaders may be present on the dias at *mahapanchayats*, but they are not allowed to address. We welcome the political support, but it remains a farmers' movement."

# Mahapanchayats giving timely impetus to farmers' protest

Singhu borders.

Mr. Tekram claims that the massive turnout at Kandela *mahapanchayat* sent across a strong message and the farmers are on the boil. "Thousands of people gathered at Jind's Kandela. They were not Khalistanis and Maoists. They were all farmers seeking their dues," asserts Mr. Tekram, a former BJP leader.

#### 'Not anti-national'

Farmer leader Raju Maan was among the organisers for the Charkhi Dadri *mahapanchayat* on February 7 along with Sangwan Khap president and Dadri MLA Sombir Sangwan. Mr. Maan argues that the huge crowds at *mahapanchayats* manifest the farmers' anger against the attempt to label them as "anti-national". "It is the son of a farmer who stands guard at the border, you cannot call him anti-national," says Mr. Maan.



Rakesh Tikait of BKU arrives to attend the *mahapanchayat* in Bahadurgarh ■ V.V. KRISHNAN

The conspiracy to defame the farmers fighting for their survival has infuriated them to no end and the massive turnouts at *mahapanchayats* are a testimony to it, he says. In Haryana, farmer unions have little influence and the political leaders have failed the farming community, so only khaps hold the fort, says Mr.

Maan, a former Congressman.

The women too have been turning up in hordes. The two meetings recently - a Meo Muslims *mahapanchayat* in Rajasthan's Bharatpur and another in Haryana's Jat belt in Chark-

hi Dadri - recorded a huge turnout of women. "When women can rub shoulders with men in all other spheres of life, they can fight for their rights too. Women too are farmers," says Nirmala Devi, ex-Sarpanch Pandwan village in Charkhi Dadri. She was among the women from Haryana to participate in the

Republic Day tractor parade. "I drove tractor all the way from Charkhi Dadri to Delhi and in the parade," she proclaims with a sense of pride.

The 40-year-old says that women could not camp at borders for days because of household responsibilities, but they came out to take part in the protests

## Poll time



Voters queuing up at a polling station in Amritsar for the municipal elections in Punjab on Sunday. ■ AFP

# Death of farmers: controversy over Haryana Minister's remark

Jai Parkash Dalal says it was commensurate with the annual death rate

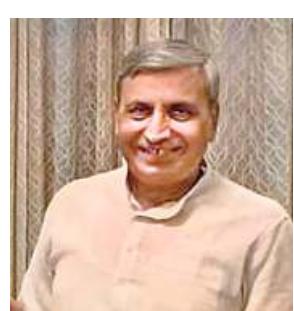
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GURUGRAM

Haryana Agriculture Minister Jai Parkash Dalal has courted controversy over his remarks that the farmers' death during the ongoing agitation was commensurate with the annual death rate and they would have died at their homes as well.

In a video clip going viral on various social media platforms, Mr. Dalal, apparently speaking to a group of journalists on the farmers' agitation, said the farmers' death during the agitation was in proportion to the annual death rate and the average age.

"Around 200 people die in a population of 1.2-lakh every six months. So these



Haryana Agriculture Minister Jai Parkash Dalal

Minister.

When a journalist insisted as to why he could not express sympathy for them, Mr. Dalal retorted that the sympathy could not be expressed in bits and pieces and he had sympathy for the entire 135 crore population. "When a person dies, the entire family is hit. Many of these [the farmers who died] had young kids. I express full sympathy for those who died," said the Minister, with those around him breaking into laughter.

Mr. Dalal said an average farmer was innocent and lost his life for the sake of sympathy for others or his caste during the agitation. "Some died due to heart attack. And a few were not keeping well," said the

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Gogoi's remarks on judiciary shocking: Pawar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi's statements on the "ramshackle" state of the country's judicial system was "shocking".

"I had read that PM Narendra Modi in a meeting with Supreme Court judges praised the country's judicial system. Obviously, we all felt happy about it then. So, the former CJI's statements were indeed startling and a matter of concern for all. Was Mr. Gogoi, who has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha, trying to tell the truth about the judiciary with his remarks?" asked Mr. Pawar.

On Thursday, the former CJI, in a conclave organised by a prominent media house, was quoted as saying that one had to wait for an inordinate time to secure a verdict if one approached Indian courts.

"How important the judiciary is as a constitutional body need not be emphasised. You want a five trillion-dollar economy, but your judiciary is ramshackled," Mr. Gogoi said.

## APMC police officer shoots himself dead

He rejoined work after sick leave

RAINA ASSAINAR  
NAVI MUMBAI

An Assistant Police Inspector attached to the APMC police shot himself dead in his cabin at 11.30 a.m. on Sunday. Bhushan Pawar (45), an officer from the 2011 police sub-inspector batch, had just returned to duty after taking sick leave for one-and-a-half months.

"He had some health issues. The reason is not clear and he has not left any note behind," B.G. Shekhar Patil, Additional Commissioner of Navi Mumbai police, said.

Colleagues rushed to his cabin on hearing a gunshot and broke open the door when he did not respond to their calls. They found Pawar in a pool of blood. "He was breathing. We put him in a vehicle and rushed him to MGM Hospital. But the doctors could not do anything. He was declared dead on arrival," said a staff at the police station.

Pawar's wife called on the station's landline number as she could not contact him. She was anxious and asked us to put him on the phone, the officer said. "The family is in shock. Relatives told us that he was under stress for the past two months," Mr. Patil said. Pawar is survived by his wife and two children who live in Hadapsar.



Honour: Vishal Garad receiving the best short film award at a national community media film festival held in Sangareddy district in Telangana. ■ MOHD. ARIF

## Film on farm distress tugs at heartstrings

Directed by lecturer from Solapur

R. AVADHANI  
SANGAREDDY

Last monsoon, two farmers were washed away in the floodwaters while trying to save their crops in Solapur district of Maharashtra. The same district has witnessed a high suicide rate among farmers.

Heart-rending stories of farmers' struggles were put together in a short film by Vishal Vijay Garad, a lecturer and son of a farmer couple. He owns five acres of land in Pangri village of Solapur district, but his parents Vijay and Mohini are active farmers who grow jowar, wheat and soyabean. Mr. Garad has heard and seen innumerable stories of farmers incurring heavy losses due to unseasonal or incessant rain. He blames the erratic rain pattern on climate change taking place due to wrong policies adopted by successive governments. About 10 farmers in Solapur have died by suicide in the past year, he claims.

With distressing stories playing on his mind, Mr. Garad decided to write, direct and act in a short film titled *Buchad*, which means all harvested crops piled up at one place. In the film, he has played the character of Bhim Pawar, a soyabean farmer. His crop is almost ready for harvesting, but is washed away due to heavy rain following floods. While trying to save the crop, Pawar also gets washed away. The film ends with him floating in water, gripping the soyabean crop in hand.

It won the best short film award at the Jai Chandiram Memorial 3rd National Community Media Film Festival at Krishi Vignan Kendra at Didgi near Zaheerabad in Telangana on Saturday.

# Sharp spike of over 4,000 new COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra

Cases exceed recoveries for third consecutive day; active cases cross 35,000

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

Maharashtra saw a sharp rise in new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, reporting 4,092 fresh cases against just 1,355 patients being discharged.

With the latest spike, cases have exceeded recoveries for the third consecutive day. While the State's active case tally rose to 35,965, the total case tally now stands at 20,64,278. Forty fatalities saw the total death toll climb to 51,529. The tally of recoveries has risen to 19,75,603.

While the State's recovery rate stands at 95.7%, the case fatality rate has dipped to 2.5%.

"Of 1,53,21,608 laboratory samples tested thus far, 20,64,278 (with the case positivity rate down to 13.47%) have returned positive, with over 49,000 samples being tested in the last 24 hours," said State Surveillance Officer Dr. Pradeep Awate.

Pune reported more than 600 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,94,663. As per State Health Department figures, two deaths were reported as the total death toll



**One for the album:** A beneficiary gets herself clicked at a photo booth after receiving COVID-19 vaccination at the BMC's jumbo facility at Bandra-Kurla Complex. ■ AFP

remained climbed to 8,012. The district's active case tally stands at 4,564, with a recovery rate of 96.53%.

### 645 cases in Mumbai

Mumbai city reported 645 new cases to take its total case tally to 3,14,076, of which 4,193 are active. Four fatalities saw the city's death toll reach 11,419.

Nagpur district in Vidarbha reported more than 500 new cases, taking the dis-

**Of 1,53,21,608 laboratory samples tested thus far, 20,64,278 have returned positive**

DR. PRADEEP AWATE  
State Surveillance Officer

trict's total case tally to 1,40,317, of which 4,298 are currently active. Six deaths saw the district's cumulative death toll surge to 3,428.

In western Maharashtra,

Satara district reported three deaths, while 103 fresh cases saw the total case tally rise to 57,443 of which just 865 are active. Its death toll stands at 1,831. Neighbouring Sangli reported just 22 cases and no deaths as the district's reported cases reached 51,066, of which only 703 are active. Its death toll stands at 1,786.

Kolhapur district reported just four cases and no fatalities as its total case tally reached 49,353, of which just 169 are active. The total death toll stands at 1,674.

In north Maharashtra, Nashik district reported more than 200 cases and three deaths as its total case tally reached 123,744, of which 1,379 are active. Its death toll stands at 2,020.

Jalgaon reported more than 100 new cases and two deaths as its total case tally reached 58,070, of which only 571 are active, while its death toll climbed to 1,492.

A total of 1,74,243 people across the State are in home quarantine and 1,747 are in institutional quarantine.

# Fadnavis targets MVA govt. over Pune woman's suicide

State police under political pressure in case, says BJP leader

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
PUNE

The alleged suicide of a 23-year-old woman in Pune has turned into a political slanging match between the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government.

On Sunday, Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnavis took aim at Mr. Thackeray and the MVA, alleging that the Maharashtra police were under political pressure in probing the death in Pune.

The deceased, who hailed from Parli in Beed district, belonged to the nomadic tribal Banjara community and had come to pursue her studies in Pune. She is suspected to have died after jumping from the first floor of a building in the city's Mohammadwadi area in the early hours of February 7.

Mr. Fadnavis attributed the police's tardiness in lodging a case to State Forest Minister and Sena leader Sanjay Rathod's alleged involvement in the case. "The police should ideally have conducted a suo motu investi-



Devendra Fadnavis

tigation. But, it appears that they are under some kind of political pressure. Ideally, the police ought to have filed a case by now and begun the investigation," he said.

Hinting at Mr. Rathod's probable involvement, he said it must be probed whose voice was featured in a series of audio clips allegedly linked to the case.

Mr. Fadnavis alleged that Mr. Thackeray did not appear to be taking the case seriously. "The police must be allowed to get to the bottom of this case to uncover whether the woman's alleged suicide was a case of abetment or something else.

Unfortunately, either the Chief Minister is not taking Senior Congress leader and State Minister Balasaheb Thorat defended Mr. Thackeray and dismissed allegations of the police being under any political pressure.

this seriously or he has not obtained complete information. I urge him to do so without delay," he said.

Shiv Sena spokesman Sanjay Raut said Mr. Thackeray was a sensitive person who would ensure that justice was done in the case. He said, "Mr. Thackeray gave instructions for a probe the moment this matter came up. But in the last few years, there has been an increasing trend of character assassination and defaming a person before any conclusive evidence comes to light."

"Some people think that by indulging in such tactics, they can harm the government. However, nothing of the kind will happen," he said, speaking in Nashik. He said Mr. Rathod had been a pillar of the Sena in the Vidarbha region, and would be probed. However, it would not be conducted in a way the Opposition wanted it.

Senior Congress leader and State Minister Balasaheb Thorat defended Mr. Thackeray and dismissed allegations of the police being under any political pressure.

**युवा शक्ति की क्षमता अपार  
अब सपने होंगे साकार  
हर प्रयास, सफलता की ओर...**

**उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की अभिनव पहल**

**युवाओं को प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के लिए निःशुल्क कोचिंग की**

**तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु अभ्युदय योजना का**

**शुभारंभ**

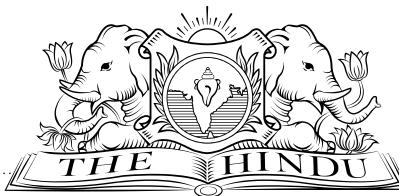
**योजना में पंजीकृत अभ्यर्थियों से संवाद  
योगी आदित्यनाथ  
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश द्वारा**

**दिनांक : 15 फरवरी, 2021 | समय : पूर्वाह्न 10:00 बजे | स्थान : 5, कालिदास मार्ग, लखनऊ**

### योजना की मुख्य विशेषताएं

- सिविल सेवा, नीट, जेईई, एसएससी, एनडीए व सीडीएस, बैंकिंग व टीईटी सहित अन्य प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के लिए मेधावी छात्र-छात्राओं को लाभ।
- अभ्यर्थियों का चयन पात्रता परीक्षा के आधार पर।
- चयनित अभ्यर्थियों के निःशुल्क प्रशिक्षण के लिए मंडल मुख्यालयों में प्रशिक्षण केन्द्रों की व्यवस्था।
- ऑफलाइन व ऑनलाइन प्रशिक्षण के माध्यम से विभिन्न परीक्षाओं के पाठ्यक्रम व परीक्षा पैटर्न की जानकारी की सुविधा।
- गुणवत्ता पूर्ण पाठ्य सामग्री उपलब्ध कराने के लिए ई-लर्निंग प्लेटफॉर्म का सृजन।
- वरिष्ठ आईएएस और आईपीएस अधिकारियों से लेकर भारतीय वन सेवा, पीसीएस, पीपीएस एवं अन्य संवर्ग के अधिकारियों/सेवानिवृत्त अधिकारियों एवं विषय विशेषज्ञों से अध्ययन एवं मार्गदर्शन का अवसर मिलेगा।
- वेबिनार, लाइव सेशन और सेमिनार के माध्यम से अभ्यर्थियों की समस्याओं के समाधान की सुविधा।

अभ्युदय योजना का लाभ लेने के लिए <http://abhyuday.up.gov.in> पर अभ्यर्थी अपना पंजीकरण कराएं



## Boosting confidence

The government should ensure that the available stocks of vaccine are used efficiently

**T**he downward trend in fresh coronavirus infections in India continues to inspire confidence that the pandemic is on the wane. The daily new cases fell below 10,000 for the third time this month. India's tally is now 10.9 million cases and fresh reported fatalities were recorded below 100 for the eighth time this month, according to Health Ministry data. On January 1, there were around 20,000 fresh infections, which fell to about 11,000 by the month end. Should this sharp decline continue for this month too, then it would be a truly propitious turn of events. So far, around 8.2 million doses of vaccine have been administered to healthcare workers and some frontline workers, though this is still below the first lot of 16.5 million doses of Covishield and Covaxin that the government commissioned from their manufacturers. India has also managed to donate vaccines to neighbouring countries. For now, supply seems to far exceed demand, with only around half of those enrolled for vaccinations showing up for their doses. Saturday marked 28 days since the first doses of vaccine were administered and time for the first batch of those inoculated to show up for their second dose. The government is also considering administering vaccines to those above 50 and those younger with co-morbidities from March. India is also likely to get 97 million doses of Covishield by June – half of them by March.

This is a far cry from many countries where demand far exceeds supply and experiments are under way to test if different vaccines can be administered as first and second doses, so that more people may get at least one dose. However, the disappearance of a pandemic does not equate to the vanishing of the virus. The results of the ongoing serology surveys from the ICMR, meant to estimate the prevalence of COVID-antibodies, say that only around 21% of the population has been exposed to the virus. That, combined with the fact that there is so far no reliable information on the kind of coronavirus variants prevalent in the population, means that India can ill-afford to be complacent. Though dreaded variants such as the South African one have not yet been identified in India, key mutations (E484K and N440K) that are known to help the coronavirus evade antibodies have been reported in India. In spite of a consortium of labs analysing variants since December, there is no firm indication from the Centre if the U.K. variant has been found outside of those with a history of international travel. However, the government's message to not be complacent and continue to adhere to mask use is in the right scientific spirit, given the uncertainty about virus evolution. Considerable hesitancy continues to exist as evidenced in Chhattisgarh. The Centre should work on furnishing efficacy data on Covaxin as well as improving public confidence, in ways that the available stocks of vaccine can be efficiently used.

## Endless war

Saudi Arabia should end the blockade of Yemen and start talks with rebel factions

**T**he Biden administration's decision to end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's Yemen war is a signal to Riyadh that the Trump-era open support it had enjoyed is a matter of the past. The U.S. offered support to Saudi Arabia's campaign against the Houthi rebels in Yemen when Barack Obama was the President. Donald Trump continued that policy, overlooking the disastrous effects of the war that has turned Yemen, one of the poorest Arab countries, into a humanitarian catastrophe. In its last hours, the Trump State Department designated the Houthis, who are backed by Iran, as a terrorist organisation. Rights groups have condemned the move, saying that the designation would complicate aid efforts as the Houthis control a sizeable part of Yemen, including the capital. Mr. Biden has now taken a different line, initiating steps to remove the Houthis from the terror list, among other actions. This is part of his larger attempts to rewrite the U.S.'s West Asia policy which, under Mr. Trump, was almost entirely focused on containing Iran. The administration's message seems to have reached Riyadh. Saudi Arabia ended a nearly four-year-long blockade of Qatar, another American ally, after Mr. Biden was elected President. It has also signalled that it would carry out domestic reforms keeping human rights in focus. But it is yet to make any definite moves to wrap up the Yemen conflict.

Yemen is a case study for a war that has gone wrong on all fronts. When the Saudis started bombing the country in March 2015, their plan was to oust the Houthis from Sana'a and restore a pro-Riyadh government. Despite the Saudi-led attacks, the Houthis held on to the territories they captured, while the Saudi-backed government of President Abdurrahman Mansur Hadi was teetering on the brink of collapse. After five years of fighting, the United Arab Emirates pulled out of the war last year. And the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council wants southern Yemen to be an independent entity. While these multiple factions continued to fight, more than 10,000 people were killed in attacks and tens of thousands more died of preventable diseases. Yemen also starves at famine. It is a lose-lose war for everyone. Saudi Arabia has failed to oust the Houthis from Sana'a and is now facing frequent rocket and drone attacks by the rebels. The Houthis are living in permanent war, unable to provide even basic services to the people in the territories they control. Yemen's internationally recognised government practically lacks any power and legitimacy at home as the war is being fought by other players. Ending the war is in the best interest of all parties. Mr. Biden should push Saudi Arabia and its allies to end their blockade of Yemen and initiate talks with the country's multiple rebel factions.

# Fuzzy law, unclear jurisprudence, trampled rights

The legal regime that enables the government to block websites needs urgent reform



GAUTAM BHATIA

**O**n February 1, 2021, in the wake of the intensification of the farmers' protests and reports of violent incidents on January 26 – a number of Twitter accounts became inaccessible in India. These included (among many others) the accounts of *The Caravan* magazine, the actor Sushant Singh, and the Kisan Ekta Morcha handle, which was chronicling the protests. In the beginning, it was unclear whether this was Twitter's decision, based on its belief that the accounts had violated its Terms of Service (the reason for its permanent suspension of Donald Trump from its platform, for example), or whether Twitter had been ordered to do so by the government, or by a court.

As outrage mounted, the Government of India clarified that it had invoked Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, and ordered Twitter to block access to these accounts. The reason, it appeared, was the use of the hashtag #ModiPlanningFarmerGenocide, which was deemed a threat to public order. The merits of this argument aside, the government's Section 69A order was clearly an overreach even on its own terms, as media outlets such as *The Caravan* had not used the hashtag.

### Uneasy truce

Soon after, Twitter restored access to many of the withheld accounts. This prompted a sharp reaction from the government, including a non-compliance notice and veiled

threats that Twitter's employees would be prosecuted for violating Section 69A. A meeting between Twitter officials and the government appears to have yielded for now an uneasy truce. On February 10, Twitter also published a blog post (<https://bit.ly/378v1of>) where it remarkably – and in my view correctly – argued that the government's own actions in directing it to withhold access to the accounts of journalists, activists, and politicians, violated Indian law, and the constitutional guarantee of the freedom of speech.

These events of the last few days throw into sharp relief the unsatisfactory state of Indian law and how it is interpreted and applied by censorship-happy governments. At present, the online free speech rights of Indian citizens depend entirely upon the extent to which multinational social-media platforms are able to stand up to the government's censorship requests, how willing they are to risk legal prosecution, and how much confidence they have that their interpretation of Indian free speech law will stand up in court, even over the claims of the government. It should be clear that this is not a sustainable situation.

### The root lies in the IT Act

The root of the problem is Section 69A of the IT Act. Section 69A grants to the government the power to issue directions to intermediaries for blocking access to any information that it considers prejudicial to, among other things, the sovereignty and integrity of India, national security, or public order. Section 69A(3) envisages a jail sentence for up to seven years for intermediaries who fail to comply. In 2009, the government also issued "Blocking Rules", which set up the procedure for blocking (in-



cluding regular review by government committees), and also stated that all requests and complaints would remain strictly confidential.

### Violation of rights

There are a number of problems with this legal structure. The first is that it makes censorship an easy and almost completely costless option, for the government. Rather than having to go to court and prove a violation even *prima facie* of law, the government can simply direct intermediaries to block content, and place the burden of going to court upon the users. It stands to reason that the easier it is to censor speech, the more likely it is that a government – any government – will resort to that option. Furthermore, the confidentiality requirement means that the user will not even know why their account has been blocked and, therefore, will be in no position to challenge it. Third, there are no procedural safeguards – no opportunity for a hearing to affected parties, and no need for reasoned orders. This, then, violates both free speech rights, as well as the right to due process.

In the famous *Shreya Singhal* case that is well known for the striking down of Section 66A of the IT Act, the scope of Section 69A and the Blocking Rules were also litigated before the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, however,

the Supreme Court missed an opportunity to guide the law in a pro-free speech direction, as it had with Section 66A: without engaging in any detailed analysis, the Court largely endorsed the legal regime, as it stood. The Court only noted that every affected individual would retain the constitutional right to challenge a blocking order, through a writ petition before the High Court.

### Need for transparency

Now, it would appear to follow from this holding that the *Shreya Singhal* judgment made it mandatory for the government to furnish blocking orders along with reasons to affected parties; it is evidently impossible to challenge something that you cannot even see. However, as recent events show, in practice, that is not being followed (the lack of clarity in the *Shreya Singhal* judgment is no doubt a contributory factor). In a recent article in *The Indian Express*, Apar Gupta also pointed out that after the Supreme Court's judgment in the Kashmir Internet Ban case, it is, at least now, an arguable position of law that any order restricting access to the Internet, or information on the Internet, must be made public. There is, at present, a pending case before the High Court of Delhi, which makes the same argument; until that is resolved, however, the present state of affairs is likely to continue.

Consequently, a combination of bad law and unclear jurisprudence has created a situation where Twitter or the intermediary that might be caught in the government's crosshairs is the only entity that is in a position to defend the free speech rights of Indian citizens. And there is little doubt that doing so entails a non-trivial risk: in particular, the record of the In-

dian judiciary in civil rights cases involving the government has been remarkably poor in recent times, and it would take considerable courage for any entity to bet on the proposition that its interpretation of Indian free speech law would be necessarily upheld by the courts. Thus, while it may still be possible for Twitter to stand up to the government in obvious cases of overreach and abuse, such as the suspension of *The Caravan*, there will be a host of borderline cases where it will simply be easier to back down; indeed, as MediaNama reported recently, the Twitter account of a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament remains suspended even now.

### Enable a fair hearing

There is, thus, an urgent need for both legal and jurisprudential reform. Legally, the best case scenario would be to prohibit the government from being able to directly order intermediaries to block access to online information, except in narrowly-defined emergency cases, and to require it to go through court to do so, with an adequate opportunity for affected parties to defend themselves. Short of that, however, it is vitally important that blocking orders be made public, and that even under the current legal regime, affected parties be given the opportunity of a fair hearing before a blocking order is issued. This process will also ensure that the blocking order is a reasoned one, and can be effectively challenged before a court, if need be. Long term, however, the hard work of contesting governmental impunity in cases of censorship, both in courts and outside, remains to be done.

Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based lawyer

## A disengagement deal better than expected

But cautious diplomatic and military planning and hawk-like vigil by India will be needed in its implementation



SUJAN R. CHINOY

**T**he year 2021 has begun on an optimistic note for reduction of military tensions between India and China. Both sides announced on February 11, the simultaneous disengagement of their massive forward deployments in the Pangong Lake area, cheek by jowl for the past 10 months in Eastern Ladakh. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh delivered a carefully worded statement in Parliament about the breakthrough which envisages a pullback by both sides in a "phased, coordinated and verified manner". The headway in the impasse, achieved after lengthy talks between the two sides, surprised the doubting Thomases who questioned India's will and capacity for a military counterpoise that is essential for restoration of the situation as it prevailed before April 2020. It also caught off guard those who scoff at the notion of a peaceful resolution of territorial differences in keeping with the longer-term interests of both Asian giants.

### Peaceful resolution

Tracing the genesis of the problem since April-May 2020, when the Chinese side had suddenly positioned a large body of troops and armaments along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the Indian Defence Minister also paid rich tribute to the armed forces and lauded their valiant sacrifices. The message was unambiguous: India was not going to cave in and stood ready to impose

thwarted by India's robust military response guided by a resolute Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Relations between India and China suffered a dramatic setback following the violation by China of the bilateral agreements and protocols, which ruptured peace and tranquillity. The bloody incident at Galwan on June 15, 2020, the first involving casualties since 1975, brought about the collapse of the prevailing consensus that bilateral ties could develop in parallel with efforts to resolve the boundary question and the maintenance of peace and tranquillity. Since June last year, India has consistently highlighted the view that peace is a fundamental prerequisite for the normal conduct of relations. The stand-off at the Pangong Lake was but one of several in Eastern Ladakh, but undoubtedly among the most significant. After China took steps to alter the ground situation between Fingers 4 and 8, the Indian Army had carried out daring manoeuvres to take up advantageous positions along the Kailash range on the southern bank, thereby dominating the key Chinese garrison at Moldo across the Spanggur Gap. Even on the northern bank, the Indian Army succeeded in offsetting any initial advantage that the PLA may have had along the spurs.

### Message of endurance

Having acquired powerful leverage, Indian troops dug in for the long haul and mirrored the PLA's deployments. On its part, the government left no stone unturned to ensure that they were provided with the necessary wherewithal to deal with any real or perceived asymmetry. The message was unambiguous: India was not going to cave in and stood ready to impose



a harsh penalty if China engaged in any act of adventurism. The endurance of the Indian Army through the harsh winter months has been extraordinary. China appears to have realised that a prolonged stand-off, hardly a part of its original calculus and of little avail militarily or politically, was permanently impairing bilateral relations. The uncertainty associated with the law of unintended consequences, the high reputational costs to itself, and the forward momentum in India-U.S. relations and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (India, the U.S., Japan and Australia), better known as the Quad, may also have proved to be factors for China.

The disengagement at Pangong Lake is certainly a welcome development. This is an area in which the patrols of the two sides have been encountering one another for decades, whether on land or on the lake. The construction of a road by China from Finger 8 towards Fingers 5 and 4 many years ago had led to a spike in face-offs and gradually reduced access for Indian troops to their traditional patrolling point at Finger 8. Meanwhile, India too built better infrastructure all the way to its permanent presence at the Dhan Singh Thapa Post near Finger 3.

The disengagement deal is perhaps better than one might have expected under the circumstances. The Chinese have agreed to pull back forward deployments to their permanent base at Sirijap, and

east of Finger 8, and to dismantle all infrastructure created after April 2020. India's tough negotiators, both diplomatic and military, have ensured that our troops retain their presence at the permanent Indian post at Finger 3 even though China had earlier demanded that India fall back further. Moreover, all the Chinese posts atop the high spurs on the northern bank will also be dismantled, including those that overlooked the Dhan Singh Thapa Post. Of course, India will also fall back from its recently held positions along the Kailash range to earlier positions.

With trust badly shattered after April 2020, one expects the Indian side to tread warily in implementing the deal at Pangong. Carrying out simultaneous disengagement in a phased and coordinated manner, with proper verification, is key to its success. There is little doubt that cautious diplomatic and military planning and hawk-like vigil will be called for throughout the implementation.

### Faith in forces, negotiators

The government of Prime Minister Modi has amply demonstrated its willingness to take tough calls on matters pertaining to sovereignty and territorial integrity. It has demonstrated boldness in the face of a major military challenge. It has shown equal courage in grasping the nettle of peace. More importantly, the government has reposed full faith in its armed forces and negotiators. Mr. Singh's statement, containing just the right blend of steel and velvet, generously acknowledged the unity of purpose among all departments of the government and highlighted the consistency with which India's unwavering position was put across. Both he and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had en-

gaged their Chinese counterparts last September and drawn the red lines. This no doubt strengthened the hand of the senior commanders and foreign ministry officials who hammered out the deal.

The progress at Pangong notwithstanding, the doubting Thomases will continue to raise questions. They run the risk of doing so without sufficient familiarity with either the facts or the military complexities on the ground. The truth is that India's tough military and diplomatic posture has paid off, resulting in an honourable disengagement. If tensions could be defused at Galwan, where much blood was shed, and at Pangong, it should be equally possible to fashion mutually acceptable terms for disengagement at Gogra/Hot Springs as well as the resolution of Depsang.

Over the next two to three weeks, both sides should be given a chance to implement the agreement. The temporary moratorium on military activities by both sides along the north bank, including on patrolling up to the traditional points, will improve the situation. That patrolling will be resumed only consequent to an agreement being reached in future diplomatic and military talks is also a step forward. Naturally, the pullback will prove to be a complex exercise involving meticulous planning of intricate details and scheduled withdrawals that must factor in the local terrain, the disposition of troops and a vast array of armaments. No doubt, one must also keep the powder dry.

Sujan R. Chinoy, a former Ambassador and negotiator on India-China boundary issues, is currently Director General, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses. The views expressed are personal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

### Stepping back

The mutual disengagement of India and China in Eastern Ladakh must also be linked to the mix of four instruments that India has used in keeping the pressure on China: direct engagement, strong military build-up, economic measures, and international partnerships. At the same time, Delhi needs to be cautious here. We do not know when Beijing can reverse its moves. The fundamental issues remain as the LAC is undemarcated and the India-China strategic rivalry

is out in the open.

N. SADHASIVA REDDY,  
Bengaluru

**Facts needed**  
It is casual and simplistic of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi to have said that the three contentious farm laws had been brought in just to benefit "two friends" of the Modi government. If Mr. Gandhi was serious about the charges he levelled, he should have provided evidence, barring which these will be characterised as wild charges and a figment of the imagination.

Suffice to say, Mr. Gandhi must stop beating around the bush and come out with solid and well-researched facts to buttress his claims and charges' and also raise the level of his speeches.

Winning plaudits from Congressmen alone will not make him sound credible.

C.G. KURIAKOSE,  
Kothamangalam, Kerala

### Power centre

V.K. Sasikala is indeed the "country's best known extraconstitutional authority" (*Profiles* page, February 14). It may not be an exaggeration to say that

she functioned as the de facto Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, wielding enormous power on the wide spectrum of administration and party affairs during Jayalalithaa's regime. That she was given a rousing welcome on her return to Chennai is indigestible. The perception is that the Bharatiya Janata Party may endeavour to unite the factions within the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam just to ensure that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam does not return to power. If the BJP

supports Ms. Sasikala for political reasons, then the national party will lose its non-corrupt image. Will it take such a political risk?

V.N. GOPAL,  
Chennai

**Radio still makes waves**  
World Radio Day, on February 13, seems to have slipped past without notice. It is unfortunate that we seem to have forgotten the magic this important tool offers us – as information, entertainment and instruction. Even in today's era where cyber-related devices and gadgets rule

the roost of media and communication, the radio has managed to retain its image. Many readers are bound to have grown up listening to "Jaimala", "Hawa Mahal", "Chhaya Geeth" and the famous "Binaca Geetmala". The happiness one derives from listening to music, especially on radio, is one that only radio listeners will relate to well. The radio is truly one of man's best companions.

M. PRADYU,  
Thalikavu, Kannur, Kerala



# When Twitter was in the right

In not complying fully with the Indian government's statutory orders, Twitter has acted with reason



PRASANNA S.

Twitter has not complied fully with the Indian government's statutory orders under Section 69A of the Information Technology (IT) Act to block hundreds of accounts for allegedly posting messages suggesting that the Prime Minister was planning a genocide against farmers. Twitter has said that the government's blocking list had accounts of journalists, activists, and politicians whose accounts appear to be bona fide; that their posts are legitimate expression; and that it reasonably believes that keeping them blocked would be a disproportionate act contrary to both Indian law and the platform's charter objectives. This apparent defiance has not gone down well with many, including the government. Independent verifications revealed that many such accounts (for example, the Kisan Ekta Morcha) did not post messages suggesting a genocide plan, although all of them had posted in favour of the farmer protests and against government measures to quell the protests.

**Criticism against Twitter**  
Criticism against Twitter's stand seems to be three-fold. One, Twitter is an intermediary bound by statutory orders of the government under the Act, and its refusal shows a lack of respect for Indian law. Two, Twitter, as a private company, cannot adjudicate or sit in appeal over the government's judgment on what is proportionate or lawful. It may challenge the order in a court, but cannot simply choose to comply partially or not at all. Three, Twitter's blocking of Donald Trump's account even while he was the sitting President of the U.S. and its refusal to block here shows it denying parity to India with the U.S. Four, its defiance indicates the increasing power and impunity of Big Tech, requiring a clear and unequivocal zero tolerance response.

The first two arguments miss the vital detail that Twitter, or any person for that matter, is only bound by lawful orders of the state. Twitter be-



ing a private company or a foreign company does not change that. Once there is a blocking order, an intermediary is within its rights to take a considered view on whether the order is lawful; to what extent it is lawful; and to what extent it must comply to achieve substantial compliance acceptable in law. Lawfulness of an order is not merely about citing the statutory provision, being on a letterhead with the national emblem on it, and having the designated officer's signature and seal. For an order to be lawful, it needs to demonstrate having satisfied all statutory conditions and conditions cumulatively evolved through judicial reasoning, which takes into account constitutional provisions and international human rights jurisprudence.

In a polity in which the government is limited by a Constitution and laws, different kinds of state action entail varying consequences and command varying degrees of deference. A government order of the non-statutory type is not quite the same as a government order validly issued under a statute (where the government is acting as a delegate of Parliament). Neither of them commands as much deference as an express provision of law. Even an express provision of law differs from an order of a constitutional court in that respect. One may add, even compliance with orders of a constitutional court is subject to one's own studied sense of constitutional reason.

In this case, Twitter appears to have justifiably formed an informed opinion that the blocking orders, even if validly issued under Section 69A(1) of the IT Act, are partly not

lawful and that it is confident of succeeding in a challenge to the orders should the government take any coercive action to enforce them.

#### Twitter's actions desirable

Quite apart from the social media giant being within its rights to defy government orders to the extent it views them as not being lawful, it is indeed desirable that it does so. It is undeniable that platforms such as Twitter have significant control over how people's right to free and informed speech is fulfilled. Mechanically following government orders without regard to their lawfulness, necessity or proportionality will seriously impact their audience's fundamental rights. The assumption of this responsibility to defy government orders is consistent with the power they wield. The tension between two powerful entities – the government and social media platforms – on questions of which speech to promote and whose speech to curtail is healthy and constructive. It acts as a check on the arbitrary power that would prevail if both were on the same side as a matter of routine. Therein also lies the response to the argument about the increasing power and impunity of Big Tech.

This functional tension as demonstrated in this case, however, is no alternative to structural and institutional solutions that must be found to limit the power of both the government and Big Tech and to enforce their obligation to act rationally and responsibly. Big Tech has often sided with the government (and the political party in power), hurting its users'

rights. The *Wall Street Journal* report on Facebook India's failure to act on the disinformation-laden and incendiary posts of a member of the BJP on the consideration of not wanting to be loggerheads with the Central government is a case in point.

#### Red Fort is not Capitol Hill

Kisan Ekta Morcha is not Donald Trump and Red Fort 26/01/2021 is not Capitol Hill 06/01/2021. Mr. Trump's Twitter account was operational with no limits on reach throughout his tenure despite repeated calls for curtailment pointing to his messages being persistently incendiary, inciteful and promoting lies. Even leading up to the day of the Capitol Hill riot, his account had been spreading misinformation (or what Twitter reasonably concluded as misinformation) calling into question the election results to the office of the President. Twitter initially resorted to the less intrusive measure of flagging his content, followed by limiting its reach before suspending his account. His account's permanent ban was the last step in the series of measures, after an appraisal of his Twitter posts' effect on the Capitol Hill riots and the probability of further imminent lawlessness. All of these actions were *suo motu* and not under government orders.

If anything, the present episode is arguably among the rare instances that Twitter has accorded parity to its Indian audience with that of its U.S. – choosing to take an independent view of the matter and not mechanically complying with the wishes of the national government. Social media platforms enjoy better immunity and warmer first amendment protection under U.S. law that help them better guard their users' interests against government action. The attempt to extend similar safeguards to Indian users, who also in theory are guaranteed the same protection under a universal human rights regime, is welcome. That would also be consistent with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights endorsed by the UNHRC.

*Prasanna S. is a Delhi-based lawyer and a founding member of the Article 21 Trust which works on issues at the intersection of digital rights and welfare. Views are personal. He holds no brief for Twitter and derives no benefit (pecuniary or otherwise, direct or indirect) from the company*

#### FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

## The retreat of democracy

The government's recent moves not only have a chilling effect on journalism but on the entire information ecosystem



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

On February 11, *The Hindu* published an editorial, 'Media as target', on the Enforcement Directorate's raids in the office of NewsClick, an online video news network. The editorial was unambiguous when it said: "The present regime's record is quite dismal when it comes to the obvious use of central agencies such as the CBI, ED, IT and even the NIA, to rein in dissenting voices. It is unfortunate that specialised agencies are allowing themselves to be used as force multipliers in political battles against sections of the Opposition." In response to the editorial, Purender, a reader, wrote: "It may be a part of 'toolkit'... and what's the problem, if they had not done anything wrong... why to fear... let them do their work."

Mr. Purender was not alone. Some readers read this editorial along with my last column, 'Debunking vs. prior restraint' (February 8), and asked two questions. Why is the ombudsman, who is independent of the editorial process, taking a similar view as the newspaper on the government's actions? News organisations and free speech advocates always raise questions about searches by the government. If there is nothing to hide, why should they fear such raids?

**Diverting attention**  
Before answering these questions, let us remember that the raid at the residence of NewsClick's editor-in-chief, Prabir Purkayastha, lasted for nearly 114 hours. There are multiple problems with these intimidating acts. The agencies who carry out these acts know that they may not be able to get a legal judgment against journalists and media organisations. But they know pretty well that searches, selective leaks and concocted tales divert the attention of the news organisation from its task of providing credible information and generating 'sense-making news'. As I have been arguing over the last three decades, in the case of freedom of the press, the approach of the government is to create a process that is itself the punishment for critical media players, rather than securing a judicial verdict against those media houses that actually flout journalistic rules with consummate ease. An independent ombudsman

at times concurs with the newspaper and at times differs with the stand taken by the newspaper.

#### 'Sense-making news' is the way to go

Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, is credited for coining the term 'sense-making news'. He has a broad and inclusive definition of 'sense-making news', which he thinks is central for journalism to thrive in the age of information overload. His prescription: "It is the news that helps people figure out what to believe. It helps them make order out of random facts. If information is in oversupply, knowledge becomes harder to create because it requires more sifting and sorting." He is convinced that 'sense-making news' is the best way to earn public trust for quality journalism. As someone who is subjected to both information overload and credible journalism on an hourly basis, I completely endorse Mr. Rosenstiel's views.

For any observer of the Indian information ecosystem, one issue is clear. The long arm of the government is extended to muzzle the voices of those who are engaged in 'sense-making news'. The First Information Reports filed against some prominent journalists by the Delhi Police and the Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh governments, for their tweets relating to the death of a farmer during tractor rally in Delhi on Republic Day, is an attempt to prevent discussions that would contribute to 'sense-making news'. The Supreme Court has protected them from arrest in multiple sedition FIRs registered against them. But the larger question is whether the government is justified in using a colonial law like sedition to cripple independent voices. Readers should realise how these moves can have not only a chilling effect on journalism but on the entire information ecosystem. Democracy cannot thrive in a climate of self-censorship and partial reporting.

The fear of executive overreach that is stifling some of our fundamental rights is very real. How else can one understand the arrest of a 21-year-old climate activist, Disha Ravi, on Saturday in Bengaluru for "spreading" the "toolkit" on the farmers' protest? Can the Delhi Police explain how sharing a toolkit to canvass support for farmers is a crime under Sections 124A (sedition), 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 120B (criminal conspiracy)?

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

## Opening up the vaccine market

The elements of a free market – competition, choice, and prices – will help advance social welfare

CHIRANTAN CHATTERJEE

Today, India completes nearly four weeks since it began administering the two COVID-19 vaccines – Covishield and Covaxin. During this period, the country has managed to give the first dose of the vaccine to only about eight million people, which is about 0.6% of the population.

Seroprevalence surveys suggest that some 400 million people already have antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 in India. Assuming true herd immunity is reached when 60% of the population develops antibodies against the virus, for a population of 1.3 billion, that would require over 780 million people to develop antibodies either naturally or through vaccines.

If we assume that 400 million have already developed antibodies, how will the additional 380 million develop antibodies quickly, without contracting the virus, especially given the high level of vaccine hesitancy and lack of trust in both vaccines and the government? In fact, at the current rate of vaccination, which is about eight million over four weeks, the country would require about 47 months (or about four years) to reach herd immunity. It simply cannot afford to wait that long.

**Constricted market**

In this context, it is surprising that the Indian government has stayed away from a free market system for COVID-19 vaccines, especially given that several vaccine options are now knocking at its door. Instead, there are only governmental channels, which can work only to a certain extent. The rules and elements of a free market, such as competition, choice, and prices, will go a long way in advancing social welfare.

On this count, the drug regulator of India has not inspired confidence. Pfizer recently withdrew its application for emergency use of its COVID-19 vaccine in India. There is no transparency on the Moderna-Tata discussions. Gamaleya Sputnik V has positive results and has advanced in its work with Dr. Reddy's Laboratories. This vaccine should soon be ready to hit the market, but here too it seems like the regulator is slowing it down by distorting incentives. Mean-

while, Johnson & Johnson has its one-dose vaccine ready; Novavax's vaccine is also in the offing; and Gennova might also speed up its clinical trials for its mRNA vaccines if incentives start making more sense through free markets.

Not opening up the market for these options suggests that there may be other considerations at play here, which are beyond the health and welfare of citizens. Many households in India are waiting to pay privately for the vaccines, in addition to socially bearing the cost of the vaccine for extended families.

A constricted vaccine market does nothing to help the government's aspiration of a \$5 trillion economy. In fact, the sooner the country reaches herd immunity, the more likely the chance that the economy will recover faster. Stimulating the economy would also be an incentive for the government given that its international image has taken a beating recently following the farmers' protests.

#### Private motivations

Economists point out that since vaccines boost health and immunity, creating additional private motivations with a free market makes rational sense in India's context. India is not really a place where one can expect private subsidies to take vaccines to socially optimal levels, such as in the U.S., because that may be socially unaffordable for the government. If this is not done, the country's rich will find a way to engage in vaccine tourism. This would mean that events that can show celebrities taking the vaccines and reducing the stigma surrounding vaccines would be few and far between in India unlike in the U.S., the U.K., or other Western economies. Also, several Indian pharmaceutical firms must be waiting to respond with their manufacturing capacities should the tap of private channels be opened.

Will the government listen? We will have to wait and hope that good sense prevails before mutating virus strains minimise our chances of effective social and policy responses.

Chirantan Chatterjee is a faculty member at IIM Ahmedabad and Visiting Fellow at Hoover Institution, Stanford University

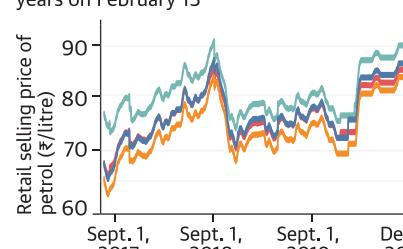


#### DATA POINT

### Paying in excess

Following Mumbai, petrol prices in Chennai breached the ₹90/litre mark in February. Delhi and Kolkata are about a rupee short of the mark. Heavy taxation on crude oil combined with a significant uptick in international crude prices are responsible for this price rise. While the recently introduced Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess on crude oil will not burden the customers, the money collected will not be shared with the States as they are excluded from the purview of the divisible pool of taxes. It is important to note that not a single rupee of the cess collected on crude oil in the past 10 years was used for the intended purposes. By Sumant Sen and Vignesh Radhakrishnan

**1. STEEP RISE** | Petrol prices per litre in Delhi (₹88.4), Mumbai (₹94.9), Chennai (₹90.7), and Kolkata (₹89.7) reached the highest mark in at least four years on February 13



**2. TAX SURGE** | The base price of petrol in Delhi without taxes, duties and commissions was ₹47.12 in May 2014 and reduced to ₹29.34 in February 2021 – a 37% decrease. In the same period, taxes, duties and commissions recorded a 133% increase from ₹24.29 to ₹56.59. Tax levied by the Centre increased by as much as 217%

Price build up	May 2014	Feb 2021
Base price	47.12 (66%)	29.34 (34%)
Centre's tax	10.39 (14%)	32.98 (38%)
Dealer commission	2 (3%)	3.69 (4%)
State's tax	11.9 (17%)	19.92 (23%)
Retail price	71.41 (100%)	86.3 (100%)

**3. NEW CESS ON THE BLOCK** | Cesses are collected for a specific purpose, and they need not be shared with the States. In the FY22 Budget, an Agriculture Infrastructure and Development (AID) Cess was announced on select items, including petrol and diesel. This new cess is a part of the excise duty component (Centre's tax) of the petrol and diesel prices. Road and infrastructure cess forms the biggest share of excise duty. The table compares the parts of the excise duty component before and after the introduction of the AID cess

Component	Duty/cess for petrol (₹/l)		Duty/cess for diesel (₹/l)	
	Feb. 3, 2021	June 6, 2020	Feb. 3, 2021	June 6, 2020
Basic excise duty	₹1.4	₹2.98	₹1.8	₹4.83
Special additional excise duty	₹11	₹12	₹8	₹9
AID cess	₹2.5	-	₹4	-
Road & infra cess	₹18	₹18	₹18	₹18

**4. MISUSED FUNDS** | The Central government is expected to transfer the cess collection to the designated Reserve Funds so that it can be utilised for the earmarked purposes. However, the CAG observed that the Centre retained 40% of all cess collections in FY19. Not one rupee of the ₹1.25 lakh crore of cess collected on crude oil was transferred to an oil industry development body it was meant to finance (FY10–FY19)

Major cesses levied	Collected cess (₹ cr.)	Retained by Centre
Overall (FY19)	2,7	

FROM PAGE ONE

## PM hands over Arjun Mk-1A tank to Army

Mr. Modi also recalled the martyrs who lost their lives in a terrorist attack in Pulwama two years ago.

"No Indian can forget this day. Two years ago, the Pulwama attack happened. We pay homage to all the martyrs we lost in that attack. We are proud of our security forces. Their bravery will continue to inspire generations," he said.

Quoting from Tamil poet Subramania Bharati, Mr. Modi said India had undertaken a massive effort to become self-reliant in the defence sector.

"One of the two defence corridors is in Tamil Nadu. The corridor has already received investment commitments of over ₹8,100 crore. Today, I am proud to dedicate to the country one more warrior to protect our frontiers. I am proud to handover the indigenously designed and manufactured main battle tank Arjun

Mk-1A. It also uses indigenous ammunition. Tamil Nadu is already the leading automobile manufacturing hub of India," Mr. Modi said.

The Arjun Mk-1A has superior firepower, high mobility, excellent protection and crew comfort, with 14 major upgrades from Arjun Mk-1, according to the CVRDE.

The indent for 118 of these tanks would be placed shortly with the Heavy Vehicle Factory (HVF) at Avadi near Chennai.

The Indian is expected to soon approach the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) for approval after which it would place the indent for 118 tanks at a cost of ₹8,956.59 crore.

Issues with Arjun Mk-1 ammunition, spares and repairs have also been resolved, and the DRDO has set up an Arjun hub in Jaisalmmer for spares and support, a source said.

## Senate acquits Trump of incitement

"This has been yet another phase of the greatest witch hunt in the history of our country," Mr. Trump, said in a statement on Saturday. "No President has ever gone through anything like it." "In the months ahead, I have much to share with you, and I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people. There has never been anything like it!"

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the GOP Senators who voted to acquit Mr. Trump, "cowardly". Ms. Pelosi, however, ruled out censoring Mr. Trump, saying it would let "everybody off the hook". Ms. Pelosi criticised Republican leader Mitch McConnell, saying the trial could not go ahead while

## 22-year-old activist sent to Delhi police custody

The police said Ms. Ravi had edited the "toolkit" on February 3. The prosecutor added that a mobile phone was recovered from her, but she had deleted all the data from it. In her defence, Ms. Ravi said she had just edited two lines in the "toolkit" and that she was in support of the farmers and was influenced by their protests as farmers provide food.

Ms. Ravi broke down after the magistrate ordered her remand but remained silent as the police took her away from the court.

According to the police, the activist is an editor of the "Toolkit Google Doc" and was a key conspirator in the document's formulation and dissemination. It alleged that she started a WhatsApp group to make the toolkit in collaboration with pro-Khalistani organisation Poetic Justice Found-

ation to spread disaffection against the Indian state. "She was the one who shared the Toolkit Doc with Greta Thunberg and later asked Greta to remove the main Doc after its incriminating details accidentally got into public domain," the police alleged.

The Coalition for Environmental Justice in India, in a statement, said the young environmental activist was the latest victim of the Centre's continuing efforts to delegitimise the ongoing farmers' protest and the nationwide solidarity it had generated.

Expressing his solidarity with the activist, former Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh tweeted, "Completely atrocious! This is unwarranted harassment and intimidation. I express my full solidarity with Disha Ravi."

## Bulk of vaccine recipients pass up second dose

While some international studies show that the vaccines can be more effective, when given apart even in a 6-12 week window, India's current policy does not recommend such a wide spacing.

Unlike many countries where available vaccines are fewer than those required, India is still to exhaust its first stock of vaccines – about 160 lakh doses – that the government ordered in the first week of January.

Until Sunday, about 82.4 lakh healthcare and frontline workers had been inoculated with at least one dose of the vaccine. Of them, around 2.72 lakh were vacci-

nated on Saturday.

The 82 lakh vaccinations have been conducted over 1.72 lakh vaccination sessions, suggesting that only around half the total vaccination capacity was being utilised. For nearly a week, there have been around 4 lakh inoculations a day.

India's active caseload of coronavirus patients dropped to 1.37 lakh as of Sunday, or about 1.26% of the total positive cases.

About eight in 10 of the new cases are from six States. Kerala reported the highest daily new cases at 5,471 followed by Maharashtra with 3,611 and Tamil Nadu at 477.

## Projects launched in Kochi will spur growth: PM

These ventures will go a long way in creating Atmanirbhar Bharat, says Modi

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KOCHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the five projects launched in Kochi would strengthen the growth trajectory of the country.

Mr. Modi dedicated to nation the Propylene Derivative Petrochemical Project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, launched the roll on, roll off vessels to be operated between Bolgatty and Wellington Island and inaugurated the Sagarka International Cruise Terminal.

He laid the foundation stone for the reconstruction of the South Coal Berth at Cochin Port, besides opening the Marine Engineering Training Institute.

Mr. Modi said the projects would go a long way in creat-

ing an Atmanirbhar Bharat. The Prime Minister urged the people to travel locally and explore places. He suggested that start-ups consider developing projects for the tourism sector.

A large number of people were writing about local tourist destinations and posting pictures as they could not travel abroad due to COVID-19. Besides generating additional revenue, it would connect youth to the culture of the country, he said.

Mr. Modi urged those in the start-up sector to think about innovative tourism-related products. In the World Tourism Index ranking, India moved from the 65th position to 34th in the past five years, he said.

The Prime Minister as-



**Joint effort:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at a petrochemical project inauguration in Kochi on Sunday. ■ H. VIBHU

sured the Indian diaspora in Gulf countries that the government was committed to their welfare. Many of the Gulf countries responded positively to the call for the

release of Indians imprisoned in jails, he said.

During the past few years, many Indians were released from prisons. The government would always speak up

for such people. The Gulf kingdoms responded to the personal appeals and took special care of Indian community there. They were giving priority to the return of

Indians to the region, he said.

Mr. Modi said he had the opportunity to interact with the Indian diaspora in the Gulf countries during his visit to the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. Around 50 lakh people were brought back to the country under the Vande Bharat programme and a large number of them were Keralites, he said.

Mr. Modi said the Union Budget had devoted significant resources and schemes that would benefit Kerala, including the next phase of Kochi Metro. The metro network had come up successfully and had set a good example of progressive work practices and professionalism, he said.

In his address, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the State government was always willing to cooperate with the Centre for the improvement of industry, tourism and infrastructure.

## 14 killed as minibus crashes into lorry in A.P.

12 were from one family in Madanapalle; 4 children injured

STAFF REPORTER  
CHITTOR

Fourteen persons, including eight women and an infant, were killed and four injured when a minibus flipped over a median and crashed into a lorry on the other side of National Highway 44 in Veldurthi mandal, 35 km from Kurnool, in Andhra Pradesh, early on Sunday.

Two of the injured are said to be critical and have been shifted to the Government Hospital in Kurnool.

Twelve of the victims belonged to a family residing at NTR Colony in Madanapalle. The four injured children are reportedly the only survivors in the family.

### En route to Ajmer

According to the Veldurthi police, the minibus was on its way from Madanapalle in Chittoor district to Ajmer dargah in Rajasthan when the accident occurred at Madhapuram village around 3.30 a.m. All the 14 were killed on the spot.

The deceased have been identified as Shaik Nowjeevabi, 65; sons Shaik Dasthgiri, 50, Shaik Rafi, 36, Shaik

Jafarwali, 30; daughter Shaik Nowjija, 34; daughters-in-law Shaik Ammazan, 35, Shaik Masthani, 32, Shaik Roshini, 29; grandson Shaik Mohammad Rihan, 1; granddaughters Shaik Shamreen, 16, Shaik Amreen; relative Shaik Amerjan, 63; minibus owner Nazir, 55; and driver Shaik Shafi, 38.

The injured are grandchildren Shaik Kasif, 14; Shaik Yasmin, 5; Shaik Asma, 8; and Shaik Musa Asin, 4.

Deputy Transport Commissioner (Kurnool) Suman

said the minibus was in a good condition and had all the valid documents.

Minister for Panchayat Raj P. Ramachandra Reddy told the media that the State government would ensure proper treatment to the injured children and aid to the bereaved families. The Minister asked Madanapalle MLA Nawaz Basha to make arrangements for the last rites of the victims.

Though the driver's negligence is said to be the cause of the tragedy, another version says a tyre burst led to the accident.

Asking party workers not to believe rumours that the JD(S) would tie up with the BJP for the 2023 Assembly election, he said the party would not have any understanding with any national party. "We will contest all the 224 seats on our own. Do not bother about money. If need be, we will raise loans to fund party activities," he said.

This comes close on the heels of party supremo H.D. Deve Gowda's statement that the party would not field candidates, which was later construed by Congress leaders as a decision that would help the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Meanwhile, the party's debacle in the Sira by-election had spurred octogenarian Mr. Gowda to take up the responsibility of strengthening the party. However, on Sunday, the former Prime Minister said he would be taking an advisory role since he was not in a position to travel across the State.

"I can only guide you and I can only give suggestions. I cannot travel everywhere. We have to prove that our party is not behind in the ensuing taluk panchayat and zilla panchayat elections," the former Prime Minister told party workers and leaders at a meeting to felicitate the party-backed gram panchayat members who were elected recently.

Clarifies plan

Mr. Kumaraswamy clarified that owing to paucity of funds to fight the by-elections, the party had decided not to field candidates, which had been announced by Mr. Gowda. "There have been allegations that we were not contesting the by-elections to help the BJP. We had not discussed the issue with Mr. Gowda. Let there be no confusion. We have decided to field our candidates," he said.

Asking party workers not

## Kerala NCP MLA to form new party

Kappan joins UDF, takes part in yatra by Chennithala

STAFF REPORTER  
KOTTAYAM

Mani C. Kappan, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA representing Pala here in Kerala, formally joined the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) on Sunday, after parting ways with the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF).

After a roadshow through the streets of Pala town in

the morning, Mr. Kappan reached the venue of the Aishwarya Kerala Yatra led by Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and was accorded a rousing reception. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Kappan expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the LDF for their wholehearted support to him during his tenure as Pala MLA.

He unleashed a scathing attack on the Kerala Congress(M) chairman Jose K. Mani and CPI(M) district unit secretary V.N. Vasavan "for

leaders of the NCP tendered their resignation from the party.

A preliminary meeting of the NCP breakaway faction in the evening decided to float a new outfit with Mr. Kappan as its chairman.

The members of the new party, which will initially assume the name NCP Kerala, will step down from all the posts awarded by the LDF government. Mr. Kappan, however, will continue as MLA and contest the next election from Pala as UDF candidate.

## Candidates backed by ruling YSRCP win big

Phase II panchayat poll results out

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
ONGOLE

The YSR Congress Party has put up a good show in the second phase of the panchayat elections as the candidates backed by it won a majority of seats in south coastal Andhra Pradesh.

In Nellore district, 117 sarpanch candidates backed by the ruling party emerged victorious when compared to the 64 aspirants backed by the Telugu Desam Party in the elections held on Saturday on non-party basis.

In Prakasam district, 131 sarpanch candidates backed by the YSRCP won. As many as 103 aspirants supported by the TDP emerged victorious. Much of the gains for the TDP came from the panchayats in Addanki Assembly constituency, which the party had wrested in the 2019 general elections, even

as the YSRCP swept the polls across the State. The TDP attributed the success to Addanki MLA Gottipati Ravikumar as the candidates sponsored by the party won 25 sarpanch posts.

### Team work lacking

Bickering and lack of team work in the Assembly segment are being cited as the reasons for the poor show of YSRCP-backed candidates.

Meanwhile, festive atmosphere prevailed at Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy's camp office in Nellore as 112 winning candidates gathered there for celebrations.

The YSRCP-backed candidate won the sarpanch post for the first time in Battapadu panchayat. The winning margins went up to 85% when compared to about 60% in 2019.

## Fossils of 'Dickinsonia' found at Bhimbetka

Discovery near Bhopal is of the earliest known animal about 550 million years old

RAMESH SUSARLA  
BHOPAL

Researchers have discovered three fossils of the earliest known living animal – the 550-million-year-old 'Dickinsonia' – on the roof of the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, about 40 km from Bhopal.

One can identify the fossils from the white leaf-like patches with a central vertebra (central midrib) and connecting veins. While one fossil is 17 inches long, the other two are much smaller.

The new discoveries, published in a journal, *Gondwana Research*, can be

seen right at the beginning of the 'Auditorium Cave', the first of such caves at Bhimbetka, a UNESCO heritage site, located about

3.5 metres above the ground.

Geological Survey of India's Bhopal in-charge Tapan Pal, who had come to

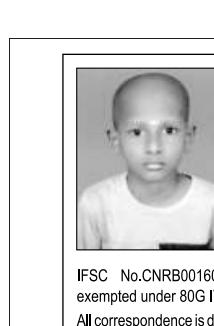
visit the site, told *The Hindu* that they were the only such fossils available in the country, and were similar to those seen in south Australia.

"This is further proof of the similar paleoenvironments and confirms assembly of Gondwanaland by the 550 Ma (mega annum), but not reconstructions adjusted for true polar wander," the article says.

The five authors of the article are Gregory J. Retallack, Neffra A. Matthews, Sharad Master, Ranjit G. Khangar and Merajuddin Khan.



**Traces of past:** The fossils of 'Dickinsonia' found at the Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, near Bhopal. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



**APPEAL**  
Harish is 8 years old is suffering from Acute Myeloid Leukemia and requires Rs.15,00,000 towards Bone Marrow Transplantation at V.S. Hospital, Chennai. He needs your support in bringing a hope to his life. Donations sent by Ch.D.N.E.F.T Transfer (CANARA BANK, Nungambakkam Branch, AC No.60182010063310, IFSC No.CNRB0016018) towards WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE is exempted under 80GIT. Please give us your e-mail ID.  
All correspondence is done through WWS, Regd. Public Charitable Trust, Flat No.GF 1, Cordell Apartments, O.No.13, N.No.29, Pyrofts Garden Lane, Chennai - 600008, Ph: 044-42137401/28235324. E Mail ID: womenswelfaresyndicate@gmail.com Website: www.womenswelfaresyndicate.org

WWS

# After lifting 4G ban, Centre plans trip of envoys to J&K

Nearly 20 diplomats, including from the EU, to be in team

SUHASINI HAIDAR  
PEERZADA ASHIQ  
SRINAGAR/DELHI

A week after restoring 4G Internet connectivity to Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre is preparing to take a group of diplomats to Srinagar and Jammu to "showcase" the situation in the Union Territory, officials confirmed to *The Hindu*. According to the sources, the visit being planned in the next few weeks will have nearly 20 envoys and diplomats including from the European Union who have been invited by the External Affairs Ministry.

A final decision on the visit and the composition of the delegation is still awaited.

The visit will be the third official one by foreign diplomats to Jammu and Kashmir since the Centre's decision to amend Article 370 and divide the erstwhile State into two Union Territories on August 5, 2019. A delegation of Members of the European Parliament visited the Union Territory in October 2019, but the trip ran into controversies over its sponsorship and was described by the government as a "personal" visit.

During the coming two-day visit which is still in the planning stage, sources said, the foreign delegation is expected to meet government officials, newly elected local District Development Council (DDC) representatives,



**Back online:** People using mobile phones after the restoration of 4G Internet, in Srinagar on February 6. ■ NISSAR AHMAD

business chambers and members of civil society. An official said the Jammu and Kashmir Administration would also make a presentation on the recently held DDC polls as a "major opening of political space" in Jammu and Kashmir as well as the restoration of high-speed Internet, which was welcomed by the Biden administration in the U.S.

It is unclear whether the group would meet former Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti, Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. Previous teams were able to meet only members of the J&K Apni Party, as most of the other political leaders were in detention at the time.

The two delegations taken by the government in January and February 2020 included Ambassadors of the United States, Germany, Norway and the European Union, as well as those from countries in South America, South East Asia and Africa.

The timing of the upcoming visit will be important as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to attend the EU-India summit in Portugal on May 8, and the group's assessment of the situation on the ground is expected to be included in the discussions.

Over the past 18 months, the European Union has issued a number of statements expressing concern over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

In November 2020, after a videoconference with Pakistani officials and European Union High Representative Josep Borrell, an EU statement said that it was "following the human rights situation in Jammu and Kashmir closely". "[Mr. Borrell] underlined the need for restraint, de-escalation of tensions and resolution of the dispute through dialogue and constructive political and diplomatic engagement," the statement added.

## 'Steps taken to avoid repeat of Pulwama'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR

The paramilitary has been constantly revising its standard operating procedures in Kashmir in the past two years to ward off any attempt to repeat a Pulwama-type attack, Deepak Ratan, Inspector-General, Central Reserve Police Force, said on Sunday.

"A lot of changes have been made in the CRPF, including the SOPs, equipment and training. We have modified and amended the mode of training in such a way that if there is any contingency or a challenge from the militants, they will be given a befitting reply," Mr. Ratan told presspersons here on the sidelines of the memorial ceremony for the 2019 attack.

He paid tributes to the 40 jawans who lost their lives in the attack, which was carried out by a local suicide bomber associated with the Jaish-e-Muhammad.

He said the CRPF had worked out safe corridors for the convoys on the highway. "To ensure safe passage of the convoy movement on the highway, CRPF men have been provided training on modern lines to carry out road-opening exercise."

The IG said convoy movement had been reduced and jawans were being moved by planes. The CRPF had set up CCTV cameras at vantage points on the highway.

## Will India lead the new normal?

As economies emerge from the effects of the pandemic, India is taking all the steps in the right direction



Ayush Sanghi  
Top Unacademy Educator

courageous step. However, it will achieve the desired results only if investments, divestments, and policy implementation take place as planned.

### Healthcare sector

India's healthcare sector didn't fare as badly as had been expected at the beginning of the pandemic. The Government has made its intentions clear by allocating ₹2,23,846 crores towards healthcare. Also, in Q3FY2021, India Inc exceeded the financial forecasts, signalling a slow-yet-steady revival of the economy.

What remains to be seen is how will India, as a nation and an emerging global power, survive, sustain, grow, and excel in the post-COVID era?

### PM Modi's dream

Ever since the Prime Minister envisaged Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, the primary focus has been on developing adequate infrastructure in the country. A ₹20 lakh crore stimulus package was announced by the FM. A large part of the stimulus package has been allocated to create a strong infrastructure for startups, MSMEs, corporations, and financial institutions.

In Budget 2021, the FM opened the government spending tap to develop a strong physical, health, and financial infrastructure. Overall, the COVID-19 stimulus package combined with the main budget 2021, strengthen the vision of making India a \$5 trillion economy.

Raising the fiscal deficit for the upcoming FY is a risky-yet-



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### A green environment

In the last few years, India has remained one of the most polluted countries in the world. However, the nationwide lockdown witnessed a significant reduction in air pollution.

Artificial intelligence is the need of the hour. To reduce healthcare costs and encourage telemedicine, the Government and private companies should partner and create a robust technology as online consultations will ease the burden on hospitals and make healthcare accessible.

### Education sector

As per Inc 42, the edtech market in India will grow 3.7x in the next five years, and may cross the \$10bn mark by 2025. Paid edtech users are expected to reach 37 million by 2025.

In 2020, edtech startups have attracted over \$2.2 billion in investments. In 2021 and years to come, virtual classrooms will continue to thrive, making education accessible and less expensive.

Edtech has provided a level playing field since students living in rural areas and Tier II, III and IV cities can now choose to study under the best educators.

### Personal finance

Until last year people would rarely discuss personal

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Scan the code to watch the free live class on 'Will the Post-COVID era be the new 'Golden Age' for India?' on Feb 15 at 9 PM. Use code UPSCCSE.

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Galwan and Pangong Tso are a surrender ... We are surrendering our rights," he said, adding that the Galwan Valley was not disputed even in 1962 and was always Indian territory.

"Disengagement and buffer zone means surrender of our land at the moment," he noted and asked the government to spell out when it would revert to the *status quo ante* as on April 2020.

When armed forces are demanding support and substantial increase in the defence budget, the current budget has made a meagre and insufficient increase of only 1.48%, he said.

"It is a betrayal of the country. The government has let down our armed forces. The government is not paying proper attention to national security," Mr. Antony said.

The Congress leader said the government should always consult leaders of all political parties before taking such a decision and must keep national security in mind.

## Disengagement with China a surrender of rights: Antony

'Meagre hike in defence budget is a betrayal of the country'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The disengagement in the Pangong Tso area and the Galwan Valley and the creation of a buffer zone are a "surrender of India's rights at the moment", former Defence Minister A.K. Antony said on Sunday.

Mr. Antony cautioned that if China played mischief, it could help Pakistan capture Siachen as the "buffer zone" in the Galwan Valley would prevent Indian troops from accessing the Karakoram range.

He said Sohail, a student of a nursing college in Chandigarh, was instructed by Pakistan-based outfit Al Badr to place the explosive in Jammu. "Another person, who was arrested on Sunday, hails from Pulwama district and was told to place the explosive in three to four locations," the police said. The police added that the arrested youth, Qazi Waseem, in Chandigarh, was also aware of the matter. "We have also arrested a person named Abid Nabi," he added.

### Two-front war

Addressing a press conference, the senior Congress leader said it was a "betrayal" of the country to have a meagre hike in defence budget, especially since India was facing a two-front war-like situation.

Mr. Antony alleged that the government did not increase the defence budget to "appease" China and give a message of no confrontation.

"To appease China, we have agreed to disengage



To appease China, we have agreed to disengage on China's terms

A.K. ANTONY  
Congress leader

ment on China's terms," he alleged.

Mr. Antony said it was sad that the Narendra Modi government was not giving priority to national security at a time when China was getting belligerent and Pakistan continued to promote terrorism.

He said disengagement was good to reduce tension but not at the cost of national security.

"Both disengagements in

Galwan and Pangong Tso are a surrender ... We are surrendering our rights," he said, adding that the Galwan Valley was not disputed even in 1962 and was always Indian territory.

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## Trinamool slams Trivedi's speech in RS

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

The Trinamool Congress, in a letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu, questioned the decision to let former party leader Dinesh Trivedi speak during the discussion on the Union Budget, when he announced his resignation after hitting out at the party for the ongoing violence in the State ahead of the Assembly election.

Trinamool's chief whip in the Rajya Sabha, Sukendu Sekhar Ray, in the letter said Mr. Trivedi was not nominated by the party for the discussion. He added that Mr. Trivedi was not sitting in his allotted seat in the gallery, but came down the chamber. "Mr. Trivedi grossly misutilised the floor of the House for his devious political ends and also the way he was allowed to have taken the House for a ride is absolutely unprecedented, unwarranted..." Mr. Ray said. He said the Chair for some "inexplicable reason" did not use the mechanisms available to it to "restrain the unruly member".



**Heavy curbs:** Security personnel stand guard at a blocked road outside the residence of Omar Abdullah. ■ PTI

closed for traffic on Sunday.

### IED found

Meanwhile, an improvised explosive device (IED) was recovered near the general bus stand in Jammu. "There were inputs that terror groups were planning an attack on the anniversary of the Pulwama attack. Last night, we arrested a person named Sohail and recovered 6-6.5 kg of IED from his possession," said Mukesh Singh, Inspector General of Police, Jammu.

He said Sohail, a student of a nursing college in Chandigarh, was instructed by Pakistan-based outfit Al Badr to place the explosive in Jammu. "Another person, who was arrested on Sunday, hails from Pulwama district and was told to place the explosive in three to four locations," the police said. The police added that the arrested youth, Qazi Waseem, in Chandigarh, was also aware of the matter. "We have also arrested a person named Abid Nabi," he added.

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"To appease China, we have agreed to disengage

## In Bengal, Left-Cong. talks meander

Cadres from both sides are anxious over the delay in a decision on seat-sharing

SOBHANA K. NAIR  
NEW DELHI

The inordinate delay in finalising the seat-sharing arrangement between the Left Front and the Congress is increasing anxiety among workers of both sides as the election to the West Bengal Assembly draws close.

Three rounds of meetings have already taken place, and the fourth is slated for February 16. As of now, sources said, the Left parties are ready to cede 92 seats to the Congress, but the Congress has been insisting on a more "respectful" figure of 100-plus seats.

The Left is eager to accommodate the newly formed Indian Secular Front (ISF) of Furura Sharif's chief patron Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui. While it is ready to give seats from its kitty to the ISF,



Mamata Banerjee has already addressed 11 public meetings.

It wants the Congress to contribute too. The Left-Congress alliance is planning to hold a joint rally on February 28 to begin its campaign. Whether a galaxy of leaders from Delhi, including former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, will be present or not will depend on the amicable settlement of a seat-sharing formula.

The Trinamool Congress and the BJP have already sto-

len a march on the alliance in the campaigning. The BJP launched its Poriborton Yatra on February 6, and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has already led 11 public meetings.

The delay exacerbates the problem for the Left-Congress alliance, which has been boxed out by both the BJP and the Trinamool Congress, and is struggling to make it a three-corner fight by projecting itself as the third alternative.

It was decided that each party would get to keep the seats it won or was the runner-up for in 2016. This formula no longer holds good, since in the past five years, many legislators have crossed over to the Trinamool Congress or the BJP. Of the 44 seats that the Congress won in 2016, only

around 25 remain with the party. The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) has also had desertions.

A section of the Congress is deeply unhappy with the delay. "The seat discussions should have been locked by January 31. There is no pro-Left or pro-Congress wave. We should have given time to individual candidates to begin their campaigns," another leader said.

The Left is equally apprehensive. "The coming together of the Left-Democratic-Secular parties had instilled this good vibe. The unnecessary delay is causing anxiety among our cadres, and unless a decision is taken quickly, it could dampen the mood," former Lok Sabha member and senior CPI (M) leader Mohammad Salim told *The Hindu*.

## G-23 leaders upset over being 'left out'

'Sense of drift continues, appointments of DCC, PCC chiefs still dictated by Delhi'

SANDEEP PHUKAN  
NEW DELHI

As the Congress gets into election mode for the next round of Assembly elections in crucial States such as Assam, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, there is growing restlessness among a section of the group of 23 (G-23) dissenters for "being excluded from the consultation process".

Some members of the G-23 – leaders who had written to party chief Sonia Gandhi last August to seek a revamp of the party – have been given responsibilities in the poll-bound States. Mukul Wasnik has been made an observer for Assam and M. Veerappa Moily for Tamil Nadu; Shashi Tharoor has been given the key responsibility of taking feedback for a people's manifesto in Kerala.

### Ad

# Scheduled Tribe seats for Ph.D. programmes in IIT-Bombay remain unfilled

RTI data for 2015 to 2019 reveal poor acceptance rate for students from marginalised communities, with 25 of 26 departments not filling OBC, SC quotas either

## PON VASANTH B.A. CHENNAI

None of the 26 departments in IIT-Bombay managed to fill seats reserved for Scheduled Tribe students in Ph.D. programmes between 2015 and 2019, according to data obtained through Right to Information queries.

The data obtained by the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle, a student collective in IIT-Bombay, showed that 25 of the 26 departments failed to fill Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Caste (SC) quota as well. Eleven of the 26 departments did not admit a single student under the ST category in the period under question.

Of the 2,874 admissions for which data were provided by the institution, 71.6% went to General Category (GC) students, which in terms of the IIT's predominantly constituted students from historically privileged communities; 19.2% went to the OBCs, 7.5% to the SCs

and 1.6% to the STs. Reservation policy demands a minimum allocation of 27% to the OBCs, 15% to the SCs and 7.5% to the STs.

### Skewed entry

In 13 of the 26 departments, more than 75% of the seats went to students under the GC.

The data showed the acceptance rate, which refers to the number of students selected for every 100 applicants, to be lower for students from reserved categories than those from GC. While the acceptance rate was 3.8% for GC, it was 3.1% for OBCs and STs and 2.5% for SCs.

In 16 of the 26 departments, this skew in acceptance rate was more pronounced with SC and ST students having acceptance rates at half or lower than those for GC applicants.

For instance, electrical engineering (EE) and mechanical engineering (ME) departments had the highest

## Entry barrier

A majority of the 26 departments in IIT-Bombay performed poorly in filling seats as per reservation in Ph.D. programmes from 2015 to 2019. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students particularly found it difficult to get admission, data obtained through Right to Information Act showed

Column A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Category	Students applied	Students interviewed	Students admitted	Acceptance rate % (D/B)	% among applied (B/total)	% among interviewed (C/total)	% among admitted (D/total)
General	53,621	46,573	2,059	3.8	65.7	64.8	71.6
OBC	17,747	15,925	552	3.1	21.7	22.2	19.2
SC	8,762	8,012	216	2.5	10.7	11.1	7.5
ST	1,495	1,363	47	3.1	1.8	1.9	1.6
Total	81,625	71,873	2,874	-	-	-	-

■ All 26 departments failed to fill seats reserved for STs

■ 25 of 26 departments failed to fill seats reserved for SCs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)

■ More than 75% of seats went to General Category (GC) in 16 of 26 departments

■ Data showed maximum rejection of students from reserved category happened in interview stage

est number of ST applicants. While two of the 148 ST applicants got selected in EE with an acceptance rate of 1.4%, the acceptance rate was 3.8% for GC. In ME, not a single ST candidate from 110 applicants got selected, whereas 168 students were selected from 4,590 appli-

cants under the GC with an acceptance rate of 3.7%. In the Energy Sciences and Engineering department, only five of the 610 SC applicants got selected with an acceptance rate of 0.8%. In contrast, 82 from 3,902 GC applicants got selected with an acceptance rate of

2.1%. Computer Science was one of the few departments that recorded dismal acceptance rates across OBC, SC and ST categories. Only five from 797 OBC applicants, four from 495 SC applicants and one from 78 ST applicants were selected with an

acceptance rate of 0.6%, 0.8% and 1.3% respectively. In contrast 69 applicants from 2,997 GC applicants were selected with an acceptance rate of 2.3%.

The Centre for Studies in Resource Engineering (CSRE) and SJM School of Management (SJMSM) were the two departments that did not admit a single student from among SC and ST applicants. The two departments together selected 74 students from among 1,780 applicants under GC. However, none were selected from 313 SC and ST applicants.

Environment Science and Engineering (ESE) and Centre for Policy Studies were the only departments to fill seats reserved for OBC and SC students. ESE and Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) came closer to filling seats reserved for STs. HSS also had marginally better acceptance rate for GC, SC and ST applicants.

The data also indicated that more students from marginalised communities were rejected at the interview stage. A comparison of the proportion of students from different categories showed that their proportion remained fairly the same at the application stage and the interview stage. Overall, around 12% of applicants got rejected; the remaining 88% made it to the interview stage. However, among those selected post the interviews, while the percentage of GC increased to 71.6%, the proportion of students from all other categories went down. GC candidates accounted for 64.8%, OBCs 22.2%, SCs 11.1% and STs 1.9% in both application and interview stages.

However, among those selected post the interviews, while the percentage of GC increased to 71.6%, the proportion of students from all other categories went down.

On the acceptance rate being different, the spokesperson said, "IITs have very high expectations of our student input, which is needed to carry out research towards a Ph.D." "While we do get sufficient candidates in certain departments, in some other departments, students of the required calibre tend to take up industry jobs rather than join for a Ph.D. which has extra uncertainties and lower income levels during Ph.D. and in some areas even post Ph.D.," the spokesperson added.

the data, the IIT Bombay administration said that the selection process was fair and transparent.

### Institute's view

"Lower cut-offs and extra efforts are made to take candidates as per reservation categories to fill the seats," a spokesperson for the institute said.

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Environment Science and Engineering (

# Let's Talk about SEX

Delhi-based NGO TARSHI completes 25 years of advocating for people's rights to sexual wellbeing and creating the resources to make this possible

SWETA AKUNDI

On February 14, 1996, when Valentine's Day was still about love (as opposed to coupon deals for take-away food in 2021), a group of people came together, hoping to elevate the quality of conversations around sexuality – so far whispered, incomplete and uncomfortable. It all began with a phone helpline.

"We launched a helpline focussing on sexuality and reproductive health, offering free information, counselling, and referrals by trained counsellors. It guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, two aspects that were and are very important to people when they discuss sexuality," says Radhika Chandiramani, founder of the helpline she named TARSHI: Talking About Reproductive and Sexual Health in India.

Twenty-five years on, the TARSHI helpline has evolved into an NGO in Delhi that has consistently been creating reliable safe spaces for questions, dialogue, and credible resources. The belief being that "all people have the right to sexual wellbeing and to a self-affirming and enjoyable sexuality". Adds Radhika, "Work on sexual and reproductive health and rights should not be restricted to a 'disease-prevention', 'violence against women or sexual minorities' framework, but be inclusive of a broader and an affirmative, rights-based perspective."

The TARSHI team looks back on its 25 years of work in this space. Edited excerpts from an interview:

**When you began in the 1990s, HIV/AIDS epidemic was one of the biggest concerns in India. Today, the conversation around it has reduced, as has the number of cases. Do you think that a sustained dialogue on this is still as**



**important?**  
**Prabha Nagaraja (PN), executive director:**

• Yes, because prevention is always better than having to deal with large numbers of infection; HIV has not been eradicated from the world like, say, smallpox which means it can flare up in any generation/region/community or at any time if basic precautions are not consistently maintained. More importantly, sustained dialogue on HIV opens the door to conversations on consensual sexual activity, respect for diversity of sexual expression, safer sex and contraceptive choices.

**Looking back, do you recall any pivotal contributions to Indian policies on sexual health and rights?**

**Radhika Chandiramani (RC), psychologist, founder:**

• It would be arrogant of us to claim any particular incidents as a 'success' on account of our work, but yes, we have been bringing about more open discussions about sexuality, training teachers on being more comfortable to provide comprehensive sexuality education, offering parents ideas

about how to talk to their children about sexuality and so on.

**The pandemic drew special attention to our overall wellness. Is TARSHI's resource material being updated for a post-pandemic world?**

• PN: We have been focussing our attention on creating resources to help activists and service providers, as well as anyone feeling the stress of these exceptional times. Our new website, Self-care Essentials was put together as countries worldwide went into various stages of restrictions on movement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pushing millions into precarity in terms of health, finances, and livelihoods. Those doing people-work had to contend with increased vulnerability of the people with whom they worked; with working from home/limited mobility; and with the stresses caused by the pandemic.

**Burnout is becoming common in most places of work, but what are the stressors unique to your field of advocacy?**

• Anisha Dutt, senior programme associate:

Especially last year with a pan-

**How have dating apps, prominent in Tier 1 and 2 cities, influenced sexual health?**

• Anisha Dutt, senior programme associate:

Especially last year with a pan-

## WHAT IS IT?

# DOMS

DIVYA KALA BHAVANI

Last year's lockdowns saw gyms shut and us in our homes, couch- or desk-bound. Most of us who have not touched a dumb-bell or run a few kilometres for months are getting back into the swing of things only now. But when the body is unaccustomed to working out, this can cause a 'delayed onset of muscle soreness' better known as DOMS, also dubbed 'muscle fever'.

DOMS leaves muscles feeling tender to the touch, the person affected having a reduced range of motion due to pain and stiffness when moving, and even short-term loss of muscle strength. Just think of that scene in *BrIDGET Jones' Diary* where she falls off the elliptical.



Dr (Maj) S Bakhtiar Choudhary, consultant in sports medicine and occupational health, explains DOMS occurs in those who have not exercised in a long time as neuromuscular coordination gets very used to inaction. So when you do work out, he says, "DOMS may happen, and it can be very painful, creating micro-tears in the muscles which can bleed."

But what if you have DOMS already? "There's no medication for DOMS, so do avoid paracetamol and such. Take it easy for the next four to five days; do not encourage further tears, but do some selectively gentle stretches," he advises. He also suggests keeping a cold

pack of 0 to 10 degrees Centigrade handy, elaborating, "This form of cryotherapy reduces swelling, the bleeding in the micro-tears, and the inflammation, and also acts as a local anaesthetic and numbs the area."

In some cases, DOMS can be a concern. Dr Choudhary says, "If one does not recover within seven to 10 days, seek medical help from a sports medicine doctor or a highly-qualified physiotherapist." The physio can offer massage to the strained muscle.

Dr Choudhary states that preventative measures against DOMS are possible. "Nutritionally, one must focus on carbohydrates, not proteins. Complex carbohydrates refill glycogen stores, helping replenish the muscle." Stay hydrated, neither underhydrating or overhydrating. Both may further throw the body off the hydration level to which it is accustomed. Athletes also recommend oily fish, nuts and even tart cherry juice to reduce the chances of DOMS.

The exercise programme from start to finish matters, too, he points out. Flexibility and mobility training (exercises to increase range of motion) provides a reduced risk of injury, enhanced athletic performance, and in some cases, transient relief. "A warm-up followed by a well-paced exercise (nothing that makes you strain over 50%), followed by a cool-down reduces lactic acid buildup and lowers your chance of muscle cramps and stiffness," he says. "The body is like a machine; it cannot function starting in just fourth or fifth gear, you have to follow the proper routine."

While the muscle takes a few days to repair itself, the key, he concludes, is to pace yourself from the start. "Do not dive right into an intense endurance training, but rather let your body's muscles build up the tolerance to the new activity levels."

*In this column, we demystify the buzzwords in wellness.*



NAHLA NAINAR

The days of trying to decipher doctors' prescription scrawls and medical lingo on reports have given way to digital record-keeping, first by human transcriptionists and now, by voice recognition technology.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased reliance on contact-free consultations between doctors and patients, making it all the more important for electronic health records (EHR) to be accurate and immediate.

Augnito, a voice-to-text medical software designed specifically for the Indian market, hopes to tap into the vast pools of natural language processing (NLP) to improve healthcare. NLP is a branch of artificial intelligence (AI) that aims to make computers decipher and understand human language. It is the main concept behind translation and personal assistance apps like Google Translate, OK Google, Siri, Cortana, and Alexa.

Augnito types out notes that are dictated to it (with punctuation marks), and saves it in an editable textual format on a cloud server. The software has a pre-programmed list of medical terms, report templates and keyboard shortcuts that help reduce repetitive typing. The vocabulary database is constantly updated in keeping with physicians' requirements and feedback.

"The voice has become the most powerful tool in technology today, as you can see with the rise of gadgets like Alexa. Just by talking, which is the most natural way of communication for humans, you are able to do sophisticated

and important jobs," says Rustom Lawyer, 39, co-founder and CEO of ScribeTech (India) Healthcare, the Mumbai-based parent company of Augnito.

Scribetech pioneered clinical documentation in the National Health Service (NHS) of the United Kingdom in 2004. It also has Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, University Hospital Birmingham, Kingston University Trust among other British medical institutions on its client list.

Developed after seven years of research in collaboration with Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and Sheffield University, UK, Augnito is available on both Mac and Windows platforms and comes with a built-in editor. It can also be downloaded onto the phone, with the help of the Aug-

nito Mic app.

Available for a subscription of ₹2,400 per month, currently its main rival in India is Dragon, a US medical transcription software developed by Nuance Communications that charges a licence fee of ₹80,000 per user.

### Saving time and energy

Since its launch six months ago, Augnito is being used in 24 States in India. Of the 4,022 doctors using Augnito, 815 are associated with Government hospitals.

"As healthcare systems are becoming digital, you need to put in a very powerful electronic medical records system to keep up the continuum of care," says Lawyer, who co-founded ScribeTech when he was 19, with his friend Shiraz Austin. "The problem with this is that doctors are often bogged down by form-filling,"

**Open dialogue**  
The TARSHI team at an event; and the NGO's publications on sale

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT AND GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

## RESEARCH MATTERS



**Discipline is a long-term gentle process**

Researchers examined data from 2,15,885 families across 62 countries

and found that when children were physically punished, they tended to show increased aggression and distraction levels. Taking away privileges was also associated with aggression and distraction, and lower levels of getting along with other children. Verbal reasoning – explaining why the behaviour was wrong – had mixed outcomes, if the explanation was not age appropriate or if the parents used a harsh tone and language. It even increased aggression, in some cases. However, children disciplined this way were more pro-social. So what does a parent do? Give structure, keep the lines of communication open, and provide developmentally appropriate removal of privileges, say the authors.



**Obesity is the major contributor to type 2 diabetes**

In the US, 30-53% of new diabetes cases every year are related to obesity, says a new

study by the McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University in Chicago, published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*. People with obesity were nearly three times as likely to develop type 2 diabetes compared to those without obesity. This is a reason for concern, the study says, because type 2 is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. It can be prevented with healthy lifestyle choices, like eating healthy, exercising, and losing weight. Researchers used information from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA) and four pooled cycles (2001-2016) of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

## Bleeding gums may be a sign you need vitamin C

Vitamin C deficiency could be one reason for bleeding gums, says a new University of Washington study published in *Nutrition Reviews*. Researchers found that increasing vitamin C intake helped reverse the bleeding. The best way of increasing the micronutrient in our diet is through food sources; the next best alternative is to consider a supplement, but do check with your doctor if you need one. The team analysed data from published studies of 15 clinical trials in six countries, involving 1,140 participants, and from 8,210 U.S. residents surveyed in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.



he adds.

A recent study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* reports that for every hour of direct clinical care that physicians in the US provide to patients, they spend nearly two additional hours on updating EHRs.

With the impact of COVID-19, the global medical transcription software sector, currently valued at \$1.7bn, is expected to grow to \$3.84bn in 2026, according to marketwatch.com.

Augnito's main advantage in this booming market is that it concentrates on Indian linguistics, says Lawyer. "Augnito can understand any Indian accent [of English], and give up to 99% accuracy as soon as it is installed. Our tech team also keeps updating its database of medical terms based on doctor feedback."

The new additions to the medical vocabulary included terms like home isolation, quarantine, N95 mask, SARS-CoV-2, MERS, ARDS, COVID-19 and COVID-19 test.

### How useful is it really?

New Government regulations on teleconsultations during the pandemic have emphasised a more professional approach to note-taking, says Dr Sujata Sawhney, a paediatric rheumatologist at Sir Gangaram Hospital in Delhi. "India never had a system where doctors were allowed remote consultations. After the pandemic, the Government has mandated note-taking, a typewritten prescription, and taking the consent of the patients, especially in sharing personal medical data online. In a specialist practice like mine, the notes have to include reviews of earlier medical reports and current investigations. Augnito has speeded up the documentation by 70%," she says.

Augnito should now look at improving its pricing module, says Dr. Kushagra Vijay Garg, consultant radiologist, 5C Networks, Hyderabad. "I process around 125-130 reports per day. It costs me ₹50 to use Augnito per day, compared to ₹35-40 per report that I used to spend on a medical transcriptionist. So the transaction cost for me is hardly 25-35 paise per report. However for a radiologist with a smaller caseload, it may cost up to ₹2 per report. And while this may not seem much now, when digital products become popular, they also tend to become costlier in the long run," he says. "I also feel there should be a more economically-priced version for medical students."

# Listen to the DOCTOR

Augnito, a medical voice recognition transcription software holds the promise of boosting a doctor's productivity at a time of increased online consultations

**Hear, hear** A screenshot of Augnito's web version; and (below) ScribeTech founder Rustom Lawyer

■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



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But what if you have DOMS already? "There's no medication for DOMS, so do avoid paracetamol and such. Take it easy for the next four to five days; do not encourage further tears, but do some selectively gentle stretches," he advises. He also suggests keeping a cold



## 'I am an ambassador of Indian music'

SRINIVASA RAMANUJAM

Shreya Ghoshal's hectic life revolving around concerts and studios came to a grinding halt in 2020 during lockdown. Far away from her musical colleagues, Shreya felt 'uninspired'. The urge to do something close to her roots resulted in 'Angana Morey', an independent track she released on February 3. The song, which has already clocked over seven million views on YouTube, is a contemporary interpretation of a girl longing for her beloved. Over phone from Mumbai, Shreya shares her excitement on what the positive response

means to her. Edited excerpts:

**The reaction to the song suggests fans expect more non-film content from you...**

- Fans have given extra love to this song probably because it is a personal project. 'Angana...' is very different from what I have done before. It cannot be defined in a genre. But the positive feedback it has received gives me encouragement and tells me that I'm on the right track.

**Was it liberating that there was no composer, director or music label telling you what to do?**

● It was. The song was done during a time when I was feeling very uninspired. During lockdown, I was cut-off from colleagues and working from a small corner of my house. 'Angana Morey' was like a boat that kept me afloat in those times. It kept me busy because I had to coordinate with musicians across the world.

Usually, as a singer, my participation in a song comes in the second phase, once the tune and lyrics are set. With 'Angana Morey', which I composed, wrote and sang, I got to experience a part of the creation process. The music production, done by my brother Soumyadeep Ghoshal,

Singer Shreya Ghoshal believes she represents the nation on the world stage making the kind of music she does. The singer speaks to *MetroPlus* on her latest indie track 'Angana Morey'

**Mellifluous voice** Shreya Ghoshal  
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

was done around my improvisations.

**#ShreyaRevivesIndianMusic** was a Twitter trend after the song's release. Your thoughts?

- I see myself as an ambassador of Indian music. I just love the classical and folk music of India. I have travelled every part of the world and listened to all kinds of music, but Indian music is something else. Its melodic richness is unparalleled due to the ragas and emotions behind it. We need to place it in the right position on the world music map.

**You grew up a fan of AR Rahman. Today, when you record tracks with him, is it easy to see him as a colleague?**

- I am still in awe of him. I have put in a lot of effort to make conversation. It is difficult to bridge this gap between being a fan and a colleague, as I have admired him for long. The ARR sir that I saw a decade ago is very different from the person I see today; he has opened up and is enjoying life. It is a lovely side of him that I now see. There is an aura around him that I feel comes only to some people who are very elevated in their spiritual philosophy.

**With composer D Imman, you have produced lilting melodies in Tamil...**

- Imman's music is like a Christmas gift that keeps surprising you. He sings the track himself and teaches it to me in an old-school manner. The mark of a great musical artiste is the ability to create a *charanam* that is even better than a *pallavi*. Imman has that quality. He creates a musical ladder that takes you through a climax and comes back to the beginning. There is

an old-school vice in his melodies wrapped in a new-age arrangement; that is what I love most. I have sung for him in Rajnikanth's *Annaatthe*.

**What does it take to get the correct pronunciation of words in languages you are not familiar with?**

- I'm a Bengali and when I hear a Bengali song, I get very thrown off if a word is mispronounced. My whole focus starts revolving around that mispronounced word, and not on the musical expression. I just cannot have that kind of a flaw when I sing. It hurts me if I get criticised for mispronunciation because I feel I am doing a big disservice to the language.

**'Angana Morey' was like a boat that kept me afloat during the tough lockdown period**

In my first Tamil song – 'Chellame Chellame' (*Album*) for Karthik Raja – it was very challenging because there were so many words that I was not used to. That was my introduction to a new language, but I understood how musical it was. I have since wanted to ensure that my diction does not sound like an outsider.

**How do you think an aspiring musician should go about their career today?**

- I got hooked on to social media at a very early age. I took it as a big boon, and today, it greatly helps me connect with fans. For aspiring musicians, it is a great way to announce their creations to the world. Today, it is a creators' world and not that of the music bosses. Having said that, one needs to find the right balance... this 'oh, I have to put something out, it will become viral' thought process is detrimental to a creator. Music cannot be decided by numbers.



**In food haven**  
Chef Charlie Carrington (right) with Sam Groth  
• SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## Charlie and the masala factory

Meet the 27-year-old chef who is serving up an assortment of flavours at the Australian Open

PRIYADARSHINI PAITANDY

Last year, as Novak Djokovic triumphantly lifted the Australian Open trophy, Charlie Carrington was busy juggling three tonnes of hummus. He successfully managed to feed nearly 25,000 people over two weeks at his pop-up restaurant at Melbourne Park.

Interestingly, this tennis extravaganza is also a haven for connoisseurs of good food. Grand Slam Oval features a variety of cuisine that traverses between fine dining and street food. After making his debut at the event last year, Carrington is back again. This year, his restaurant Atlas Dining will cater at the venue and the focus is on Australian cuisine. "It's a lot of fresh produce. The food has got a lot of influence from different countries: Lebanese, Chinese, Indian, Greek..." says Carrington, over a Zoom call from Melbourne.

Carrington's cooking style is influenced by his "incredible travel experiences". So far, he has travelled to 13 countries to learn more about its food, recipes, cooking styles. "I spend two weeks in a country, go to markets, talk to people." He was in India last March, scouring the city of Mumbai that inspired him with its street food and ingredients. Once the pandemic situation sorts out worldwide, he plans to pick up from where he left off: India; he wants to head back and go to Goa and Kerala.

pandemic, the number of people will be lesser. Carrington will start service on Thursday and is looking at serving 60 guests per day.

And do the tennis players also get to grab a bite at his pop-up? "No, it's just the spectators. The players are too busy eating fish and salad," he laughs. In addition, Carrington is also doing an Atlas Master Class. "We are sending out ingredient boxes and uploading videos on our YouTube channel. We have uploaded three videos with tennis player Sam Groth," he says.

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Watch Australian Open 2021 live on Sony Pictures Sports Networks +



## Breaking the bamboo ceiling

As Kerala gears up to hold its annual Bamboo Fest, we find out why the tree-like grass finds favour with artisans and also architects rooting for green construction

stands," says Shylaja, a member of Sushi Crafts, a bamboo artisan collective.

Sooraj S, CEO of Kerala Bureau of Industrial Promotion (KBIP), which is organising the 17th Kerala Bamboo Fest in association with the Kerala Bamboo Mission, says the fete aims at highlighting the potential of bamboo.

"About 75 artisans from across the State are participating. The event endeavours to demonstrate the wide application prospects of bamboo, chiefly artistic home décor (utensils, curios, furniture), and

to support the livelihood of some in the sector," he says.

Perhaps, it is little wonder then that bamboo is referred to as 'green steel'. Some architects vouch for its incorporation as an eco-friendly construction

material, or at least as a composite one, as part of developing sustainable architecture. Award-winning architect Vinu Daniel says, "We are running out of other cost-effective materials. Bamboo can be cultivated, and hence is renewable."

Architect G Shankar, a Padma Shri recipient,

founder of Habitat – an NGO working towards green architecture – also believes in the wider use of bamboo in construction. "We mostly relegate bamboo as a temporary building material and use it to construct rudimentary sheds or erect poles. But if used correctly, it is a mainstream, permanent building material," he says. This perspective is increasingly gaining traction at a time when the cost of mortar mix and rods are shooting up. But there is another obvious appeal that attracts Shankar to green steel – its aesthetics.

Carbon-friendliness too is a plus. PB Sajan, director of Costford (Centre of Science and Technology For Rural Development), co-founded by renowned British-born Indian ar-

chitect Laurie Baker), says, "What bamboo does is carbon sequestration, unlike conventional construction materials, which are generally carbon-emitting. Bamboo has extremely low thermal mass as well, meaning it is cooling."

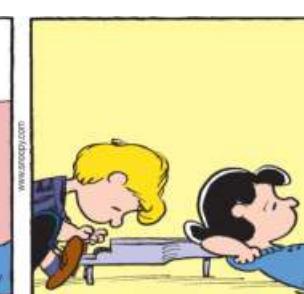
In 2019, Costford unveiled a three-storey documentation centre and library in Thiruvananthapuram that was largely built from bamboo. Costford recently laid the foundation stone of its next big project, TR Chandradutt Centre, a six-storey, 10,000 square feet memorial for the social activist the building is named after. "Bamboo is central to its architecture and construction," says Sajan.

From February 16-20; for details, visit keralabamboomission.org

### POOCH CAFE



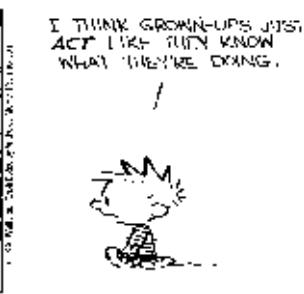
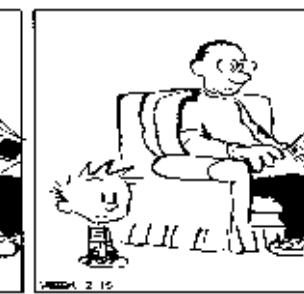
### PEANUTS



### HAGAR THE HORRIBLE



### CALVIN AND HOBBES



### TIGER



### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



# Trump remains a dominant force in GOP

70% of Republicans approve of the former President's job performance, according to a recent poll

REUTERS  
WASHINGTON

It is still Donald Trump's Republican Party – at least for now.

The vote by 43 of the 50 Republican Senators to acquit Mr. Trump on the charge of inciting last month's deadly riot at the U.S. Capitol, with only seven voting for conviction, highlights just how powerful a grip he has on the party he remade in his image over the past five years.

The former President, who has largely stayed out of sight at his Florida home since leaving the White House on January 20, commands fervent loyalty among his supporters, forcing most Republican politicians to pledge their fealty and fear his wrath.

But after two impeachments, months of false claims that his election loss



**Historic moment:** U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi speaking to press after the Senate acquittal. ■ AFP

to Democrat Joe Biden was rigged, and an assault on the U.S. Capitol by his supporters that left five people dead, Mr. Trump remains a critical force in many of the swing districts that often decide American elections.

That leaves Republicans in a precarious position as they try to forge a winning coalition in the 2022 elec-

tions for control of Congress and a 2024 White House race that might include Mr. Trump as a candidate.

"It's hard to imagine Republicans winning national elections without Trump supporters any time soon," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist and aide to Senator Marco Rubio during his 2016 presidential prim-

"Whether he does run again is up to him, but he's still going to have an enormous amount of influence on both the direction of the policy and also in evaluating who is a serious standard-bearer for that message," one adviser said. "You can call it a kingmaker or whatever you want to call it."

Mr. Trump has maintained strong support from Republicans in polls even since the January 6 attack on

ary race against Mr. Trump.

"The party is facing a real Catch 22: it can't win with Trump but it's obvious it can't win without him either," he said.

#### Political plans

Mr. Trump has not signalled his long-range political plans for after the trial, although he has publicly hinted at another run for the White House.

"Whether he does run again is up to him, but he's still going to have an enormous amount of influence on both the direction of the policy and also in evaluating who is a serious standard-bearer for that message," one adviser said. "You can call it a kingmaker or whatever you want to call it."

Mr. Trump's defenders in the Senate argued that the trial was unconstitutional because Mr. Trump had already left office and that his remarks ahead of the riot were protected by the constitutional right to free speech.

Just days after the riot, a Reuters/Ipsos poll found 70% of Republicans still approved of Mr. Trump's job performance, and a later poll found a similar percentage believed he should be allowed to run for office again.

But outside his party he is unpopular. A new Ipsos poll published on Saturday showed that 71% of Americans believed Mr. Trump was at least partially responsible for starting the assault on the Capitol.

Fifty percent believed he should be convicted in the Senate with 38% opposed and 12% unsure.

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# Russia's Foreign Minister holds talks on climate with U.S. envoy

Two agree to cooperate further within the Arctic Council

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed climate change with U.S. envoy John Kerry and the two agreed to cooperate further within the Arctic Council, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"During the conversation, questions were raised about the implementation of the Paris climate accord," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement released Saturday.

**'Welcomed decision'**

The Foreign Minister told Mr. Kerry, a former Secretary of State who is now the U.S. climate envoy, that he "welcomed" the decision by new U.S. President Joe Biden to rejoin the landmark Paris



Sergei Lavrov

Agreement on curbing global emissions of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Biden's predecessor Donald Trump had pulled out of the 2015 accord.

The two men also "underlined the need for as wide a cooperation as possible" in the area of the environment.

They also agreed to "develop cooperation" within the

Arctic Council – a high-level intergovernmental forum that addresses various issues, including sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic region.

#### Strained relations

The telephone conversation came at a time when already strained relations between Russia and the West have been further exacerbated by the arrest and imprisonment of Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny and Moscow's merciless crackdown on the ensuing protests.

Earlier this month, Mr. Biden said the U.S. would no longer be "rolling over in the face of Russia's aggressive actions" and demanded Mr. Navalny's release.

## Pakistan Army conducts exercises in Thar Desert

Month-long training began on Jan. 28

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan Army is holding a month-long exercise in the Thar Desert, located in the Sindh province, to prepare for conflict in extreme desert environments.

The exercise, code-named 'Jidar-ul-Hadeed', began on January 28 and is scheduled to conclude on February 28, the Army said in an official statement on Saturday.

"The four-week long defensive manoeuvre exercise is aimed at validating the concept of defence in deserts," the statement said.

Troops from the Karachi Corps will be practising tactical drills and procedures as part of the exercise.

The Army said the exercises are being conducted in

extreme desert conditions, 74 km ahead of Chhor in Sindh, under conventional operations.

The Army has a Desert Warfare School at Chhor, which is 165 km from Hyderabad, Sindh. The school was established in 1987 to promote desert warfare.

The Thar Desert is an arid region that covers over 2,00,000 sq km. It forms a natural boundary along the border between India and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, a multinational naval exercise hosted by Pakistan, Aman-2021, began in the Arabian Sea. It will conclude on February 16.

As many as 45 countries, including the U.S., Russia, China and Turkey, will be participating in the exercise.

## 'Do not harbour fugitive protesters'

Myanmar's new military regime warns the public not to hide political activists

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
YANGON



**Power point:** An armoured vehicle on a street in Yangon, Myanmar on Sunday. ■ AFP

Myanmar's new military regime warned the public not to harbour fugitive political activists on Sunday after issuing arrest warrants for veteran democracy campaigners supporting massive nationwide anti-coup protests.

Much of the country has been in uproar since last week when soldiers detained Aung San Suu Kyi and ousted her government, ending a decade-old fledgling democracy after generations of junta rule.

Security forces have stepped up arrests of doctors and others joining a civil disobedience movement that has seen huge crowds throng streets in big urban centres and isolated frontier villages alike.

Police are now hunting down people who have lent vocal support to the protests, including some of the country's most famous democracy activists.

"If you find any fugitives mentioned above or if you have information about them, report to the nearest

police station," said a notice in the state media on Sunday.

"Those who receive them will [face] action in accordance with the law."

Among the list of fugitives was Min Ko Naing, who spent more than a decade in prison for helping lead protests against an earlier dictatorship in 1988. "They are arresting the people at night and we have to be careful," he said in a video published on Facebook on Saturday, skirting a junta ban on the platform, hours before his arrest warrant was issued.

The 1988 protests vaulted Ms. Suu Kyi to the top of Myanmar's democracy movement, and the Nobel laureate spent years under house arrest as a prisoner of the Generals.

She has not been seen in public since she was detained on February 1 alongside top aides. Nearly 400 others have been arrested in the days since, including many of Ms. Suu Kyi's top political allies, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

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## ASK US

AARATI KRISHNAN

**Q.** I am a retired senior citizen, aged 71. Along with my wife, I have invested about 50% of my retirement corpus in leading public sector banks' and NBFCs' deposits. The balance is distributed across SCS, LIC Vaya Vandana Yojana, PPF, RBI 7.75% taxable bonds. Some bank and NBFC FDs worth ₹30 lakh will be maturing shortly. The new interest rates are very low. Kindly advise any other secure investment option available for regular income with better returns as we are dependent on our interest income.

RAJESH

**A.** The ultra-low interest rates in the economy have allowed lenders to raise deposits at very low rates that don't really compensate for inflation. We do think that the abnormally low interest rates will improve once economic growth normalises.

Presently it makes sense to invest mainly in Central government-backed instruments which carry the highest safety in terms of capital. We hope you have availed of the individual limits of ₹15 lakh both for yourself and your wife in the Senior Citizens Savings Scheme and LIC Vaya Vandana Yojana.

If you have done so, the other option you can look at are the Government of India's new series of floating rate taxable savings bonds. These bonds offer half-yearly interest at a rate which is linked to the prevailing interest on the National Savings Certificates, with a 0.35 percentage point premium over NSC. These bonds are available on tap with no maximum limit on your investments.

Presently, the bonds offer 7.15%, though this rate may change as NSC changes its rates. Given that, we think interest rates in the economy are close to bottom. The possibility of rates falling below 7% is quite low. To invest in these bonds, you need apply through physical application forms available at 14 designated banks that include leading ones like SBI and HDFC Bank. You can find the details of the bond and the application form here: <https://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/content/pdfs/GOI26062020.pdf>. The only negative with these bonds isthey have a 7-year lock-in period; but early withdrawals are allowed with penalty for seniors like you. Given the Central government guarantee, these bonds are among the safest instruments you can buy.

This apart, India Post's National Savings Monthly Income Account is also a safe option to consider. This account with a 5-year lock-in allows up to ₹9 lakh investments in joint capacity. The interest rate is currently 6.6%. While this may not seem attractive, it is superior to the return on bank deposits at this juncture, for an instrument with higher safety. The account allows withdrawal after 1 year with a prefixed penalty.

After exhausting these two options, you can consider investing a limited sum (say ₹5 lakh) in floating rate debt mutual funds with good quality portfolios. While they carry market risks, their advantage is that you can get tax-efficient income by setting up Systematic Withdrawal Plans in such funds. If you aren't sure how to choose the right funds, take the help of a qualified advisor.

**Q.** My mother (58) is a beneficiary of family pension. Her section 80C and 80D are full for tax purposes and I was looking to invest in NPS to get benefits under 80CCD. Please advise whether NPS is a good option?

VIVEK KESHRI

**A.** NPS is an option for young people saving towards retirement rather than those on the verge of retirement, seeking a pension. It may not be suitable for your mother, as it is market-linked and carries risks to her capital. This apart, she cannot withdraw the entire amount you accumulate in the scheme in the form of a lump sum when she turns 60.

As much as 40% of the maturity proceeds need to compulsorily go into an annuity scheme, which is likely to provide low returns, that are moreover taxable. As your mother is set to soon turn 60, there's also very little time to accumulate enough money in NPS to meet her requirements.

There are, frankly, not too many options beyond Sections 80C and 80D to reduce the tax outgo. If you have not availed Section 80 TTA, you can park some money in savings accounts with banks that offer higher rates. Under this section, interest income of up to ₹10,000 is exempt from tax. You can watch out for issue of any tax-free bonds in the coming year to supplement her income.

Readers can send in queries on personal finance and investing to [moneywise@thehindu.co.in](mailto:moneywise@thehindu.co.in). Our experts who write on personal finance will answer these queries. Moneywise will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund scheme, share or fixed deposit.

## LOOSE CHANGE

RAVIKANTH



"Oh, come on, stop worrying and go to sleep! You're not even an investor, I say!"

# Cover drive in pandemic times

COVID-19 has propelled the need for choosing a plan with higher sum insured

AMIT CHHABRA

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has certainly made us all understand the importance of buying health insurance.

Moreover, even the numbers tell the same story. As per prominent global reinsurer Swiss Re's Consumer Survey, conducted in 2020, Indian consumers are the second-most active in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of searching for and purchasing new health insurance policies.

Apart from a rise in the number of people buying health insurance, there is another noteworthy trend being observed. People have gradually started investing in health insurance policies with higher sum insured. Earlier, high-value covers constituted merely 4-5% of insurance enquiries. Today, their share has gone up to more than 50-60% as per Policybazaar.com.

There is a realisation among people that a health insurance policy with higher sum insured

can take care of everything – from treatment of critical illnesses such as cancer and heart-related ailments to advanced procedures such as robotic and bariatric surgeries.

**COVID-19 myth**  
Usually, people in India tend to develop a false perception that a family floater policy with ₹7-₹10 lakh sum insured is enough to take care of the medical needs of a family. However, the pandemic has completely changed their perception with people hospitalised due to COVID-19 reporting hospital bills worth ₹5-₹7 lakh for 14-day treatments.

With such a low sum insured, even if any two people from the family get hospitalised due to COVID-19, they might struggle to avail themselves of proper treatment due to lack of funds.

Further, the cost of many major critical and lifestyle illnesses, that are quite common these days, might put them under fi-

nancial pressure. For instance, there are more than 25 types of cancer that are very common in India and the treatment costs for which often go beyond ₹20-₹25 lakh, including surgery and chemo sessions. Another very common illness in India is heart disease, for which the treatment cost can be as expensive as ₹15-₹20 lakh.

**'Costs rise 150'**  
Higher sum-insured health policies are also the need of the hour as, for an average urban citizen, the cost of hospitalisa-

tion has increased by approximately 150% in the last decade and this is extremely worrying. To fight such a high medical-inflation rate, higher sum insured is the only weapon. Cashing in on the trend, many prominent insurers such as Max Bupa, Care Health Insurance and Aditya Birla Capital are offering plans with sum insured as high as ₹1 crore.

Apart from hospitalisation costs, the high-value policies offer higher maternity, baby care, post-treatment, outpatient care and day-care proce-

dure covers; they insure organ donation and fund alternative treatment. People buying health insurance plans with higher sum insured have increased. Of all the health insurance policies sold by PolicyBazaar.com in the last 10 months, the share of policies with ₹1-crore sum insured accounted for 53% with the share of policies with a sum insured of ₹25/30/50 lakh being 47%.

The most common age group buying maximum number of plans with higher sum insured is 30-40 years.

A prominent reason for rise in the sales of plans with higher sum insured is affordability due to availability of the option of paying health insurance premium monthly.

**EMI option**

Last year, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India directed all general and specialised health insurers to offer the equated monthly in-

stalments (EMI) option to customers for paying premiums.

Available data shows that almost 40-45% of first-time health insurance buyers are choosing the monthly payment mode for paying premiums. Many insurers have reported that 65% of their health insurance business has shifted online post the EMI option being rolled out.

To conclude, a high sum insured health insurance plan is always a good idea for a policyholder to secure the health of the entire family. An insurance plan with a high sum insured is an ideal option for combating the huge medical expenses and availing of the best available medical treatment. So, opt for a health scheme that provides optimal coverage in times of emergency. Even if affordability makes you anxious, you would never want to compromise your and your family's health.

(The author is Health Insurance Business Head, Policybazaar.com)

## COVER NOTE: CANCER POLICY

## Stocking ammunition to fight the crab

Normal hospitalisation and cancer benefit policies can be a good combo

K. NITYA KALYANI

Through the past year, many illnesses have gone undiagnosed and untreated. They have to rear their heads at some point and so, a health check-up and health insurance check-up would be wise.

The fourth of February was World Cancer Day. Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) unveiled a specialised cancer policy. It's a cue we ought not to ignore.

LIC's Cancer Cover is a benefit policy. It has lump-sum claim payouts, a monthly benefit payout and also, a premium waiver once a claim becomes payable.

Why a cancer-specific policy? Isn't my hospitalisation policy enough to cover cancer? Yes, and no. Provided I have sufficient coverage, it can indeed pay for cancer-related hospitalisation.

**Prolonged expenditure**

But those claims will eat into coverage for other health events, and we all know cancer is both a large and a prolonged expense. So, if your intention is to insure against cancer expenses you should consider multi-layer cover.

**Health insurance** is of two kinds. Indemnity policies are annual policies that reimburse your hospitalisation bills and



**Double protection:** To insure against cancer expenses, one should consider taking a multi-layer cover. ■ GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

you are entitled to lifelong renewal. Benefit policies pay a flat sum of money on diagnosis of a specified disease and terminate after that.

An indemnity policy is usually given by a general insurance company and a benefit policy by a life insurance company. Each has its advantages. Combined well, they cushion you better financially.

A normal hospitalisation policy with a cancer benefit policy is a good combination to have. The former pays your bills and the latter supports you for the numerous expenses that are not covered under the former, including due to insufficient sum insured under the former.

Add to this combo a cancer-specific indemnity policy and you are better covered. For all three policies there are several options available from the more than 55 insurance companies in India.

Coming to the new policy, LIC Cancer Cover is a 10 to 30-year policy with ₹5 lakh to ₹50 lakh cover. Claims can be triggered by diagnosis of early-stage and major-stage cancer.

**Monthly-benefit payout**

There is a monthly benefit payout with premium waiver benefit also.

The former, at the rate of 1% of the sum insured per month, is guaranteed for 10 years irrespective of the policy term and

even if the insured dies. Premium waiver is for three years for early-stage cancer and for life in the case of major-stage cancer.

It is costlier than cancer-indemnity policies. For a quick example, the premium for a 45-year old for ₹15 lakh cover is about ₹4,000 a year for New India's Cancer Guard while for LIC Cancer Cover it is about ₹7,500.

We are comparing apples and oranges here because of the additional features in the latter though it has a time limit on its coverage compared to the former.

Where both the policies are disappointingly similar – and this applies to many policies in the market – is the very low sum insured available for senior citizens.

As much as ₹5 lakh for the age band 60 to 65 is close to nothing, leading to bitter complaints that those most in need of insurance are offered the least coverage.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

## A normal

**hospitalisation policy** pays your bills, while a **cancer benefit policy** supports you for uncovered expenses

he would be left with a gain of \$37.50.

What is the biggest risk involved?

■ The main risk is the exchange rate risk.

If the conditions under which he borrowed funds to make his carry trade remained unchanged till he redeemed his investment and repaid his borrowing, he would be on velvet.

However, if for example, the rupee weakens against the dollar so much so that he now needs ₹75 to buy each dollar, then on conversion he would net only \$1,012.27 (75,920/75). After paying back his U.S. loan, he would be left with a meagre gain of \$9.77. Worse, if the rupee slides to ₹77 or ₹78 to a dollar, the investor will end up losing money!

How do carry trades impact a nation's economy?

■ Any change in the global economic environment including actual changes or expectations of changes in interest rates in different markets could influence investors to pull their money out of a country and move it to another.

This in turn could cause a sudden outflow of the lower yield bearing currency, impacting the exchange rate of the country into which these funds were invested and thus potentially pushing up the cost of imports in that economy.

## BLACKBOARD: CARRY TRADE

## A bet on interest rates

K. BHARAT KUMAR

What is a carry trade?

■ Carry trade refers to the trade where an investor borrows funds in a market where the interest rate is relatively low and then invests the borrowed money in a market where the interest rate is higher.

Why are investors attracted to the trade?

■ It helps investors realise better returns by arbitraging on the interest rate differentials. For example, a foreign portfolio investor may borrow in the U.S. (the U.S. Federal Funds Rate is currently 0.00% to 0.25%) and invest the funds in an emerging market such as India (where the RBI's benchmark repo rate is 4%). The investor could convert the dollar loan to rupees and could invest in a relatively secure debt instrument in India that would fetch him a higher rate of interest.

For instance, an investor could borrow \$1,000 in the U.S. at 0.25%, convert it into Indian rupees at ₹73 to a dollar, and invest the resultant ₹73,000 in a bond that offers 4%. A year later, his investment would yield him ₹75,920. On redeeming his investment and assuming the rupee-dollar rate remains unchanged, the conversion into dollars should yield him about ₹1,040 (75,920/73). Thus, after repaying his U.S. loan with interest, or paying back \$1002.50,

he would be left with a gain of \$37.50.

## Home loan interest rates

(In %)

## PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

Name of Lender

Upto 30 lakh

Above 30 lakh &amp; upto 75 lakh

Above 75 lakh

(In %)

## HOUSING FINANCE COMPANIES (HFCs)

Name of Lender

Upto 30 lakh

Above 30 lakh &amp; upto 75 lakh

Above 75 lakh

(In %)

## PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS

Name of Lender

Upto 30 lakh

Above 30 lakh &amp; upto 75 lakh

Above 75 lakh

(In %)

\*Special interest rate concession offered upto 30 bps. Additional concession of 5 bps if applied via Yono app and digital channels. Interest rates starting at 6.80% p.a.

\*\*Rates under festive offer. Interest rate of 6.85%-6.90% p.a. offered under IND AWAS Scheme

^HLB interest rate range of 6.80%-7.50% p.a. for any loan amount, with repayment from ICICI Bank account

^^ Special HLB rates starting at 6.75% p.a. for any loan amount

^^ Special rates effective for disbursements (part/full) available on or before March 31

Rates as on February 10

Source: Paisabazaar.com

## Bank fixed deposit rates

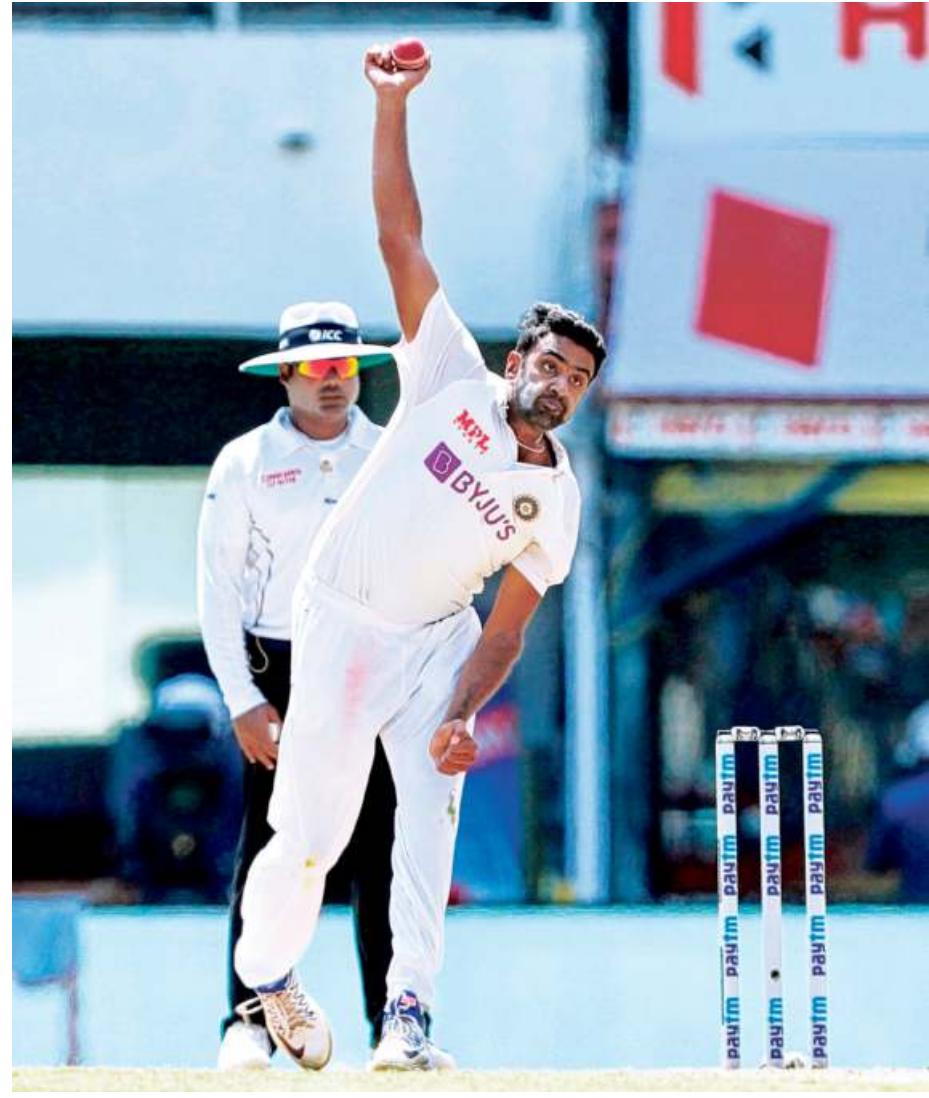
Bank Name

Highest Slab

1-year tenure

# Ashwin's wizardry has England staring down the barrel

Spinner makes the most of a crumbling pitch to bag a five-for; Foakes offers some resistance but the visitors fold up for 134 replying to India's 329



**Webmaster:** R. Ashwin exploited the pitch and conditions to have the England batsmen in a tangle. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

## ENGLAND IN INDIA

S. DINAKAR  
CHENNAI

Russian Roulette it is. Which delivery has your name? It's a cricketing version of life and death.

Dust emanating from the surface on day one was a pointer. The pitch showed its true colours on Sunday when 15 wickets fell.

### True colours

The ball turned and jumped, the bounce was uneven and all this coupled with the dust – the top soil was loose – made batting hard. Actually, this Indian team can defeat top sides on sporting tracks. It doesn't have to manufacture a win.

After bundling out England for 134 – R. Ashwin scalped five – and gaining a mammoth first innings lead of 195, India further consolidated. The host was 54 for one at stumps on the second day of the second Test at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday.

Shubman Gill fell to a Jack Leach slider. Rohit Sharma – he was let off on 24 when the normally reliable Ben Foakes missed a leg-side stumping off Leach – was together with Cheteshwar Pujara (7 batting), he did not field after being struck on the hand on day

one, at stumps.

When England began, Ishant Sharma flummoxed opener Rory Burns with a good length delivery that nipped back. And Dom Sibley's attempted sweep off Ashwin saw the ball brushing the back of his bat.

England continued to lose wickets in heaps. Among them was key man Joe Root. Now, Root's strength is his sweep. His strength can be his weakness, too. He swept debutant left-arm spinner Axar Patel against the turn and saw Ashwin hold the top-edge at short fine-leg.

Dan Lawrence battled hard, waited for the turn and played Ashwin off the back-foot. However, the experienced off-spinner got one to bounce from round the wicket to snare the Englishman.

Ashwin picked up the big scalp of Ben Stokes. Big Ben succumbed to Ashwin with the ball drifting across the left-handed Stokes to strike his off-stump.

Wickets continued to fall as Kohli shuffled his bowlers having a dash of pace to complement spin. And Mohammed Siraj grabbed his first Test wicket at home with Ollie Pope getting a tickle down the leg-side and 'keeper Rishabh Pant producing a fine diving catch.

Axar found the edge of

## Scoreboard

### INDIA – 1ST INNINGS

Rohit Sharma c Moeen b Leach 161 (231b, 18x4, 2x6), Shubman Gill lbw b Stone 0 (3b), Cheteshwar Pujara c Stokes b Leach 21 (58b, 2x4), Virat Kohli b Moeen 0 (5b), Ajinkya Rahane b Moeen 67 (149b, 9x4), Rishabh Pant (not out) 58 (77b, 7x4, 3x6), R. Ashwin c Pope b Root 13 (19b, 1x4), Axar Patel st. Foakes b Moeen 5 (14b, 1x4), Ishant Sharma c Burns b Moeen 0 (2b), Kuldeep Yadav c Foakes b Stone 0 (15b), Mohammed Siraj c Foakes b Stone 4 (2b, 1x4); Total (in 95.0 overs): 329.

### FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Gill, 1.3 overs), 2-85 (Pujara, 20.2), 3-86 (Kohli, 21.2), 4-248 (Rohit, 72.6), 5-249 (Rahane, 75.2), 6-284 (Ashwin 82.3), 7-301 (Axar, 89.2), 8-301 (Ishant, 89.4), 9-325 (Kuldeep, 95.3).

### INDIA BOWLING

Broad 11-2-37-0, Stone 15.5-5-47-3, Leach 27-3-78-2, Stokes 2-0-16-0, Moeen 29-3-128-4, Root 11-3-23-1.

### ENGLAND – 1ST INNINGS

Rory Burns lbw b Ishant 0 (3b), Dom Sibley c Kohli b Ashwin 16 (25b, 3x4), Dan Lawrence c Gill

1-0 (Gill, 1.3 overs), 2-85 (Pujara, 20.2), 3-86 (Kohli, 21.2), 4-248 (Rohit, 72.6), 5-249 (Rahane, 75.2), 6-284 (Ashwin 82.3), 7-301 (Axar, 89.2), 8-301 (Ishant, 89.4), 9-325 (Kuldeep, 95.3).

### FALL OF WICKET

1-0 (Gill, 11.2).

### ENGLAND BOWLING

Stone 0-0-8-0, Leach 9-2-19-1, Moeen 9-2-19-0.

standing up. His lightning stumping when Moeen floated one to Axar was top class.

The speedy Olly Stone, clocking around 150kmph, polished off the tail with a bouncer-fuller length routine to finish with three wickets. He has a future!

## Ashwin defends spinning pitches

Feels that the challenge is the same as in seaming conditions

S. DIPAK RAGAV  
CHENNAI

India's top spinner R. Ashwin feels that playing on pitches that offer turn from day one is not too different to tackling seaming conditions.

"It is about being patient, just like when you play on a seaming wicket. You need to tide through the early phase and start putting runs on the board," said Ashwin when asked if the pitch was challenging to bat on as England was shot out for 134 in its first innings.

"We will be putting up another batting performance on it," he added.

"When it comes to spin, they want conditions to be in their favour, be it driving or cutting. On a seaming wicket, you can't do all that when you play in the morning. So when you play spin on a challenging wicket," said Ashwin, who finished with a five-wicket haul to put the home side in control of the second Test here on Sunday.

"I would say that the challenges are far greater when the ball is moving at 140-150 kph off the deck compared to a ball spinning at 85-90 kph



Axar will long remember his maiden Test wicket – Root.



**At full tilt:** A diving Ajinkya Rahane snaps up Moeen Ali off Axar Patel's bowling. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

**ASHWIN**  
about the pitch assisting the spinners

jan was playing, I didn't even imagine I would go on to become an off-spinner for India. I was still a batsman for my State.

### Try and bowl like him

"Back then, a lot of my teammates used to make fun of me because I used to try and bowl like him. From there, to break his tally, is incredibly special. I didn't know about it. Now that I know, I feel happy," said the 34-year-old.

### Tough conditions

England assistant coach Graham Thorpe felt that the conditions were demanding and early wickets had

Ashwin became India's second-highest wicket-taker at home, surpassing Harbhajan's tally of 265. Kumla leads the list with 350 wickets

### Pegged the team back

"It was challenging for us on that surface on day two. They are a skilled spin attack in these conditions and it was a very good toss to win for India."

"We know the pitches deteriorate here as the game goes on and this one has gone a bit quicker," said Thorpe.

## Finger on the pulse!

S. DIPAK RAGAV  
CHENNAI

It may have been Virat Kohli's India out on the field at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday, but the aura of M.S. Dhoni is ever-present in Chennai.

As India got on top of England with the ball, skipper Kohli urged the crowd to get behind the team and make more noise, indicating he wasn't hearing them.

Soon the India skipper gestured to the fans to whistle, referencing the Chennai Super Kings'



**Whistle Podu!** Kohli got the fans involved, repeatedly gesturing to them to 'join' the play. ■ SPORTSPICS/BCCI

the noise.  
Talk about knowing the pulse of the audience!

## Pakistan wins series

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
LAHORE

Pakistan defeated South Africa by four wickets in the third and final T20I on Sunday to clinch the three-match series 2-1.

Chasing a target of 165, the hosts crossed the finish line in 18.4 overs. Earlier, David Miller had smashed an unbeaten 85 off 45 balls to lift the visitors to 164 for eight in 20 overs.

**The scores:** South Africa 164/8 (20 overs) (David Miller 85 n.o.) lost to Pakistan 165/6 in 18.4 overs (Mohammad Rizwan 42, Babar Azam 44, Tabraiz Shamsi 4/25). Pakistan won the three-match series 2-1.

## WI pips Bangladesh in thrilling finish

Cornwall the hero for the visitors

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DHAKA

for 74 with four for 105 in the second innings to help the visitors bowl out Bangladesh for 213, with the hosts chasing a target of 231.

Left-arm spinner Jomel Warriken (three for 47) and skipper Kraigg Brathwaite (three for 25), who bowls off-spin, also took key wickets.

**The scores:** West Indies 409 and 117 (Tajul Islam 4/36) bt Bangladesh 296 and 213 (Tamim Iqbal 50, Mehidy Hasan 31, Rahkeem Cornwall 4/105).



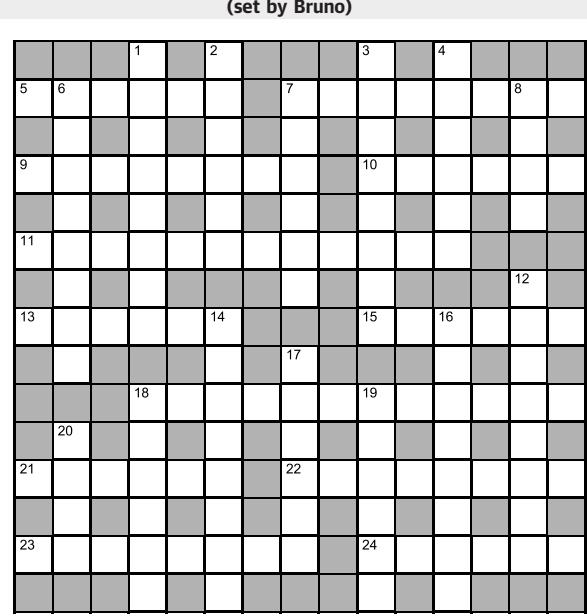
**Go-to man:** Cornwall played a key role for West Indies, breaking several key partnerships at various stages of the game. ■ AFP

## CROSSWORD + 13171

(set by Bruno)

Never go of the grid.  
We are digital now. Come solve online.  
at <https://www.ergo.page.link/jjpTn>

SCAN TO PLAY



### ACROSS

- 5 Thick ring, black and teal on top has value (6)
- 7 Father's on back seat – one vacated by dog (8)
- 9 Dog's nimble and he's flexible (8)
- 10 Essays about British families (6)
- 11 Guide to reflect Almighty's protector (9,3)
- 13 Dog of convict finally adopted by Judge (6)

- 15 Horse carrying loose hunting accessory (3-3)
- 18 Airline ships foreign dog (5,7)
- 21 Tight glove missing edges found in empty fairground (6)
- 22 Old lover's statement described second deportation? (8)
- 23 Hybrid dog's partly modified – flew around (4,4)
- 24 Officer's right – threat was a non-starter (6)
- DOWN
- 1 Tips for dog? (8)
- 2 Backup batsman essentially lacking respect (6)
- 3 Pomeranian's got tail of bird – zips excitedly (5,3)
- 4 Setter stuck around making this? (6)
- 6 Spooner's giant bottom has partition (8)
- 7 Post Office produced locksmith's tool? (6)
- 8 Witches' leader banished to hotspot (4)
- 12 What some prophesies do: sorrow will follow heavenly body (4,4)
- 14 God in sink water? (8)
- 16 Side lost two to mystery spin bowling (8)
- 17 Cop suspects her – I finally gathered (6)
- 18 Sign tourists often lack sense... (6)
- 19 Writer to have a go at verse (6)
- 20 Fond of First Lieutenant Eisenhower? (4)

## SUDOKU

			6	4		2		
7			1			9		
1	6	3						
9	1							
3	5				9	2		
					7	1		
4			5	8	6			
9	4	3			5			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to puzzle 13170

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

No. SS999 Distribution: www.nigfittures.com

## FAITH

### Steeped in devotion

</div

# Dimitrov stuns Thiem; Djokovic hangs on through pain

## The day in numbers

**O** Naomi Osaka has zero losses in Grand Slams once she reaches the quarterfinals

**7** Aslan Karatsev is the seventh player in the Open era to reach the last-eight stage on his Slam debut

**12** Novak Djokovic has reached the Australian Open quarterfinals for the 12th time

**35** At 35, Hsieh Su-wei is the oldest woman in the Open era to make a Major singles quarterfinal debut

**54** Serena Williams ties with Chris Evert for entering the most number of Slam quarterfinals

**100** Grand Slam match wins for Simona Halep

**300** Djokovic is the second player to win 300 Grand Slam matches (Federer, 362)

**850** Overall career match victories for Serena

**DMITROV**

If it was any other tournament and not a Slam, I would have retired/withdrawn Novak Djokovic on playing with an injury

The thing is, I'm not a machine. Sometimes I would like to be Dominic Thiem, after losing to Grigor Dimitrov

**FALLEN SEEDS**

**MEN**

**3** - Thiem | 14 - Raonic

**20** - Auger-Aliassime

**23** - Lajovic

**WOMEN**

**7** - Sabalenka

**14** - Muguruza | 15 - Swiatek

**19** - Vondrousova

**Youngster**

knocking on the doors of the top-100 rank

## TENNIS

KAMESH SRINIVASAN  
NEW DELHI

With a whirlwind performance in the four ITF junior tournaments this season, Aman Dahiya, who won back-to-back singles titles in Nepal, has shot into the limelight in Indian junior tennis.

After ending last year at 537 in the world junior rankings after winning three titles in a row – before the pandemic broke – Aman is already knocking on the doors of the top-100 rank.

**Fire in his eyes**

"When I first saw him about a year and a half ago, I saw the fire in his eyes."

"I right away mentioned that this hungry young player had the potential. I really like his attitude," said Alexander Waske from Germany.

"After he had won three tournaments last year, we had a lot of plans for Aman, but COVID broke."

"He was very disappoint-



Aman Dahiya

ed. It was good that he was staying with me at my place. We turned this time into an opportunity. We did lots of off court work, match analysis, life style development," recalled Jignesh.

With more tournaments lined up, the target for Aman is to be around the

top-80 before he goes to Germany for tuning his game with Waske.

"I like the way he is respectful to his coaches and thankful for the amount of energy being put into him."

"He is paying back with very good results. I have already got him a club in Germany," said Waske.

"Aman's firepower is good. He is outstanding with his mindset of working very hard and going to the limit, playing every point. I am looking forward to see more of him," said Waske.

Jignesh was grateful to Waske for the interaction and help.

The club stint in Germany will help Aman get some matches "as well as some financial help to support his tennis journey".

team championships and the three doubles events, the TTFI is starting with the women's singles.

At the outset, only players with negative RT-PCR test reports are allowed to enter the venue.

**Field of Play**

The matches will be played

on 12 tables. At any given time, the Field of Play (FOP) allows only 24 players, their coaches and 24 umpires besides two officials.

In the qualifying stage, there are 47 groups of three players and one group consists of four. The group toppers advance to the knockout phase.

At the conclusion of the first set of matches, the next set of 24 players and officials are ready in the "Call Area". They enter the FOP only after it is sanitised.

At the conclusion of the ladies' competition on February 18 and upon their departure, hotel rooms will be sanitised and allotted to the

(Can) 3-6, 1-6, 6-3, 6-3, 6-4. **Women:** Hsieh Su-wei (Tpe) bt 19-Marketa Vondrousova (Cze) 6-4, 6-2; 3-Naomi Osaka (Jpn) bt 14-Garbine Muguruza (Esp) 4-6, 6-4, 7-5; 10-Serena Williams (USA) bt 7-Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) 6-4, 2-6, 6-4; 2-Simona Halep (Rou) bt 15-Iga Swiatek (Pol) 3-6, 6-1, 6-4.

**Fourth round: Men:** 1-Novak Djokovic (Srb) bt 14-Milos Raonic (Can) 7-6(4), 4-6, 6-1, 6-4; 6-Alexander Zverev (Ger) bt 23-Dusan Lajovic (Srb) 6-4, 7-6(5), 6-3.

18-Grigor Dimitrov (Bul) bt 3-Dominic Thiem (Aut) 6-4, 6-4, 6-0; 6-Aslan Karatsev (Rus) bt 20-Felix Auger-Aliassime

## Aman wins appreciation from coaches

**RAKESH RAO**

CHANDIGARH

The Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) faces a huge test when its National championship begins at Panchkula on Tuesday.

A first-hand experience of the logical challenges faced by the host Haryana Table Tennis Association (HTTA) suggests no effort is being spared in making the event a success in spite of the pandemic.

A secure bio-bubble,

scores of protocols, getting the players and officials to follow the instructions in ensuring smooth conduct of the 'singles-only' competition forms the core of the challenges facing the host Haryana Table Tennis Association (HTTA) over the next nine days.

At the conclusion of the ladies' competition on February 18 and upon their departure, hotel rooms will be sanitised and allotted to the

## So holds Carl森

### RACE WALKING

UTHRA GANESAN  
NEW DELHI

Wesley So won the final rapid game on demand to draw level at 2-2 against Magnus Carlsen in the first set of their final clash in the \$100,000 Opera Euro rapid online chess tournament on Saturday.

Carlsen took the lead by winning the second game with black and retained it following the drawn third game. So won the fourth with white to restore parity.

In the clash for third place, Teimour Radjabov clinched the first set against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave 2.5-1.5 after the last three games saw the players win with white.

**The results (final):**

**Set One:** Magnus Carlsen (Nor) drew with Wesley So (USA) 2-2.

**For third place (set one):** Teimour Radjabov (Aze) bt Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) 2.5-1.5.

## Reshma wins u-20 10km

### RACE WALKING

UTHRA GANESAN

NEW DELHI

Reshma Patel won the under-20 10km at the eighth National/ fourth International Race Walking Championships in Ranchi, on the second and final day of the competition on Sunday.

With the women's 35km shelved due to lack of entries – the best walkers focusing on the 20km instead – the spotlight was on Reshma and Munita Prajapati, who had set new junior National records in 5,000m and 10,000m race walk respectively at the National junior championships in Guwahati only last week.

While Reshma completed the event in 49 minutes 28 seconds, a comfortable 29 seconds quicker than second-placed Geeta Lohar.

Olympian Manish Rawat

won the inaugural men's 35km event in 2:49:12, a nine-minute margin over second-placed Ganapati Krishnan of Tamil Nadu.

In the 50km, Punjab's 36-year-old Gurpreet Singh won in a personal best time of 3 hours 59 minutes 42 seconds and became the fifth Indian to break the 4-hour mark over the distance.

**The results:**

**Men: 50km:** 1. Gurpreet Singh (Pun, 3:59:42), 2. Ram Baboo (UP, 4:05:10), 3. Sagar Joshi (Guj, 4:12:06).

**35km:** 1. Manish Rawat (Utk, 2:49:12), 2. Ganapati Krishnan (TN, 2:58:23), 3. Vikash (Del, 3:08:43).

**U-20, 10km:** Men: 1. Vishvendra Singh (MP, 42:14), 2. Parameet Singh Bishy (Utk, 42:16), 3. Bajrangi Prajapati (MP, 44:16).

**Women:** 1. Reshma Patel (Utk, 49:28), 2. Geeta Lohar (Raj, 49:57), 3. Munita Prajapati (UP, 51:30).

## NEUFC climbs to third

### SPORTS BUREAU

NorthEast United FC played football of a delightful kind. The Highlanders passed with precision and finished with panache as they defeated Odisha FC 3-1 in the ISL at the Tilak Maidan Stadium, Vasco da Gama (Goa), on Sunday.

The win took them to 26 points and to third in the table, behind Mumbai City (34) and ATK Mohun Bagan (33). Odisha remains at the bottom with nine points.

Luis Machado struck twice for NorthEast, while Bradden Inman pulled one back for Odisha.

**The results:** NEUFC 3 (Luis Machado 9 & 24, Deshorn Brown 19) bt Odisha FC 1 (Bradden Inman 45); ATKMB 1 (Roy Krishna 85) bt JFC 0.

**Monday's match:** Mumbai City vs Bengaluru FC, 7.30 p.m.

## Gurpanthjeet gets Arrows a first win

### CHESS

RAKESH RAO

NEW DELHI

After a year and a half that saw unprecedented infighting leading to an acrimonious election process, the All India Chess Federation (AICF) is showing signs of putting the game back on track.

In its Annual General body meeting here on Sunday, it was decided to return to over-the-board competitions in a phased manner, reduce the financial burden on the registered players, hold at least one elite tournament annually, and bid for the Chess Olympiad, among others.

Reflecting on the roadmap ahead, the newly-elected president Sanjay Kapoor told *The Hindu*, "Our players-first approach will remain paramount in everything that we do. For a

**The results:**

Indian Arrows 1 (Gurpanthjeet 26) bt Mohammedan Sporting 0; Sudeva Delhi 1 (Lewis 19) drew with Aizawl 1 (Jaryan 15).

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

KOLKATA

Indian Arrows rode on Gurpanthjeet Singh's goal to stun Mohammedan Sporting 1-0 for its first win in the Hero I-League here on Sunday. Arrows now has four points from eight matches, while Sporting remains on 10 following its first loss in seven matches.

Gurpanthjeet Singh headed home from close range in the 26th minute. He pounced on a loose ball after Sporting goalkeeper Shubham Roy had blocked a Gurkiran Singh free-kick.

**The results:**

Indian Arrows 1 (Gurpanthjeet 26) bt Mohammedan Sporting 0; Sudeva Delhi 1 (Lewis 19) drew with Aizawl 1 (Jaryan 15).

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

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